



OM : ONE GOD UNIVERSAL
A Garland of Offerings

In 3 Parts

Truth is One.
God is Truth.
∴ God is One.

Offered by
Murarilal Nagar
and
Sarla Devi Nagar

Om Shanti Mandiram
Columbia Missouri
1999

ओंकार - ब्रह्म - नाद

न नादेन विना गीतं न नादेन विना स्वरः।
न नादेन विना रागस्तस्मान्नादात्मकं जगत् ॥

There is no song without the nāda (resounding sound).
There is no tone without the nāda. There is no melody
without the nāda. Therefore, the nāda constitutes the
whole universe.

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A Collection of selected Scriptures and writings on
Om, Akṣara and Praṇava-- an Anthology.

Om Shanti Sandesha
(Journal)
(Voice of the Om Shanti Mandiram)

Om is Brahman.

Meditate upon Him.

See Him in everyone.

He is everywhere.

Ātman is Paramātmān.

Name-form is illusion.

That art thou.

It is all the Glory of Om.

May Omshānti pervade all.

O m s h ā n t i S a n d e s h a



Omityekākṣaram Brahma. BG. 8.13a
Om, this monosyllable is the Brahman.

Mumukṣur vai śaraṇam aham prapadye. Śveta. 6.18 d.
Desirous of immortality I take refuge in Him.

Satyam jñānam anantam Brahma. Taittirīya. 2.1.1.
Truth, Knowledge, Unending is the Brahman.

[Hariḥ] Om Tat Sat. BG. 17.23.
Hari Om, That is the Truth.

Ānandam Brahmaṇo vidvān. Tait. 2.4.1; 2.9.1
Having realized the Bliss of the Brahman.

Neha nānāsti kiñcana. Kaṭha. 2.1.11b
There is nothing here that differs.

Tat tvam asi. Chāndogya. 6.8.7, etc.
That art thou.

Ityeṣa Upaniṣadām upadeśaḥ.
This is the teaching of all the Upaniṣads.

ॐ नमः सिद्धम्

Is the first holy prayer to OM, recited by a child (after his father or guru), as he commences his life-long learning process--the beginning of schooling. He is about 5 years in age.

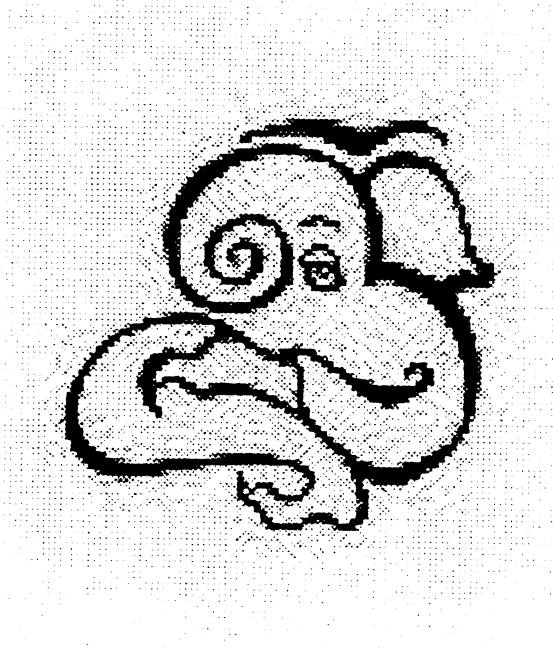
श्रीगणेशाय नमः

Is the very first instruction in lettering--learning the alphabet. His father (or guru) holds his right hand, which is holding a pen, and helps him write the auspicious prayer to Lord Gaṇeśa, while pronouncing the sacred *Mantra*.

Om is Śrī Gaṇeśa

and

Sri Gaṇeśa is Om



तुरीय प्रकाश¹

The first chapter of the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* discusses *Turīya* by means of the Vedic symbol OM. The restless mind cannot think of the transcendental reality without the help of a concrete symbol. It needs a symbol. The aspirant is asked to imagine four parts (or quarters) in Brahman, the Cosmic Reality. The first three --gross, subtle, and causal -- constitute the phenomenal world. The fourth, so called only in relation to the earlier three, is transcendental, being beyond time, space, and causality. It is *Turīya* or unconditioned Brahman, i.e. Ātman. The gross aspect of Brahman has its counterpart in the waking state (*Viśva*) of Atman, when the external world is perceived by means of the sense-organs; the subtle aspect, in the dream state (*Taijasa*), when the internal world, created by waking experience, is perceived; and the causal aspect, in deep sleep (*Prājña*) characterized by bliss and the cessation of mental activity. The transcendental aspect of Ātman, or Pure Consciousness, which is Its true nature, is the same as *Turīya*.

Like Brahman, OM also has four parts, represented by letters and sound. The first three letters are A, U, and M, corresponding to the first three quarters of Brahman and Atman. In addition to these, there is an undifferentiated sound of OM, which comes after the first three letters are pronounced. Devoid of all characteristics, it is not any particular sound, but the substratum of all sounds. It is the same as the unconditioned Brahman, or *Turīya*. Thus through meditation on OM a yogi can realize Brahman both in Its cosmic and in Its acosmic aspect.²

ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ

शिवमहिम्नः स्तोत्रम्

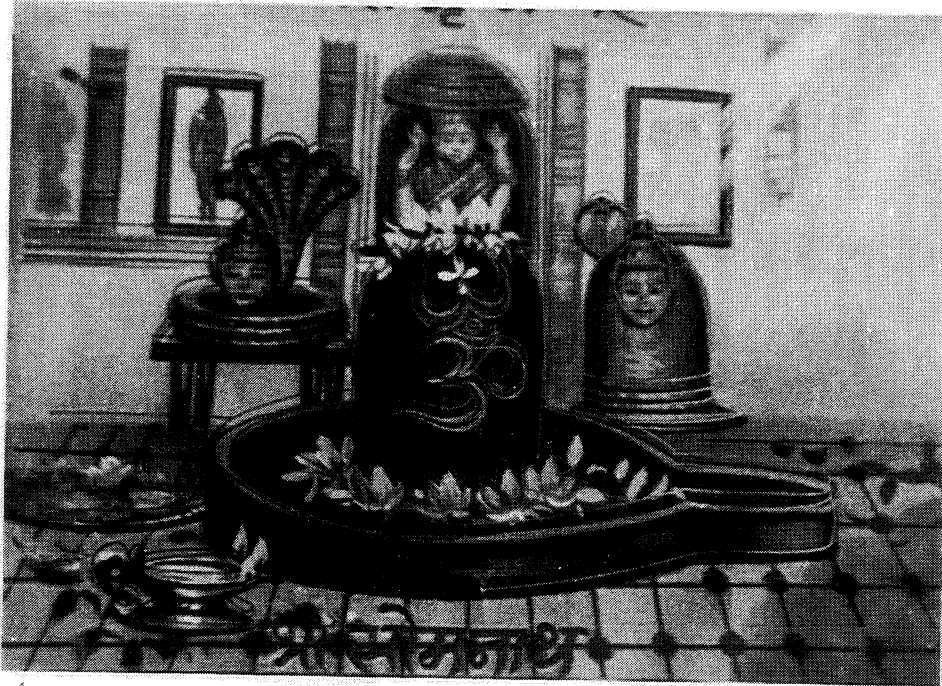
त्रयीं तिस्रो वृत्तीस्त्रिभुवनमथो त्रीनपि सुरान्
अकाराद्यैर्वर्णैस्त्रिभिरभिदधत्तीर्णविकृति ।
तुरीयं ते धाम ध्वनिभिरवरुन्धानमणुभिः
समस्तं व्यस्तं त्वां शरणद गृणात्योमिति पदम् ॥ 27 ॥

¹ This publication of *OM : One God Universal* may be regarded as the *Turīya Prakāśa* (4th issue) of *OM Shanti* (Journal). We dedicate this to the *Turīya* of *Svaparakāśa Parabrahma Paramātman*.

² Based on the Introduction to the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* by Svami Nikhilānanda. *The*

The word *Om*, as whole and in parts, extols you, O Bestower of Shelter, Śiva Śaṅkara Mahādeva ! [by means of] the triad (of the Vedas), the three *vṛttis* (waking, dreaming, sleeping--states of consciousness), the three worlds (earth, atmosphere, heaven), also the three gods (Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra), denoting all these by three letters, *a, u, m*, and also by that which is beyond differentiation, the fourth state (*Turīya*), your domain, pervaded by subtle sounds [all this constituting] you.¹

MAY OM SHANTI BLESS ALL!!



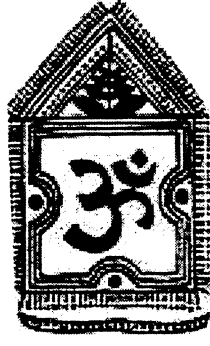
Upanishads. 2nd ed. New York: Ramakrishna Vivekananda Center, 1975. 2 : 209-210.

¹ Originally tr. by W. Norman Brown. Reformed by MLN.

ओंकारोच्चारणमहानादपुरःसरं
ब्रह्मविष्णुविहितो लिङ्गोद्भवभवस्तवः¹।

तदाशु समयं कृत्वा गत्वा तूर्ध्वमधश्च नौ।
पितामहोऽप्यहं नान्तं ज्ञातवन्तौ समेत्य वै ॥
ततो विस्मयमापन्नौ ध्यायन्तौ विश्वमीश्वरम्।
प्रोच्चरन्तौ महानादम् ओंकारं परमं पदम् ॥
बद्धान्जलिपुटौ भूत्वा शम्भूं तुष्टुवतुः पुनः।

¹ लौकिकन्यायरत्नाकरस्य कोलम्बियासंस्करणे, पृ. 77.



ओंकार--ब्रह्म--स्तवः

ॐ ॐ ॐ

Part I

एकं सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति ।
सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तम् ब्रह्म ।
एकमेवाद्वितीयम् ।

**Truth is One.
God is Truth.
∴ God is One.**

स्तावकौ

ओंकारब्रह्ममहिम – स्तवानन्दितमानसौ ।
नागरौ सरलादेवी मुरारिलाल इत्युभौ ॥



ओम् शान्ति मन्दिरम्
कोलम्बिया, मिज़ूरी

१९९९

Om is All * * * All is Om

In Appreciation

We pay our homage to Om. When we consider the truth stated above we have paid homage to all those who have helped us any way to present this Garland of Offerings. This is a collection of select contributions, a kind of anthology. If we attempt to list those whose words or works have helped us, the list will become very long. And it cannot be exhaustive. If we omit a name by chance, it will be a kind of injustice. So we pay our silent tribute to all those who have made it possible for us to achieve this Garland of Offerings to OM.

May God Almighty Om bless all.

Om is All

The Introduction

OM, the sacred mono-syllabic symbol of Parabrahma Paramātman, is the pious and holy name of the Supreme God. It is cryptic, majestic, mighty, mystic, mysterious, sacred, sacrosanct, secret and transcendental by nature. It possesses enormous, extra-ordinary, inexplicable, immanent spiritual power.

There is no other word in the whole world, in any of the many literatures of the entire universe, which is so infinitesimal in character, and yet is full of such infinite meanings as is this universal OM. It is most intensive in form and still extremely extensive in content. It is infinitely minute in appearance, nonetheless immensely colossal in its all-pervasiveness. It is honored and worshipped by so many cultures and traditions, ancient as well modern around the globe.

Paul Deussen, a great exponent of the Upanishadic philosophy, has given the following meanings for the word Upanishad:-- Secret formula, secret import, secret institution, secret name, secret sign, and secret word. Since this mystic and majestic, monosyllabic as well as monumental word OM constitutes the quintessence--the sum and substance--of the totality of all the Upanishads, it can be invested with all the above meanings and many more.

Kathopaniṣad sings the glory of OM in the following flowering terms:

Sarve vedā yat padam āmananti
tapāṃsi sarvāṇi ca yad vadanti.
Yad icchanto brahmacaryam caranti
tat te padam saṅgrahaṇa bravīmy Om iryetaḍ.
Kaṭha. I.ii.15.¹

The *Bhagavadgītā* regarded the above words so vital that it reproduced them all in its own inimitable way:

Yad akṣaram vedavido vadanti
viśanti yad yatayo vītarāgāḥ.
Yad icchanto brahmacaryam caranti
tat te padam saṅgrahaṇa pravakṣye.
Bh. Gi. 8.

¹ Original Sanskrit texts and English translations of all these Upanishadic citations appear in the Sanskrit Khaṇḍa, no. 1.

Kāthopaniṣad continues:

Etaddhyevākṣaram Brahma etaddyevākṣaram param.
Etaddhyevākṣaram jñātvā yo yad icchati tasya tat.

Etad ālambanam śreṣṭham
etad ālambanam param.
Etad ālambanam jñātvā
Brahmaloke mahīyate. Kāṭha. I. ii. 16-17.

Yet there is not even a single monograph--an independent study--a unitary publication--in the whole world today wherein we could find some substantial reading matter in one handy volume. We are reproducing below our appeal made to the scholarly world to help us remove this deficiency.

Veda Vedanta Mandiram
1405 St. Christopher
Columbia, MO 65203-2356

Christmas Day, 1998.

Subject: Oṃkāra Brahma Mahimā

Dear friend:

A. M. Esnoul has contributed a very short article on 'Om' to the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. by Mircea Eliade (New York, 1987) at the end of which he says: 'In the absence of monographic studies on the subject the reader would do well to consult Andre Padoux's *Recherches sur la symbolique et l'inergie de la parole dans certains textes tantriques*, "Publications de l'institut de civilization indiennes," no. 21 (Paris, 1963).

The statement may be true but it was not pleasing. We saw the book. It runs to about 400 pages. But we could not read it, since it was in French. Therefore, it was all Greek and Latin to us. However, the Index indicated that there were about 30 pages on which OM has been discussed or referred to. We made extensive efforts to get the relevant pages translated into English. All our efforts proved fruitless. One local translating agency demanded three thousand dollars just to translate those 30 and odd pages!

We took it as a challenge and resolved to bring out one substantial publication--a collection of selected individual writings on the subject, a kind of symposium, or an anthology. We have not yet found any monograph on OM, yet we were able to gather together as many individual contributions as we could find. You will be pleased to know that so far we have collected more than one hundred and fifty pages of the 'reading

matter' related to Om, Akṣara, and Praṇava. [By now, the number has risen to three hundred and fifty]. We have also procured a CD which contains approximately 500 images of OM. This could easily serve as a collective publication and fill the vacuum which exists today.

We seek your cooperation and support. We will appreciate it very much if you kindly give us some references where we could find some additional material. This enterprise will enable us to prepare a good bibliography as a healthy by-product. We would also request you to send us an off-print or a spare copy of a 'writing' on the subject if you have one. We are also seeking images (pictures, graphics, or reproductions) of OM--as many as possible. We don't want you to carry our burden. We just want your helping hand.

If our request is not clear, or if you need any further information, please use our e-mail, the address being --omshanti@showme.missouri.edu.

Thanking you so much and looking forward to hearing from you soon,

Sincerely yours,

Murarilal Nagar,
Director.

We might add another pathetic lamentation voiced by a sympathetic scholar of repute on the lack of a comprehensive study on OM. We saw it at a later date. Asko Parpola in his learned paper presented to the Nordic South Asia Conference, held in Helsinki in 1980, says: "Rather surprisingly, a comprehensive study of the sacred syllable *Om* still remains a task to be undertaken. Even substantial articles dealing extensively with this topic are few in number."

As a result of our appeal, we received some help in the form of references and papers, but not enough. We had to conduct our own search and research and find what is presented in this publication. This is certainly not our writing. It is not our own production. It is only a reproduction. Our work, even at its best, could be compared with that of, say, a *mālākāra*, a garland-maker. He does not cultivate the flowers. He merely collects them and organizes them in such a way that they are made usable and useful. They then decorate the hearts of the beloved, divine and human. They are put to so many good uses. For example, the garland has been playing a very vital role in Hindu weddings since time immemorable. Princesses selected their life partners through a garland. The literature is full of this *svayamvara*--"self-selection" custom and tradition among the royal families in India.

Even scattered flowers, when collected, gathered together and presented as a bouquet, decorate our temples and drawing rooms. However, it is not an easy task. Plucking the flowers from the gardens has its own rewards no doubt, but it is full of heavy hazards as well. There are prickly thorns and biting insects, up and down, all around. It requires a good deal of patience and perseverance. The toil, trouble and torture involved in this arduous task is seldom realized by those who have never gone that way.

We would like to stress even at the risk of being repetitive that our work is not a new creation. It is only a representation. So the reader should view this publication keeping well all the above facts and realities in mind and review it in its proper perspective.

Around the middle of April 1999, while conducting our extensive search through modern databases, we learnt that the coveted work of Andre Padoux had already been published in English almost a decade ago in a revised and enlarged form. We procured a copy immediately. Merciful OM has enormous power to bring about unexpected boons. However, we found that the main focus of the book is the study of the Word; Om has been studied only as a word and incidentally, here and there. The book is voluminous. It extends to more than 460 pages. Yet there are not more than 18 pages that discuss and deal directly with Om. A great deal of whatever is there is a rehash any way. All draw their water from the same well. We did not get much out of it. So the assumption of Esnoul is only a presumption. We have collected and presented many more longer and coherent studies of OM here in our Anthology.

Our collection of selections may help a younger scholar to pick up the thread and go forward. This could be an incidental advantage. His path will be smoother. We have already done a beginning in literature search. He won't have to wade through deep waters and collect the sources and resources once again, at least for what has been already presented herein.

There is enormous scope for search and research in the field we are covering. Maybe someday, someone, somewhere is motivated to continue the work we have just begun and embark upon an ambitious expedition of undertaking a systematic and comprehensive study of Omkāra-Brahma-Mahimā. What we are presenting herein may serve for him as a startup of the building material.

Here is an example. We have reproduced the text of one version of the *Prāṇavopaniṣad* published by the Adyar Library and Research Center and another version published as part of the Gopatha Brāhmaṇa in an as reformed and improved form as we could make it with our extremely limited resources. The text in one begins with: *Brahma ha vai Brahmāṇam puṣkare puṣkare saṣṭje*, while in another there is only one "puṣkare". The translators following their original version have not taken any note of the repetition. Maybe their original had only one word. However, we believe the repetition has a special meaning. Puṣkara means a lotus, no doubt, but it also means a lake. A lotus while still blooming in water possesses a real life. The lake makes the

flower more charming. There are bees humming around. There is a special aroma all over. There is an inspiring fragrance all around. It may be difficult to create the Brahmā when the flower is plucked out and is lying sideways. It cannot even stand upright. So the repetition and taking the first word stand for the lake may enhance the beauty of the words and their meaning too.

Also Puṣkara is a great tīrtha, a holy place of pilgrimage. We have been reciting the following prayer since our early boyhood:

Puṣkarādyāni tīrthāni Gaṅgādyāḥ saritas tathā.
Āgacchantu pavitrāṇi snānakāle sadā mama.

Now Bhagavatī Bhāgīrathī Gaṅgā is the most sacred river as believed by the Vedic Aryans. But Puṣkara comes even before her and leads all the tīrthas! May be the Upanishadic repetition is intended to glorify this Puṣkara Tīrtha.

Our tradition tells us that the God Brahmā is not worshipped in image (*mūrti*, *pratīka*, or symbol). There are no temples exclusively dedicated or devoted to God Brahmā, there being only one exception, and that is this Puṣkara Tīrtha, situated near Ajmer in Rajasthan. Does this specific repetition have any special significance or relevance?

This is only an imagination on our part-- a simple guess. However, we are not ready to accept that the repetition is a thoughtless error and that we have to have only one "Puṣkare." Here is a play and display of an old adage:

Śāstram sucintitam atho paricintanīyam, and

Vāde vāde jāyate tattvabodhaḥ.

We might add as a footnote that we recently read about the Omkāreśvara Tīrtha, (also known as Omkārajī), where one of the twelve *jyotirlingas* of Śiva Śaṅkara Mahādeva is worshipped, called Māndhātā (Godarpur) on an island [of some-what of Om shape] in Narmadā river in Madhya Pradeśa. Our source (the *Encyclo- paedia Britannica, Micropedia, vol 5:321*, says that there is a temple there dedicated also to God Brahmā.

Some of the sources that we used were extremely poor in lettering and meaning -in form and content--*vāg* and *artha*. They were quite disappointing both graphically and typographically. Some were unreadable. The image was faded. Hence we could not reproduce them all well. Some volumes were bound too tight. It was difficult even to open them and then copy. We had no time, energy, knowledge or other necessary means to edit them or to reform them. That was not our job either. So, they are presented here as they were found.

After all, a gardner too does not--cannot--improve the nature or appearance of the flowers he weaves into a garland. We have done our best. Therefore we could not do any better. If in spite of all the above disturbing conditions, our copies in Division Three are not as bad as some of their originals, the credit goes to our research associate Hui-Hsien Chen (Saphia), who did a remarkable job in scanning, computerizing, and then reproducing this bewildering mass of writings. If the fame is due, she gets it. If the blame is due, she gets it. Credit or debit, she earns it.

If someone follows us and is better equipped with what we were lacking, he will find at least some worthwhile material to go forward and build on what we have already built. Any serious future work on this subject need not be a mere labor of love. A young aspirant, a beginner, can earn even a Ph. D. One who already holds a Ph. D. can work toward a D. Litt. The book by Andre Padoux was originally presented as a doctoral dissertation. P. M. Modi earned a doctorate by presenting a dissertation on Akṣara to the University of Kiel (See our Bibliography).

We crave the indulgence of the reader and invite true, dedicated, devoted, and divine scholars to offer their services for the improvement of what is being presented here. If they could read the presentation and communicate to us any typographical errors or suggest ways to improve its nature and content, it will be a noble service for the glorification of OM and its dissemination worldwide. If we know the shortcomings we might try to remove them. As long as India was under a paralysing foreign domination, both politically and culturally, they used to say--Rome was not built in a day! Now we hear: Taj was not built in a day.

It had been our ardent desire for a long time to prepare and present to the world at large an "object" represeting OM. It could be a replica, lamp, picture, sign, or symbol--any kind of a souvenir that could decorate the drawing rooms of those who desire it. It could be, say, a screen-saver for the computers. The idea was to make the user or owner feel the physical presence of OM, a constant companion, a continuous reminder. But subsequently I learnt that OM has already been "commercialized." There are "AUM creations" which cover a large field of useful and usable worldly objects. These OM Creations lessened my enthusiasm for a concrete object. However, my idea remained in a dormant state for a long time. It seems Almighty OM wanted me to bring something more intellectual and cultural rather than physical and temporal, not earthly but divine. And here is the outcome.

We believe this publication may be the first of its kind in the world. It is a verbal picture. It is a graphic image. We have tried to put the words and graphics together. We would have loved to present many more images and pictures in bright colors. But that would have cost us much more. Maybe enough buyers might not have come forward. We have had a very bad and sad experience in this matter. We prepared and published a "Mine of Gems", but there were no buyers! It is a very long story and a sad one too. So we have brought this collection out in an economical form. If this publication finds enough support, it might be brought out once again in a revised, improved, and somewhat embellished form by us or by someone else. Viśvavibhūti Mahākavi

Bhavabhūti said: *Kālo hyayam nirvahir vipulā ca pṛthvī*=The Time is endless and this earth is extremely extensive.

Unforeseen circumstances beyond our control have forced us to organize and present all the "matter" that we collected into three separate sections. Now this "Garland of Offerings to OM: One God Universal" has three strands, strings, or cords.

I Division

The first division may be called the Basic Classics. We have named it *Upaniṣadādi-Mūlagrantha-sandohaḥ*. It comprises original Sanskrit texts, classical commentaries and their translations in English, etc. These are the foundational texts. They are fundamental. They were computerized by us on a special software called Multilingual Scholar. Modern software such as Microsoft Word could not handle this ancient classical matter. It is therefore a class by itself.

II Division

The second division presents modern writers who have tried to expound the classical texts in a genuine way and have presented the greatness and grandeur of OM in a faithful, traditional manner, following the sources appearing in Division One. They are not argumentative. They present the thoughts on OM with regard, respect and reverence. They don't raise unnecessary questions. This section was computerized earlier than the last one. It was done on MS Word 06.

III Division

The third and final division (with some exceptions) may be called analytical, critical, ultra-modern, controversial treatment. Many a time it is just academic and argumentative. The writers are, so to say, the botanists. They study the structure of the blossoms. They cannot appreciate the beauty of the whole entity. They investigate the origin. They analyze the parts. They discuss the meaning. To them OM is a word only to be subjected to analysis and synthesis. Some go to the extent of calling OM as meaningless. Of course, there are some exceptions too, and all honor to them. This division also presents some historical narrative. It was computerized last on a later version of MS Word 97.

Now the above three categories of software are not mutually interchangeable. They are not on speaking terms with one another. They have to stand apart--separately, individually. It is not possible to merge them all into one coherent unit and present them in a single sequence. It will be a horrible wastage of time, energy, and matter to try to do so. After all, taking the analogy of a florist, these three types of blossoms will have to be presented in a combined bouquet, but in separate sections next to one another. Or, if we take the analogy of a garland, there are three separate strands (strings or cords), just like, say, in our *Yajñopavīta*, the sacred cord.

Well, all this has come out naturally. It may be the Creativity of Om Itself. Anyone who knows Om also knows that there are three constituent elements in OM. Here is an enumeration of some.

OM (1) is Akṣara (2) and Praṇava (3) as well

OM constitutes three letters--a, u, m, representing three

Gods (Vishṇu, Shiva and Brahmā)
Vedas (Ṛg, Yajur, and Sāman)
Bodies (gross, subtle, and causal)
Fires (Dakṣiṇāgni, Gārhapatya, and Āhavanīya)
Stages in creation (sṛṣṭi, sthiti, and laya)
States of consciousness (waking, dream, and deep sleep)
Time divisions (past, present and future)
Worlds (Lokas: earth, sky, and heaven),

So, what is surprising there if this presentation named "A Garland of Offerings to OM: One God Universal" comes out in three separate divisions!

There is a well-known popular saying: Diverse are the tastes of the people. A critic might find fault with this presentation on the ground that there is too much repetition. We admit it. It is there. But it is only a natural corollary. This is a collection of selections. It is a garland of offerings made by many devotees of OM to OM. We go to the temple. We make our own individual offerings to our Beloved God (Iṣṭa devatā). But what do we see there? There is a great deal of duplication! The fruits, flowers, and sweets are almost alike! Is it possible to differentiate, say, the coconut offered by me and my neighbor? Of course, not. The prayers too are generally the same.

Nevertheless each offering is unique. The devotion and faith of each devotee is unique--exclusively his or her own. The desired favor or boon too may not be identical. Someone wants learning. Someone else wants the children. Someone wants money. So each one is motivated by his own individual objective and goal. If the offerings are viewed from this angle, there is no duplication at all--none whatsoever.

विषयबिन्दुसन्दोहः

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Part I

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OM = Majestic God

OMnipotent सर्वशक्तिमान् ।

OMnipresent सर्वव्यापिन् ।

OMniscient सर्वज्ञः ।

Om, One God Universal invoked by many names.

अथ महावाक्यानि चत्वारि -- यथा

प्रज्ञानं ब्रह्म ।

Knowledge is Brahman.

अहं ब्रह्मास्मि ।

I am the Brahman.

तत्त्वमसि

Thou art That.

अयमात्मा ब्रह्म ।

This Ātmān is Brahman.



ओंकार-ब्रह्म-महिमा

The Glory of Om
The Universal Sacred Symbol

ओमित्येकाक्षरं ब्रह्म ।
OM, this monosyllable, is Brahman.

अणोरणीयान् महतो महीयान् आत्माऽस्य जन्तोर्निहितो गुहायाम् ।
तमक्रतुः पश्यति वीतशोको धातुप्रसादान्महिमानमात्मनः ॥ (कठ. 1. 2. 20).

Ātman, smaller than the smallest, greater than the greatest, is hidden in the hearts of all living beings. A man who is free from desires beholds the majesty of the Self through the tranquility of the senses and the mind and becomes free from grief.

There is no other word in the whole world, in any of the many languages of the entire mankind of the kind of OM, which is so minute in character, and yet is so colossal in its meanings. It is extremely infinitesimal and yet immensely infinite.

एकमेवाद्वितीयं ब्रह्म
One and One alone,
without a Second, is Brahman.

एको देवः सर्वभूतेषु गूढः सर्वव्यापी सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा ।
कर्माध्यक्षः सर्वभूताधिवासः साक्षी चेता केवलो निर्गुणश्च ॥
(श्वेताश्वतरोपनिषद्. 6. 11).

The Singular, Resplendent Lord, residing in all beings, permeating all bodies created, Inmost Self of all creatures, presiding over all actions, enlivening all the living, witnessing all deeds, the Animator and the Absolute, free from all attributes. *That is the God Almighty!*

विश्वतश्चक्षुरुत विश्वतोमुखो विश्वतोबाहुरुत विश्वतस्पात् ।
सं बाहुभ्यां धमति सं पतत्रैः द्यावाभूमी जनयन् देव एकः ॥ (3. 3)

His eyes are here, there and everywhere. His face is here, there and everywhere.

उपनिषदादि—

His arms are here, there and everywhere. His feet are here, there and everywhere. He is all-pervasive. He is all-encompassing. He unites all men with their arms. He unites all birds with their wings. He creates the heaven and the earth. He is One God, One and One alone. He is non-dual, without a second. There is none other like Him.

There is none above Him. He is All-in-all, above all. None can equal Him.

एको देवः

(बृहदारण्यकोपनिषदि तृतीयाध्याये नवमं ब्राह्मणम्)

अथ हैनं विदग्धः शाकल्यः पप्रच्छ कति देवा याज्ञवल्क्येति । स हैतयेव निविदा प्रतिपेदे यावन्तो वैश्व-
देवस्य निविद्युच्यन्ते त्रयश्च त्री च शता त्रयश्च त्री च सहस्रेति । ओमिति होवाच कत्येव देवा याज्ञवल्क्येति ।
त्रयस्त्रिंशदिति । ओमिति होवाच कत्येव देवा याज्ञवल्क्येति । षडिति । ओमिति होवाच कत्येव देवा याज्ञवल्क्येति ।
द्वाविति । ओमिति होवाच कत्येव देवा याज्ञवल्क्येति । अर्धय इति । ओमिति होवाच कत्येव देवा याज्ञवल्क्येति ।
एक इति ।

1. Then Vidagdha Śākalya, the descendent of Śākala, asked him (Yājñavalkya) : "How many gods are there, Yājñavalkya ?"— Yājñavalkya ascertained the number through [the group of Mantras known as] the *nivid*, (the list or inventory of the gods) and said : As many as are mentioned in the *nivid* of the *Viśvadevas*— three hundred and three and three thousand and three" (3306). —

"Om (well)" said Śākalya (the son of Śākala) and asked again : "How many gods are there, Yājñavalkya ?"—"Thirty-three."

"Om", said Śākalya, "but just how many gods are there, O Yājñavalkya ?"— "Six."

"Om !" said he, "but just how many gods are there, Yājñavalkya ?"— "Three."

"Om !" said he, "but just how many gods are there, Yājñavalkya ?" "Two."

"Om !" said he, "but just how many gods are there, Yājñavalkya ?"— "One and a half."

"Om !" said he, "but just how many gods are there, Yājñavalkya ?" "**One.**"

* * * * *

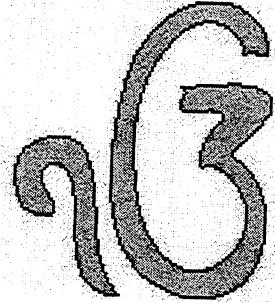
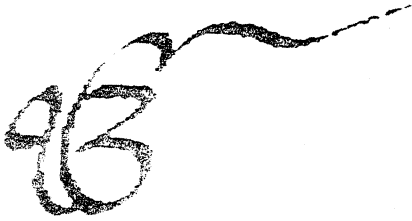
Om in Sikkha Faith

"१ ओंकार सतिनामु करता पुरखु निरभउ निरवैरु अकाल मूरति अजूनी सैभं गुर प्रसादि ।"¹

¹ सिक्खो का मूलमन्त्र, गुरु ग्रन्थ साहिब, पृष्ठ १ ।

"वह एक है, शब्द अथवा वाणी है, और इसी द्वारा सृष्टि रचता है। वह सत्य है, नाम है। उसके अस्तित्व का वाचक नाम केवल सत्य है और शेष जितने नाम हैं, उसके गुणों के वाचक हैं। उसके प्रत्यक्ष गुण ये हैं: कर्तार है, पुरियों का निर्माण करके उनके बीच निवास करने वाला है। महान् पौरुष और महान् शक्तियुक्त है। समस्त शक्तियों का स्वामी है।" परमात्मा के निषेधात्मक गुण हैं— वह भय से रहित है, वैर से रहित है, मूर्तिमान् है, काल से रहित है, योनि के अन्तर्गत नहीं आता। त्रिपुटी से परे है। वह स्वयंभू (अपने आप होनेवाला) है। वह प्राप्त होने वाला है और उसकी प्राप्ति गुरु की कृपा से होती है।¹

There is but One God² —Manifested and Unmanifested One.
The Eternal All-pervading Divine Spirit.
The Creator, the Supreme Being (omnipresent, omniscient,
omnipotent).
Without fear, without enmity,
Immortal Reality,
Unborn, Self-existent.
Realized through the Grace of Guru.



Shri Guru Nanak Deva, the founder of the Sikkha faith, paid due tribute to OM, when he placed it right in front of his Mūlamantra, or Bijamantra, which is in a sense the true Sūtra of his philosophy and teachings. Critics have observed that the entire Guru Grantha Sahib is just a commentary of this Sūtra. Some Sikhs may not be able to realize it, but all the teachings of Shri Guru Nanak Deva are drawn from the "HINDU" scriptures, especially the Advaita Vedanta of the Upanishads.

The more this basic idea is disseminated and made to permeate the minds of the Hindus and Sikhs there will be more harmony and friendship among them. May this One OM bring all the world united together under the banner of ONE GOD UNIVERSAL.

¹ Jayarāma Mīśra, *Śrī Guru Grantha-Darśana*. Allahabad, Sāhitya Bhavana, 1960. p. 61.

² Randhir Singh, *Readings from Guru Nanak's Japaji* (Prologue) "Glimpses of the Divine Masters" (New Delhi : International Traders Corporation, 1965).

OM Honored in Ancient India 5000 Years Ago

We have collected a large number of "Offerings" on OM. This is, probably, the most exciting, thrilling, and sensational one. It gives us an authentic picture of the honor accorded to the Universal God OM 5000 years ago in Harappa. Dr. N. S. Rajaram, writing under the title--"Vedic Language and Symbols in the Deciphered Indus Seals"-- has provided us with this epoch-making information and an image of OM, named *Om̐kāra Mudrā*, in Harappa.¹ Says he:

"The recent decipherment of the Harappan script has allowed scholars to identify deep connections between the Vedic literature and Harappan archaeology. The written messages on the seals are from the later Vedic and Vedantic texts, while the images often embody Vedic symbolism. . . . This reverses the chronological relationship between Vedic and Harappan civilizations found in the text books; it shatters the Aryan invasion theory, and also shows the Aryan-Dravidian divide to be a modern myth. . . . This has far-reaching consequences, and calls for a complete re-writing of ancient Indian and world history."

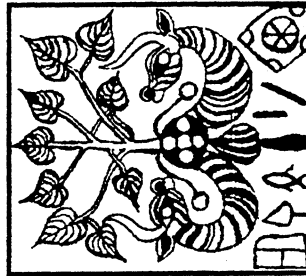
Harappan OM — Original and Rotated



Harappan Seal ↻



↻ Original Harappan OM



↻ Rotated by 90° gives
Devanagari OM

As an example the author has chosen the seal depicting the "bow-shaped" image with *aśvattha* leaves—a very sacred symbol. This seal is known as 'Om̐kāra Mudrā'. Along with the seal photo Dr. Rajaram has displayed two line drawings of the seal.

¹ *Prabuddha Bhārata*, January 1999, pp. 322-28.

The one above is in the original position, while the other is rotated ninety degrees. The reader will immediately recognize the one below to be the letter 'OM' used in Devanagari and other North Indian scripts. What is interesting is that South Indian scripts like Kannada and Telugu retained the original orientation while slightly elongating it.

The description of this seal is found in the Muṇḍaka Upanishad¹ as the 'bow-shaped Praṇava Akṣara'. (Praṇava means OM). Other Upanishads, notably the Kaṭha Upanishad, contain similar descriptions. Even the Bhagavadgītā has such a reference. The written message on the seal can be deciphered as 'varadaḥ saḥ redhate' which is a reference to a famous verse² in the fourth book of the Rigveda.

Śaunakopaniṣad has equated Praṇava, Udgītha, Indra and Vṛṣabha--they are all one and the same! Dr. Rajaram has drawn our attention to a very significant *mantra* of the Ṛgveda. This very *mantra* has been cited by our Upaniṣad and explained in a way that is in full consonance with the glory and grandeur of the Praṇava.

It is remarkable to note that this very *mantra* has been given varied and various interpretations by Yāska, Patañjali, Śabarasvāmin, Kumārila, and Sāyaṇa as shown by Othmar Gachter in his *Hermeneutics and language in Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* (Delhi, 1990), pp. 111-15. It is fully featured in full color on the cover (dust jacket) of the book. However, the interpretation found in the Śaunakaka Upaniṣad is totally innovative and unknown to any of the interpreters enumerated above.

Dr. Rajaram ends : "From all this we may safely conclude that there are very deep connections between the Harappan Civilization and the Vedic culture. The Aryan invasion is a modern myth. The decipherment may be seen as the last nail into the Aryan invasion coffin, and along with it the various theories about the Aryan-Dravidian divide and their linguistic theories."³

This remarkable paper has also thrown a new light, logical and legitimate, on the origin of the word OM. Now we don't have to swallow the bitter pill that OM is a borrowed word from a 'rabble of aboriginal savages'. It is as "Saṃskṛta" as the Veda and Vedanta.

Dr. Rajaram says that the writing on the seal reads *Vardah saḥ redhate*. We are unable to understand the meaning of the third word. Modern dictionaries don't help, naturally. It might mean something like *roravīti*.

¹ See our page # 14.

² See RV 4. 58. 3--a pretty good rendering of its fourth pāda--*maho devo martyām āviveśa* ('The mighty divine enshrined in the heart of all mortals').

³ See the contribution by Asko Parpola in this very collection. His theory is justifiably rejected by Hock. [MLN].

The Śaunkopaniṣad has also cited another Ṛgveda *mantra* which begins with *Marutvantam vṛṣabham vāvṛdhānam*. Here is the full *mantra* along with its translation by Svami Satya Prakash Sarasvati and Satyakam Vidyalankara as appearing in their edition of the Ṛgveda. (New Delhi : Veda Pratishthan, 1977).

The *Mantra* reads :

Marutvantam vṛṣabham vāvṛdhānam akavārim divyam śāsam Indram.
Viśvāsāham avase nūtanāyogam sahodām iha te huvema.

Their translation is : We invoke the resplendent self, the lord of vital elements, the showerer of benefits, to grant us protection. He augmenting in glory overcomes all adversities. He is the celestial ruler and subduer of all evil forces. He is fierce in struggle and bestower of strength.

This is a "free" rendering by those who don't believe in concrete objects. Theirs is an abstract painting colored by their own specific theology. There are no figures, no images, just the ideas to be imagined. It does not fit well with the theme presented in the Upaniṣad. There is a very good translation of this *Mantra* here itself on p. 45.



Why Aśvattha ?

The question naturally arises--Why such a highly exalted position is accorded to the Aśvattha tree? The answer is simple: Bhagavān Śrī Krishna Himself has proclaimed in His *Bhagavadgītā*: *Aśvatthaḥ sarvavrkṣāṅām* = Of all the trees I am the Aśvattha! It is honored since it is the holiest of all holy trees. It can very well stand as a true symbol (*satya pratīka*) of OM, which in turn is the true symbol of the Parabrahma Paramātman.

Of the two pieces of Araṇi (the fire-generating couple of wood) the upper one--the *manthana daṇḍa*--the churning rod, is made of this Aśvattha tree. It is the male organ! It is equalled with Praṇava (OM).

Apte analyzes the word Aśvattha as *Na śvaś ciram śālmalīvrkṣādivat tiṣṭhatīti*.

And Monier-Williams says: Aśvattha = under which horses stand, the holy fig tree, *Ficus Religiosa*; the upper (or male) *araṇi* is made of its wood. AV. vi. 11. 1; S. Br. xi; KātyŚr;

This *Aśvattha* tree is highly venerated and is mentioned in various ancient Indian scriptures in a worshipful manner. Macdonell and Keith, in their work entitled *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects* have given many references and citations. They say:

Aśva-ttha (horse-stand') is one of India's greatest trees, the *Ficus Religiosa*, later called *pippala* (now Peepal). . . Its hard wood formed the upper of the two pieces of wood used for kindling fire, the lower being Śamī. The gods are said to sit under it in the third heaven.

Śamī is known to contain fire in latent form. [cf. *Śamīm ivābhyantara-līna-pāvakām, Raghuvamśa*]. So the lower part could very well be taken as the female partner, giving birth to the fire which is hidden in her womb. It is a perfect union and has great symbolism.

The *Aśvattha* tree is called Bodhidruma. It is under this tree that Siddhārtha Gautama received his 'bodhi,' the Supreme Enlightenment, and became Bhagavān Buddha. It is recorded in India's ancient history that during the reign of Emperor Ashoka the Great, a branch of this tree in Bodha Gaya was taken to Sri Lanka and was transplanted there. In our own times, a branch of the same tree, still alive in Sri Lanka, was brought back to India and was transplanted in Sarnath (Varanasi). We have had a holy darśana of this holy tree. It is beautifully flourishing. It has a divine life.

सनातनोऽश्वत्थः

ऊर्ध्वमूलोऽवाक्शाख एषोऽश्वत्थः सनातनः।
 तदेव शुक्रं तद्ब्रह्म तदेवामृतमुच्यते।
 तस्मिँल्लोकाः श्रिताः सर्वे तदु नात्येति कश्चन।
 एतद्वै तत् ॥ (कठ. 6. 1).

तूलावधारणेनैव मूलावधारणं वृक्षस्य क्रियते लोके यथा, एवं संसारकार्यवृक्षावधारणेन तन्मूलस्य ब्रह्मणः स्वरूपावधिधारणियेष्येयं षष्ठी वल्ल्यारभ्यते -- ऊर्ध्वमूलः ऊर्ध्वं मूलं यत्तद्विष्णोः परमं पदमस्येति सोऽयमव्यक्तादिस्था-
 वरान्तः संसारवृक्षः ऊर्ध्वमूलः। वृक्षश्च व्रश्चनात्। जन्मजरामरणशोकाद्यनेकानर्थात्मकः प्रतिक्षणमन्यथास्वभावो
 मायामरीच्युदकगन्धर्वनगरादिवद् दृष्टनष्टस्वरूपत्वात्। अवसाने च वृक्षवदभावात्मकः। कदलीस्तम्भवन्निःसारोऽ-
 नेकशतपाषण्डबुद्धिविकल्पास्पदतत्त्वविजिज्ञासुभिरनिर्धारितेदंतत्त्वो वेदान्तनिर्धारितपरब्रह्ममूलसारोऽविद्याकामकर्मा-
 व्यक्तबीजप्रभवः अपरब्रह्मविज्ञानक्रियाशक्तिद्वयात्मकहिरण्यगर्भाङ्कुरः सर्वप्राणिलिङ्गभेदस्कन्धः तृष्णाजलावसे-
 कोद्भूतदपो' बुद्धीन्द्रियविषयप्रवालाङ्कुरः श्रुतिस्मृतिन्यायविद्योपदेशपलाशो यज्ञदानतपआद्यनेकक्रियासुषुप्पः सुख-
 दुःखवेदनानेकरसः प्राण्युपजीव्यानन्तफलस्तत्तृष्णासलिलावसेकप्ररूढजडीकृतदृढबद्धमूलः सत्यनामादिसप्तलोकब्रह्मा-
 दिभूतपक्षिकृतनीडः प्राणिसुखदुःखोद्भूतहर्षशोकजातनृत्यगीतवादित्रक्ष्वेलितास्फोटितहसिताकृष्टरुदितहाहामुञ्च-
 मुञ्चेत्याद्यनेकशब्दकृततुमुलीभूतमहारवो वेदान्तविहितब्रह्मात्मदर्शनासङ्गशस्त्रकृतोच्छेद एव संसारवृक्षोऽश्वत्थो
 ऽश्वत्थवत्कामकर्मावतारितनित्यप्रचलितस्वभावः। स्वर्गनरकतिर्यक्प्रेतादिभिः शाखाभिखाक्शाखः। सनातनोऽ-
 नादित्वाच्चिख्रवृत्तः। यदस्य संसारवृक्षस्य मूलं तदेव शुक्रं शुभ्रं शुद्धं ज्योतिष्मच्चैतन्यात्मज्योतिःस्वभावं तदेव
 ब्रह्म सर्वमहत्त्वात्। तदेवामृतमविनाशस्वभावमुच्यते कथ्यते सत्यत्वात्। वाचारम्भणं विकारो नामधेयमनृतम्
 अन्यदतो मर्त्यम्। तस्मिन्परमार्थसत्ये ब्रह्मणि लोकागन्धर्वनगरमरीच्युदकमायासमाः परमार्थदर्शनाभावावगमनाः
 श्रिता आश्रिताः सर्वे समस्ताः। उत्पत्तिस्थितिलयेषु तदु तद्ब्रह्म नात्येति नातिवर्तते मृदादिभिव घटादि[?]कार्यं

कश्चन कश्चिदपि विकारः। एतद्वै तत् ॥ (शाङ्करभा० 6. 1).

Svami Nikhilananda translates the *Kaṭhaśruti* as follows:

THIS IS THAT eternal Aśvattha tree with its root above and branches below. That root, indeed, is called the Bright; That is Brahman, and That alone is the immortal. In That all worlds are contained, and none can pass beyond. This, verily, is That.

And he further presents Shri Shankaracharya:

Śaṅkarācārya, in order to spur men on the path of renunciation, gives in his commentary the following vivid description of the Tree of the Universe:

"The universe is endowed with the unending and manifold miseries of birth, old age, death, and grief; it changes its nature every moment. Like magic, a mirage, or a castle in the air, the universe is perceived only to vanish ultimately. It is non-eternal, like a tree. Again like a plaintain tree, it has no inner substance. A subject of idle fancies on the part of many, stupid heretics, its real nature remains undetermined by wise seekers after truth. The ultimate root of the universe is the Supreme Brahman ascertained by Vedānta; its seed is avidyā, desire, action, and the Unmanifest; its sprout is Hiraṇyagarbha, in which are combined the powers of knowledge and activity of the lower Brahman; its trunk is formed of the various subtle bodies of living beings; its haughty growth is hastened by the sprinkling of the waters of longing for enjoyment. Its tender shoots are the various objects of the organs of perception; its leaves are the Vedas, the smritis, logic, and the other forms of knowledge and instruction; its beautiful blossoms are such deeds as the multifarious sacrifices, gifts, and penances; its diverse tastes are the experiences of joy and sorrow; and its endless fruits are heaven and the other planes enjoyed by living beings as the reward of their actions. Its numerous subsidiary roots are entwined together, fastened in the earth, and nourished by the waters of longing for the results of action. The nests in the tree have been built by birds, that is to say, all the living beings—from Brahmā downwards—who reside in the seven higher heavens. This tree of the Universe is constantly reverberating with the tumultuous noise arising from dancing, singing, instrumental music, sport, arrogant uproar, laughter, jostling, lamentations, and such exclamations as 'Alas! I am done for' and 'Leave me alone!', induced by hilarity and weeping, which are the results of the happiness and unhappiness of living beings. Shaken constantly by the high winds of desires and their fruits, this tree can be felled only by the irresistible sword of detachment forged in the fire of knowledge of the identity of Brahman and Ātman as taught in Vedānta."

From the sight of cotton lying on the ground, a man comes to know of the existence of the cotton tree and its unseen root. Likewise, from the universe one can infer the existence of Brahman, its unseen cause.

Kaṭhōpaniṣad, Sixth vallī. Tr. by Robert Ernest Hume.

The world-tree rooted in Brahma.
Its root is above, its branches below--
This eternal fig tree¹

That (root) indeed is the Pure. That is Brahma.
That indeed is called the Immortal.
On it all the worlds do rest,
And no one soever goes beyond.

ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ

भगवद्गीता

The fifteenth chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā* is named Puruṣottama-Yoga. It begins with :—

ऊर्ध्वमूलमधःशाखमश्वत्थं प्राहुरव्ययम् ।
छन्दसि यस्य पर्णानि यस्तं वेद स वेदवित् ॥ (गीता 15. 1).

अधश्चोर्ध्वं प्रसृतास्तस्य शाखाः
गुणप्रवृद्धा विषयप्रवालाः ।
अधश्च मूलान्यनुसन्ततानि
कर्मानुबन्धीनि मनुष्यलोके ॥ (गीता 15. 2).

न रूपमस्येह तथोपलभ्यते
नान्तो न चादिर्न च सम्प्रतिष्ठा ।
अश्वत्थमेनं सुविरूढमूल-
मसङ्गशस्त्रेण दृढेन छित्त्वा ॥ (गीता 15. 3).

And here is the Śāṅkara-bhāṣya on the above verse one, which is an echo of the *Kaṭha* mantra just discussed above.

Shri Shankaracharya explains :

ऊर्ध्वमूलं कालतः सूक्ष्मत्वात्कारणत्वाश्रित्यत्वान्महत्वाच्चोर्ध्वमुच्यते । ब्रह्माव्यक्तं मायाशक्तिम् । तन्
मूलमस्येति सोऽयं संसारवृक्ष ऊर्ध्वमूलः ।

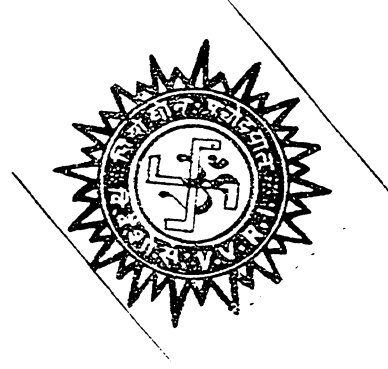
श्रुतेश्च :—

¹ This same simile of the world as an eternal fig-tree growing out of Brahma is further elaborated in BhG. 15. 1-3.).

ऊर्ध्वमूलोऽर्वाक्शाख एषोऽश्वत्थः सनातनः। (कठ. 6. 1) इति।

पुराणे च :-

अव्यक्तमूलप्रभवस्तस्यैवानुग्रहोत्थितः।
बुद्धिस्कन्धमयश्चैव इन्द्रियान्तरकोटरः॥
महाभूतविशाखश्च विषयैः पत्रवांस्तथा।
धर्माधर्मसुपुष्पश्च सुखदुःखफलोदयः॥
आजीव्यः सर्वभूतानां ब्रह्मवृक्षः सनातनः।
एतद् ब्रह्मवनं चैव ब्रह्माऽऽचरति नित्यशः॥
एतच्छित्त्वा च भित्त्वा च ज्ञानेन परमासिना।
ततश्चात्मरतिं प्राप्य यस्मान्नाऽऽवर्त्तते पुनः॥
(मभा. 14. 35.20-22) इत्यादि॥



अधःशाखं महदहङ्कारतन्मात्रादयः शाखा इवास्याधो भवन्तीति सोऽयमधः शाखस्तमधःशाखम्। न श्वोऽपि स्थातेत्यश्वत्थः, तं क्षणप्रध्वंसिनमश्वत्थं प्राहुः कथयन्ति। अव्ययं संसारमायामयमनादिकालप्रवृत्तत्वात्। सोऽयं संसारवृक्षोऽव्ययोऽनाद्यनन्तदेहादिसन्तानाश्रयः, हि सुप्रसिद्धस्तमव्ययम्। तस्यैव संसारवृक्षस्येदमन्यद् विशेषणम्। छन्दांसि यस्य पर्णानि, छन्दांसि छादनादृग्यजुस्सामलक्षणानि यस्य संसारवृक्षस्य पर्णानीव पर्णानि। यथा वृक्षस्य परिरक्षणार्थानि पर्णानि तथा वेदाः संसारवृक्षपरिरक्षणार्थाः, धर्माधर्मतद्भेदतुफलप्रकाशनार्थत्वात्। यथाव्याख्यातं संसारवृक्षं समूलं यस्तं वेद स वेदविद्वेदवेदार्थविदित्यर्थः। नहि संसारवृक्षादस्मात् समूलाज्ज्ञेयो अन्योऽणुमात्रोऽप्यवशिष्टोऽस्ति, अतः सर्वज्ञः सर्ववेदार्थविदिति समूलसंसारवृक्षज्ञानं स्तौति॥ 1॥

Source: The Bhagavadgītā, with the commentary of Shankaracharya, tr. by Swami Gambhirananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1984).

They say that the *Aśvattha* (Peepal) tree, which has its roots upward and the branches downward, and of which the Vedas are the leaves, is imperishable. He who realizes it is a knower of the Vedas.

Ūrdhva-mūlam, that which has its roots upwards:--Brahman, possessed of the unmanifest power in the form of *Māyā*, is referred to by the word 'upward' because of its subtleness in point of time by virtue of its being the Cause, and also because of Its eternality and vastness; and That is the root (*mūlam*) of this world. The Tree of the World which is such, is *ūrdhvamūlam*. This accords with the Upaniṣadic text "This has its roots above and branches below" (Kaṭha. 2. 6. 1). In the Purāṇa also we have:

It sprouts from the Root in the form of the Unmanifest; it grows through the sturdiness of that very One. And it has abundance of intelligence as its trunk, and the apertures of the organs as hollows.

The great elements are the boughs; so also, it has the objects of perception as its leaves. It has virtue and vice as its beautiful flowers, and happiness and sorrow are the fruits it bears.

This eternal Tree presided over by Brahman is a means of livelihood to all creatures. And this verily is the resort of Brahman; in it Brahman dwells for ever.

Having felled and split this Tree with the great sword of Knowledge, and then, attaining the bliss of the Self, one does not return from that (bliss). (Cf. Mbh. Āś. 47. 12-15).

That Tree, which has its roots upwards and is constituted by the enchantment of mundane existence, and which has the branches downwards-- *mahat*, egoism, subtle elements are its branches, as it were, extending downwards, which does not last even for the morrow is *aśvattha*. They say that the *aśvattha* Tree, undergoing destruction every moment is imperishable, and constituted by the enhancements of mundane existence. Having been in existence from time without beginning, that Tree of the World is imperishable. It is, indeed, wellknown as the sustainer of the beginningless and ceaseless series of bodies, etc. They call it imperishable. (Presented more or less in substance, rather than in the exact wording).

छान्दोग्योपनिषद्

Chāndogyopaniṣad (8. 5. 3) says :

ब्रह्मलोके . . . अश्वत्थः सोमसवनः ।

तत्रैव चाश्वत्थो वृक्षः सोमसवनो नामतः, सोमोऽमृतं तन्निःस्रवोऽमृतस्रव इति वा । (शाङ्करभा० 8. 5. 3).

Svami N. :—There are in the world of Brahman, in the third heaven from here (i.e. from earth) . . . the *Aśvattha* tree, which showers Soma-juice (that is to say, nectar).

ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ

वाचस्पत्यम्¹

तस्य वाचकः प्रणवः (27)

¹ By Tārānātha Tarkavācaspati Bhaṭṭācārya, reprinted by Chowkhamba, Benares, 1962. We have begun this with *Vācaspatyam* because it makes a good beginning and leads to many valuable sources. We have relocated certain citations and placed them where they make a better reading. After all *Vācaspatyam* is selective. We have also added Śāṅkarabhāṣya to enrich the text. Excepting the *Vācaspatyam* we have generally indicated our source of selection.

27. The Sacred word connotes Him.

यथा तस्येश्वरवाचकता तथा पात० सूत्र भा० विवरणेषु दर्शितम्। यथा:-
"तस्य वाचकः प्रणवः" पातञ्जलयोगसूत्र० 27.

"वाच्य ईश्वरः प्रणवस्य। किमस्य सङ्केतकृतं वाच्यवाचकत्वमथ प्रदीपप्रकाशवदवस्थितिमिति। स्थितोऽस्य वाच्यस्य वाचकेन सह सम्बन्धः। सङ्केतस्त्वैश्वरस्य स्थितमेवार्थमभिनयति। यथाऽवस्थितः पितापुत्रयोः सम्बन्धः सङ्केतेनावद्योत्यते--अयमस्य पुत्र इति। सर्गान्तरेऽपि वाच्यवाचकशक्त्यपेक्षस्तथैव सङ्केतः क्रियते"। भा० सूत्र० 27.

Vyāsabhāṣya

The sacred word connotes 'Him'. He is denominated by the sacred word, the *Pranava* (AUM). Is the relation of the sign and the thing signified between these conventional, or inherent as between flame and light? His relation with the sign is inherent and thus ever present. Further, the convention of God shows only an object which exists (that which is inherent). As the relation already existing between father and son is only expressed by convention, this is the father, this the son. In other creations too the same convention is adopted on account of the dependence upon the connotative powers of the sign and the thing signified.¹

सम्प्रति तत्राणिधानं दर्शयितुं तस्य वाचकमाह, तस्य वाचकः प्रणवः। व्याचष्टे, वाच्य इति। तत्र परेषां मतं विमर्षद्वारेणोपन्यस्यति किमस्येति। वाचकत्वं प्रतिपादकत्वमित्यर्थः। परे हि पश्यन्ति, यदि स्वाभाविकः शब्दार्थयोः सम्बन्धः सङ्केतेनास्मात् शब्दादयमर्थः प्रत्येतव्य इत्येवमात्मकेनाविव्यज्येत ततो यत्र नास्ति स सम्बन्धः तत्र सङ्केतशतेनापि न व्यज्येत। न हि प्रदीपव्यङ्ग्यो घटो यत्र नास्ति तत्र प्रदीपसहस्रेणापि शक्यो व्यञ्जयितुम्। कृतसङ्केतस्तु करभशब्दोच्चारणे वारणप्रतिपादको दृष्टः। सङ्केतकृतमेव वाचकत्वमिति विमृश्याभिमतमवधारयति, स्थितोऽस्येति। अयमभिप्रायः। सर्व एव शब्दाः सर्वाकारार्थाभिधानसमर्था इति स्थित एवैषां सर्वाकारैरर्थैः स्वाभाविकः सम्बन्धः। ईश्वरसङ्केतस्तु प्रकाशकश्च नियामकश्च तस्य। ईश्वरसङ्केतासङ्केतकृतश्चास्य वाचकापभ्रंशविभागः। तदिदमाह-- सङ्केतस्त्वैश्वरस्येति। निदर्शनमाह--यथेति।

ननु शब्दस्य प्राधानिकस्य महाप्रलयसमये प्रधानभावमुपगतस्य शक्तिरपि प्रलीना। ततो महदादिक्रमेणोत्पन्नस्य वाचकस्यैव माहेश्वरेण सङ्केतेन न शक्या वाचकशक्तिरभिज्वलयितुं, विनष्टशक्तित्वादित्यत आह -- सर्गान्तरेष्वपीति। यद्यपि सह शक्त्या प्रधानसाम्यमुपगतः शब्दस्तथापि पुनराविर्भावे तच्छक्तियुक्त एवाविर्भवति, वर्षातिपातसमाधिगतमृदुभाव इवोद्भिज्जो मेघविसृष्टवारिधारावसेकात्। तेन पूर्वसम्बन्धसङ्केतः क्रियते भगवता इति। तस्मात्सम्प्रतिपत्तेः सदृशव्यवहारास्परम्पर्या नित्यतया नित्यः शब्दार्थयोः सम्बन्धः न कूटस्थनित्य इत्यागमिनः प्रतिजानते। न पुनरागमनिरपेक्षाः सर्गान्तरेष्वपि तादृश एव सङ्केत इति प्रतिपत्तुमीशत इति भावः।" विव०।

Vāchaspati's Gloss

¹ Sacred Books of the Hindus # 4 : 49ff.

Now he speaks of His sign (indicator, Vāchaka) in order to explain the meaning of his devotion. 'The sacred word connotes Him.' Explains :— He is denoted by *Pranava*, &c. Introduces the opposite theory by putting a question. Is the relation, &c. Signifying is laying down, expressing.

Others, of course, hold that if the relation of word and meaning is inherent, and that it is manifested by a convention that such and such a meaning is to be denoted by such and such a word, then in the absence of any relation between word and meaning, the meaning would not be conveyed even by a hundred conventions. If no jar exists which may be shown by a lamp, even a hundred lamps would not reveal one. It is, however, observed that the word 'elephant' will signify a camel if a convention is made that this word will be used to signify an animal of that class. Hence the power to signify is conventional.

Having thus stated their position, he explains his own teaching :— 'Its relation is inherent.' This is the meaning. All words have the capability of meaning objects of all forms. Their relation with objects of all forms must, therefore, be inherent. And the convention of Īśvara is the determining factor and the shower thereof. The division of the sign signifying and not-signifying something is also made by Īśvara's convention or non-convention. This is what he says : "Further the convention of God, &c." He gives an illustration :— "already existing between, &c. "

The question arises. Sound is a manifestation of the Prakṛiti. At the time of the Great Latency it passes back the state of Prakṛiti. Its power also thereby disappears. Then a particular verbal sign is born again through the successive states of Mahat, &c. But then the power of signification having disappeared, its manifestation does not remain possible. For this reason, he says :— 'In other creations also, &c.'

Although a word does become one with the Prakṛiti along with the power, it comes back into manifestation along with the power. As earth-born creatures becoming one with the earth on the cessation of the rains, come back to life on being wetted by showers of rain water. Thus God makes a convention similar to the convention which indicated the former relation. Hence on account of the eternity of the succession of similar usage, due to simultaneous knowledge, the relation of word and meaning is eternal. Independent eternity is not meant. So say the Āgamis. Without the authority of the Āgama (the Veda) it is not possible to ascertain that in other creations also the convention is the same. This is the meaning—27.

"तज्जपस्तदर्थभावनम्" सू० 28

"संप्रतिपत्तिनित्यतया नित्यः शब्दार्थसंबन्ध इत्यागमिनः प्रतिजानते विज्ञातवाच्यवाचकत्वस्य योगिनः। प्रणवस्य जपः प्रणवाभिधेयस्य चेश्वरस्य भावनम्। तदस्य योगिनः प्रणवं जपतः, प्रणवार्थं च भावयतश्चित्तमेकाग्रं सम्पद्यते। तथा चोक्तम्। स्वाध्यायाद्योगमासीत् योगात्स्वाध्यायमासते। स्वाध्याययोगसम्पत्त्या परमात्मा

उपनिषदादि-

प्रकाशते। इति" भा० २८ ॥

Vyāsabhāṣya

The Vedic teachers hold that the relation of word and meaning is eternal, inasmuch as one co-exists with the other. The Yogi who has come to know well the relation between word and meaning must consistently repeat it, and habituate the mind to the manifestation therein of its meaning. The constant repetition is to be of the *Pranava* (AUM) and the habitual mental manifestation is to be of what it signifies, Īśvara. The mind of the Yogi who constantly repeats the *Pranava* and habituates the mind to the constant manifestation of the idea it carries, becomes one-pointed. And so it has been said :—

'Let the Yoga be practiced through study, and let study be effected through Yoga. By Yoga and study together the Highest Self shines'— 28

वाचकमाख्याय प्रणिधानमाह, तज्जपस्तदर्थभावनम्। व्याचष्टे, प्रणवस्येति। भावनं पुनःपुनश्चेतसि निवेशनम्। ततः किं सिध्यति इत्यत आह प्रणवमिति। एकस्मिन् भगवति आरमति चित्तम्। अत्रैव वैयासिकीगाथामुदाहरति, तथा चेति। ततः ईश्वरः समाधितत्फलदानेन तमनुगृह्णाति।" विव०।

Vācaspati's Gloss

Having described the sign, he now describes the devotion, *Praṇidhāna*, the means of feeling the presence of the Lord everywhere, in all circumstances and phenomena :— 'Its constant repetition and the repeated understanding of its meaning.' Explains :— 'The constant repetition of the *Praṇava*, &c.

Repeated understanding (*Bhāvanā*) means making it enter the mind over and over again until it becomes the very substance of the mental existence.

What attainment does he acquire thereby ? Says :— 'The mind of the Yogi who constantly repeats the *Praṇava*, &c.' The mind feels bliss in the One Lord alone. Quotes a verse of Vyāsa in this connection :— And so it has been said :— The Lord then becomes gracious to him up to his attaining the faculty of trance (*Samādhi*) and its fruit. — 28.

ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ

ओमित्येकाक्षरं ब्रह्म प्रणवापरनामभूत् ।¹

ॐ

ओंकार-नाद

मुण्डकोपनिषद्²

ॐ

धनुर्गृहीत्वोपनिषदं महास्त्रं शरं ह्युपासानिशितं सन्धयीत ।

आयस्य तद्भावगतेन चेतसा लक्ष्यं तदेवाक्षरं सोम्य विद्धि ॥ (मुण्डक० उप० 2. 2. 3).

Svāmī N. :— Take the Upanishad as the bow, the great weapon, and place upon it the arrow sharpened by meditation. Then, having drawn it back with a mind directed to the thought of Brahman, strike that mark, O my good friend— that which is the Imperishable.

By contemplating the meaning of Om and repeating the sound, the aspirant realizes his self to be the reflection of Brahman. The meditation on the Ātman as such is denoted by the placing of the arrow upon the bow. The realization that the reflected consciousness is identical with Pure Consciousness is described as striking the mark. Beginners are advised to meditate on Brahman through the symbol *Om*.

प्रणवो धनुः शरो ह्यात्मा ब्रह्म तल्लक्ष्यमुच्यते ।

अप्रमत्तेन वेद्व्यं शरवत्तन्मयो भवेत् ॥ (मुण्डक० उप० 2. 2. 4).

Svāmī N. :— Om is the bow; the Ātman is the arrow; Brahman is said to be the mark. It is to be struck, by an undistracted mind. Then the Ātman becomes one with Brahman, as the arrow with the target. (4).

अरा इव रथनाभौ संहता यत्र नाड्यः स एषोऽन्तश्चरते बहुधा जायमानः ।

¹ *Apara+nāma* may mean "another name", but it can also mean the "Name of the Supreme Reality." The first half (of the above verse) is the *Bhagavadgītā*, but the second half is a *Bhagavad-bhakti-vara-dāna*--a blessing from the Bhagavān to us..

Pranavaḥ=The mystical sacred syllable *Om*; an epithet of Viṣṇu or the Supreme being. *Tasya vācakaḥ Pranavaḥ (Yogasūtra of Patañjali)*. Derived from the verb *pranu=to praise*; to utter the sacred syllable *Om*; to roar, below; to resound. (Apte). Also meaning reverberate (*anuraṇana, i.e. nāda*).

² See *Omkāra-mudrā* found in Harappa on p. 4.

ओमित्येवं ध्यायथ आत्मानम् । स्वस्ति वः पाराय तमसः परस्तात् ॥
(मुण्डक० उप० 2. 2. 6).

Svāmī N. : He moves about, becoming manifold, within the heart, where the arteries meet, like the spokes fastened in the nave of a chariot wheel. Meditate on Ātman as Om. Hail to you ! May you cross the sea of darkness [ignorance]. (6).

माण्डूक्योपनिषदि

गौडपादकारिकासु प्रणवस्वरूपम्
आगमप्रकरणम्

ओंकारं पादशो विद्यात्पादा मात्रा न संशयः ।
ओंकारं पादशो ज्ञात्वा न किञ्चिदपि चिन्तयेत् ॥ (24).

Svāmī N. :— Aum should be known quarter by quarter. There is no doubt that the quarters are the same as the letters. Having understood Aum quarter by quarter, one should not think of anything else. (Kārikā. 24).

युञ्जीत प्रणवे चेतः प्रणवो ब्रह्म निर्भयम् ।
प्रणवे नित्ययुक्तस्य न भयं विद्यते क्वचित् ॥ (25).

The mind should be concentrated on Aum. Aum is the fearless Brahman. He who is always absorbed in Aum knows no fear whatever. (Kārikā. 25).

प्रणवो ह्यपरं ब्रह्म प्रणवश्च परः स्मृतः ।
अपूर्वोऽनन्तरोऽबाह्योऽनपरः प्रणवोऽव्ययः ॥ (26).

Aum is verily the lower Brahman. It is also stated to be the Highest Brahman. Aum is beginningless and unique. There is nothing outside it It is unrelated to any effect and is Immutable. (Kārikā. 26).

सर्वस्य प्रणवो ह्यदिर्मध्यमन्तस्तथैव च ।
एवं हि प्रणवं ज्ञात्वा व्यश्नुते तदनन्तरम् ॥ (27).

Aum is, indeed, the beginning, middle, and end of all things. He who has realized Aum as Immutable immediately attains the Supreme Reality. (Kārikā. 27).

प्रणवं हीश्वरं विद्यात्सर्वस्य हृदि संस्थितम् ।
सर्वव्यापिनमोंकारं मत्वा धीरो न शोचति ॥ (28).

Know Aum to be Īśvara, ever present in the hearts of all. The calm soul, contemplating *Om* as all pervading, does not grieve. (Kārikā. 28).

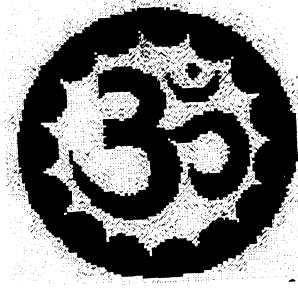
अमात्रोऽनन्तमात्रश्च द्वैतस्योपशमः शिवः ।
ओंकारो विदितो येन स मुनिर्नेतरो जनः ॥ (29).

One who knows Aum, which is soundless and also endowed with infinite sounds, which is all good and the negation of duality, is a real sage, and none other. (Kārikā. 29).

ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ

प्रणवोपनिषत् (1)¹

ॐ सह नाववतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु ।
सह वीर्यं करवावहै । तेजस्वि
नावधीतमस्तु । मा विद्विषावहै ।
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥



पुरस्ताद्ब्रह्मणस्तस्य विष्णोरद्भुतकर्मणः ।
रहस्यं ब्रह्मविद्याया धृताग्निं संप्रचक्षते ॥
ओमित्येकाक्षरं ब्रह्म यदुक्तं ब्रह्मवादिभिः ।
शरीरं तस्य वक्ष्यामि स्थानकालत्रयं तथा ॥
तत्र देवास्त्रयः प्रोक्ता लोका वेदास्त्रयोऽग्नयः ।
तिस्रो मात्रार्धमात्रा च प्रत्यक्षस्य शिवस्य तत् ॥
ऋग्वेदो गार्हपत्यं च पृथिवी ब्रह्म एव च ।
अकारस्य शरीरं तु व्याख्यातं ब्रह्मवादिभिः ॥
यजुर्वेदोऽन्तरिक्षं च दक्षिणाग्निस्तथैव च ।
विष्णुश्च भगवान् देव उकारः परिकीर्तितः ॥
सामवेदस्तथा द्यौश्चाहवनीयस्तथैव च ।
ईश्वरः परमो देवो मकारः परिकीर्तितः ॥

¹ Unpublished Upanishads. (Adyar ed., 1933), pp. 30-32. :

सूर्यमण्डलमाभाति हचकारश्चन्द्रमध्यगः।
 उकारश्चन्द्रसंकाशस्तस्य मध्ये व्यवस्थितः॥
 मकारश्चाग्निसंकाशो विधूमो विद्युतोपमः।
 तिस्रो मात्रास्तथा ज्ञेयाः सोमसूर्याग्नितेजसः॥
 शिखा च दीपसंकाशा यस्मिन्नु परिवर्तते।
 अर्धमात्रा तथा ज्ञेया प्रणवस्योपरि स्थिता॥
 पद्मसूत्रनिभा सूक्ष्मा शिखाभा दृश्यते परा।
 नासादिसूर्यसंकाशा सूर्यं हित्वा तथापरम्॥
 द्विसप्ततिसहस्राणि नाडिभिस्त्वा तु मूर्धनि।
 वरदं सर्वभूतानां सर्वं व्याप्यैव तिष्ठति॥
 कांस्यघण्टानिनादः स्याद्यदा लिप्यति शान्तये।
 ओंकारस्तु तथा योज्यः श्रुतये सर्वमिच्छता¹॥
 यस्मिन् स लीयते शब्दस्तत्परं ब्रह्म गीयते।
 सोऽमृतत्वाय कल्पते सोऽमृतत्वाय कल्पते²॥ इति ॥

ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ

प्रणवोपनिषत् (2)³

[A *Pranava-Upaniṣad* (that is how the title is to be explained without doubt) is found in a manuscript form in Fort St. George (Taylor, *Catalogue* II, 472), in Tanjore (Burnell 33b), in Jammu (Stein's *Catalogue* p. 31) and in Madras (*Catalogue of the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library*, p. 52); the third cannot be our Upaniṣad, for in that case it would be fractional, since it consists of fourteen lines; whether the others, remains to be seen. Meanwhile we are attempting to sift out from the diffused and probably here also strongly interpolated Persian-Latin translation a conjectural text of the original work. But we remark that this attempt is a completely hypothetical one, particularly considering the abstruse contents of the work. It is divided in three Brāhmaṇas: the first considers the Praṇava, i.e. the syllable *Om* according to its letters and sounds and its indispensability at the beginning of every Vedic study and the sacrifice;— the second Brāhmaṇam confirms this indispensability through a myth; — the third makes the Prajāpati answer thirtysix questions concerning the *Om*-sound. Here also the more coherent presentation of the answers seems to be the original and the prefixing of the thirtysix questions a later subscription of the con-

¹ Original reads सर्वमिच्छति।

² In many of the verses, there are many blunders. For a better version see pp. 87-88.

³ Sanskrit text drawn from Adyar ed. 1933. pp. 32-37. English translation and notes from *Sixty Upanishads*.

tents (cf. Praśna 4, above). We have tried as far as possible to correlate questions and answers through common numbering; but already Anquetil (II, 748) no more knows now [?] to help; several passages are partly misunderstood, and partly not understood at all even by him or quite probably by his Persian predecessors. We can scarcely hope that we have always hit the mark in our attempt to bring about clarity everywhere. But the picture of the Upaniṣad as given by our translation will essentially be a correct one. [After Bloomfield's discovery, as said in the Forward, of the Sanskrit text of the Praṇava-Upaniṣad in the Gopatha-Brāhmaṇam I, 1. 16-30, we have added in this second edition a translation of the occasionally difficult and considerably corrupt Sanskrit original running throughout side by side with our original translation from Anquetil Duperton, because a comparison of the two versions is not without interest.]

ब्रह्म ह वै ब्रह्माणं पुष्करे पुष्करे¹ ससृजे। स खलु ब्रह्मा सृष्टश्चिन्तामापेदे। केनाह-
मेकेनाक्षरेण सर्वांश्च कामान् सर्वांश्च लोकान् सर्वांश्च देवान् सर्वांश्च वेदान् सर्वां-
श्च यज्ञान् सर्वांश्च शब्दान् सर्वांश्च व्युष्टीः सर्वाणि च भूतानि स्थावरजङ्गमान्यनु-
भवेयमिति। स ब्रह्मचर्यमचरत्। स ओमित्येतदक्षरमपश्यत्। द्विवर्णं² चतुर्मात्रं सर्व-
व्यापि सर्वविभ्वयातयाम ब्रह्म³ ब्राह्मीं व्याहृतिं ब्रह्मदैवतं तथा सर्वांश्च कामान्
सर्वांश्च लोकान् सर्वांश्च देवान् सर्वांश्च वेदान् सर्वांश्च यज्ञान् सर्वांश्च शब्दान् सर्वां-
श्च व्युष्टीः सर्वाणि च भूतानि स्थावरजङ्गमान्यन्वभवत्। तस्य प्रथमेन वर्णेनापः स्नेहं
चान्वभवत्⁴। तस्य द्वितीयेन वर्णेन तेजो ज्योतीष्यन्वभवत्। तस्य प्रथमया स्वर-
मात्रया पृथिवीमग्निमोषधिवनस्पतीनृग्वेदं भूरिति व्याहृतिं गायत्रं⁵ छन्दस्त्रिवृतं स्तोमं
प्राचीं दिशं वसन्तमृतुं वाचमध्यात्मं जिह्वां रसमितीन्द्रियाण्यन्वभवत्। तस्य द्वितीयया
स्वरमात्रयाऽन्तरिक्षं वायुं यजुर्वेदं भुव इति व्याहृतिं त्रैष्टुभं छन्दः पञ्चदशं स्तोमं
प्रतीचीं दिशं ग्रीष्ममृतुं प्राणमध्यात्मं नासिके गन्धघ्राणमितीन्द्रियाण्यन्वभवत्। तस्य
तृतीयया स्वरमात्रया दिवमादित्यं सामवेदं स्वरिति व्याहृतिं जागतं छन्दः सप्तदशं
स्तोममुदीचीं दिशं वर्षर्तुं ज्योतिरध्यात्मं चक्षुषी दर्शनमितीन्द्रियाण्यन्वभवत्। तस्य
वकारमात्रयाऽऽप⁶श्चन्द्रमसमथर्ववेदं नक्षत्राण्योमिति स्वमात्मानं जनदित्यंगिरसा-
मानुष्टुभं छन्दः एकविंशं स्तोमं दक्षिणां दिशं शरदमृतुं मनोऽध्यात्मं ज्ञानं ज्ञेयमिती-
न्द्रियाण्यन्वभवत्। तस्य मकारश्चुत्येतिहासपुराणं वाकोवाक्यगाथानाराशंसीरुप-

¹ पुष्करे पुष्करे। This repetition may be purposeful, meaning on a lotus flower blooming in a lake.
The translators have neglected this aspect.

² Original reads विवर्णं।

³ Original reads यातयामब्रह्म।

⁴ Original reads नापस्नेहश्चान्व।

⁵ Original reads त्रिगा।

⁶ Original reads त्रया यश्च।

निषदोनुशासमानानामिति [?] वृधत्करद्रुहन्महत्तच्छमोमिति व्याहृतीः स्वरशम्यनाना-
तन्त्रीस्वरनृत्यगीतवादित्राप्यन्वभवत्। चैत्ररथं¹ दैवतं वैद्युतं ज्योतिर्बर्हितं छन्द-
स्त्रिण²वत्त्रयस्त्रिंशस्तोमौ ध्रुवामूर्ध्वां दिशं हेमन्तशिशिरावृतं श्रोत्रमध्यात्मं शब्द-
श्रवणमितीन्द्रियाण्यन्वभवत्।

सैषैकाक्षरा³ ऋग्ब्रह्मणस्तपसोऽग्रे प्रादुर्बभूव। ब्रह्मवेद⁴स्याथर्वणं शुक्रमत एव
मन्त्राः प्रादुर्बभूवुः। स तु खलु मन्त्राणामतपसाऽशुश्रूषा⁵ नध्यायाध्ययनेन यदूनं च
वरिष्ठं च यातयामं च करोति [?]. तथाप्यथर्वणं तेजसा प्रत्याप्याययेन्मन्त्राश्च माम-
भिमुखीभवेयुर्गर्भा इव मातरमभिजिघांसुः परस्तादोकारप्रयुक्तयैतयैव तदृचा प्रत्या-
प्याययेदेष यज्ञस्य पुरस्ताद्युज्यत एषा पश्चात् सर्वत एतया यज्ञस्तपते। तदप्येतदृचोक्तं-
"या पुरस्ताद्युजत ऋचोऽक्षरे परमे व्योमन्निति"। तदेतदक्षरम्। ब्राह्मणो यं काममिच्छेत्
त्रिरात्रोपोषितः प्राङ्मुखो वाग्यतो बर्हिष्युपविश्य सहस्रं ऋच आवर्तयेत् सिध्यन्त्य-
स्यार्थाः सर्वकर्माणि चेति ब्राह्मणम् ॥

वसोह्वाराणाभिन्द्रनगरं तदसुराः पर्यवारयन्त। ते देवा भीता आसन्। क इमान-
सुरान् हनिष्यतीति। तमोकारं ब्रह्मणः पुत्रं ज्येष्ठं ददृशुः। ते तमब्रुवन्। भवता मुख्येने-
मानसुरान् जयेमेति। स होवाच किं मे प्रतीवाहो भविष्यतीति। वरं वृणीष्वेति। वृण
इति। स वरमवृणीत-"न मामनीरयित्वा ब्राह्मणा ब्रह्म वदेयुर्यदि वदेयुरब्रह्म तत्स्यात्"
इति। तथेति। ते देवा देवयजनस्योत्तरार्धेऽसुरैः संयत्ता आसंस्तानोकारेणाग्नीधीया
देवा असुरान् पराभावयन्त। तद्यत्पराभावयन्त तस्मादोकारः पूर्वमुच्चार्यते। यो ह
वा एतमोकारं न वेदावशः⁶ स्यादित्यथ य एवं [?] वेद ब्रह्मवशः स्यादिति। तस्माद्-
ओकार ऋग्भवति, यजुषि यजुः, साम्नि साम, सूत्रे सूत्रं, ब्राह्मणे ब्राह्मणं, श्लोके
श्लोकः, प्रणवे प्रणव इति ब्राह्मणम्।

ओकारं पृच्छामः-को धातुः किं प्रातिपदिकं किं नामाख्यातं किं लिङ्गं किं च
वचनं का विभक्तिः कः प्रत्ययः कः स्वरः उपसर्गो निपातः किं वै व्याकरणं को विकारः
को विकारी कतिमात्रः कतिवर्णः कत्यक्षरः कतिपदः कः संयोगः किं स्थानानुप्रदान-
करणं शिक्षकाः किमुच्चारयन्ति किं छन्दः को वर्ण इति पूर्वं प्रश्नाः। अथोत्तरे [?] मन्त्राः।

1 Original reads भवच्चैत्र।

2 Original reads छन्दस्तृण।

3 Original reads सैषैकाक्षर ऋग्ब्र।

4 Original reads ब्रह्म वेद।

5 Original reads मन्त्राणां तपसा शुश्रूषा।

6 Original reads वेदावश्यः।

कल्पो ब्राह्मणं ऋग् यजुः साम। कस्माद्ब्रह्मवादिन ओंकारमादितः कुर्वन्ति। किं दैवतं किं ज्योतिषं किं निरुक्तं किं स्थानं का प्रकृतिः किमध्यात्ममिति षट्त्रिंशत्प्रश्नाः। पूर्वोत्तराणां त्रयो वर्गा इवादश एकाशतैरोंकारं व्याख्यास्यामः॥

इन्द्रः प्रजापतिमपृच्छत् भगवन्नभ्यष्ट्य¹ पृच्छामीति। पृच्छ वत्सेत्यब्रवीत्। किमय-
मोंकारः कस्य पुत्रः किं चैतच्छन्दः किं चैतद्गुणः किं चैतद्ब्रह्म ब्रह्म संपद्यते। तस्माद्
द्वैत²मोंकारं पूर्वमालोभस्वरितोदात्त [?] एकाक्षर ओंकार ऋग्वेदे, त्रैस्वर्योदात्त एका-
क्षरोंकारो यजुर्वेदे, दीर्घप्लुतोदात्त एकाक्षर ओंकारः सामवेदे, ह्रस्वोदात्त एकाक्षरः
उकारोऽथर्ववेदे। अनुदात्तोदात्तद्विपद अ उ इत्यर्धचतस्रो मात्रा मकारे व्यञ्जनम्
इत्याहुः [?].

या सा प्रथमा मात्रा ब्रह्मदैवत्या रक्ता वर्णेन यस्तां ध्यायते नित्यं स गच्छेद्ब्राह्मं
पदम्। या सा द्वितीया मात्रा विष्णुदैवत्या कृष्णा वर्णेन यस्तां ध्यायते नित्यं स गच्छेद्
वैष्णवं पदम्। या सा तृतीया मात्रा ईशानदैवत्या कपिला वर्णेन यस्तां ध्यायते
नित्यं स गच्छेद्देशानं पदम्। या सार्धचतुर्थी³ मात्रा सर्वदैवत्या व्यक्तीभूता खं विचरति
शुद्धस्फटिकसन्निभा वर्णेन यस्तां ध्यायते नित्यं स गच्छेत् पदमनामकम्।³

ओंकारस्योत्पत्तिं विप्रो यो न जानाति तत्पुनरुपनयनम्। तस्माद्ब्राह्मणवचनमादत्त-
व्यम्। यथा लातव्यो गोत्रो। ब्रह्मणः⁴ पुत्रो। गायत्रं छन्दः। शुक्रो वर्णः। पुंसो वत्सो।
रुद्रो देवता। ओंकारो वेदानाम्। उत्तरोपनिषदं व्याख्यास्यामः। को धातुरित्याप्ते-
र्धातुरवतिमप्येके। रूपसामान्यादर्थसामान्यं नेदीयः⁵। तस्मादापेरोंकारः सर्वमा-
प्नोतीत्यर्थः। कृदन्तमर्थवत्प्रातिपदिकम्। अदर्शनं प्रत्ययस्य नाम संपद्यते। निपातेषु
चैन वैय्याकरणा उक्षन्तं⁶ समामनन्ति। तदव्ययीभूतमन्वर्थवाची शब्दो न व्येति कदा-
चन इति।

सदृशं त्रिषु लिङ्गेषु सर्वासु च विभक्तिषु।
वचनेषु च सर्वेषु यन्न व्येति तदव्ययम् ॥

1 Original reads स्तु

2 Original reads तस्माद्वैत।

3 We have broken into more paragraphs. We have used more full stops.

4 Original reads ब्राह्मणः।

5 Original reads : . . . अर्थसामान्यान्यदीयस्त

6 Original reads उक्षत्तं।

को विकारी। अवतेः संप्रसारणम्। आप्नोते[?]राकारपकारौ¹ विकार्यौ। आदित ओकारो विक्रियते। द्वितीयो मकारः। एवं द्विवर्ण एकाक्षर ओमित्योकारो निर्वृत्तः। कतिमात्र इत्यादेस्तिस्रो मात्राः अभ्याधाने हि प्लवते। मकारश्चतुर्थी। किं स्थानम् इत्युभावोष्ठौ स्थानम्। आधानकरणी च द्विःस्थानं सन्ध्यक्षरमवर्णलेशः कण्ठचो यथोक्त-शेषः पूर्वो विवृत्तकरणस्थितश्च द्वितीयः स्पृष्टकरणस्थितश्च। नायं योगे विद्युत आख्या-तोपसर्गानुदात्तः स्वरितलिङ्गविभक्तिवचनानि च संच्छन्नाध्यायिन आचार्याः पूर्वं बभूवुः। श्रवणादेव प्रतिपद्यन्ते। न कारणं प्रयच्छन्ति।

अथापरपक्षीयाणां कविः पञ्चालचण्डः परिपृच्छको बभूवांबुः[?] पृथगुद्गीथदोषान् भवन्तो ब्रुवन्त्विति। तद्वाच्युपलक्षयेत् वर्णाक्षरपदाङ्कशो विभक्त्यामृषिनिषेवितामिति वाचं स्तुवन्ति। तस्मात् कारणं ब्रूमो वर्णानामयमिदं भविष्यतीति षडङ्गविदस्तत्तथा-धीमहि।

किं छन्द इति। गायत्रं हि छन्दो, गायत्री वै देवानामेकाक्षरा श्वेतवर्णा च व्याख्याता। द्वौ द्वादशकौ वर्गौ। एतद्वै व्याकरणं धात्वर्थवचनं शैक्षं छन्दो वचनं च। अथोत्तरौ द्वौ द्वादशकौ वर्गौ। वेदरहसिकी[?] व्याख्याता। मन्त्रकल्पो ब्राह्मणमृग्यजु-सामाथर्वाण्येषा व्याहृतिश्चतुर्णां वेदानामानुपूर्व्येण। ॐ भूर्भुवस्सुवरिति व्याहृतयः।

असमीक्ष्य प्रवल्हितानि श्रूयन्ते। द्वापरादावृषीणामेकदेशो दोषयतीह चिन्तामापेदे। त्रिभिः सोमः पातव्यः समाप्तमिव भवति। तस्माद्दृग्यजुस्सामान्यपक्रान्ततेजांस्यासन्। तत्र महर्षयः परिदेवयाञ्चक्रिरे। महच्छोकभयं प्राप्ताः स्मो न चैतत्सर्वैः² समभिहितम्। ते वयं भगवन्तमेवोपधावाम। सर्वेषामेव शर्म भवानिति। ते तथेत्युक्त्वा तूष्णीम-तिष्ठन्। नानुपसन्नेभ्य इति। उपोपसीदामेति नीचैर्बभूवुः। स एभ्य उपनीय प्रोवाच। मामिकामेव व्याहृतिमादितः कृणुध्वमित्येवं मामका अधीयन्ते। न ऋते³ भृग्वङ्किरो-विद्भ्यः सोमः पातव्यः। ऋत्विजः पराभवन्ति। यजमानो रजसापध्वस्यति। श्रुतिश्चाप-ध्वस्ताप[?]तिष्ठतीत्येवमेवोत्तरोत्तराद्योगाल्लोकं तोकं प्रशाध्वमित्येवं प्रतापो न परा-

¹ Original reads च्यवते प्रकारणमाप्नोतिरा।

² Could we read सर्वं पूर्वैः ?

³ We have taken the courage and have corrected the text where we were positively certain. In many other cases we have left the text as we found though we thought that it was not correct. It did not make any sense to us. But we did not know any better. It was not our primary objective to edit the text of this Upanishad. It was a different task. It was a difficult task. We just wanted to present the thought in the best possible manner. And that is what we have done.

Original reads नर्त्त।

भविष्यतीति । तथाह भगवन्निति प्रतिपेदिरे आप्याययंस्ते तथा वीतशोकभया बभूवुः ।
तस्माद् ब्रह्मवादिन ओंकारमादितः कुर्वन्ति ।

किं दैवतमिति । ऋचामग्निर्दैवतं तदेव ज्योतिर्गायत्रं छन्दः पृथिवी स्थानम्
"अग्निमीडे पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देवमृत्विजम् ।
होतारं रत्नधातमम् ॥"
इत्येवमादिं कृत्वा ऋग्वेदमधीयते ।

यजुषां वायुर्दैवतं तदेव ज्योतिस्त्रैष्टुभं छन्दोऽन्तरिक्षं स्थानम्
"इषे त्वोर्जे त्वा वायवः स्थोपायवः स्थ देवो
वः सविता प्रार्पयतु श्रेष्ठतमाय कर्मणे ।"
इत्येवमादिं कृत्वा यजुर्वेदमधीयते ।

साम्नामादित्यो दैवतं तदेव ज्योतिर्जागतं छन्दो द्यौः स्थानम्
"अग्न आयाहि वीतये गृणानो हव्यदातये ।
नि होता सत्सि बर्हिषि ॥"
इत्येवमादिं कृत्वा सामवेदमधीयते ।

अथर्वणां चन्द्रमा दैवतं तदेव ज्योतिः सर्वाणि छन्दांस्यापः स्थानम्
"शन्नो देवीरभिष्टये"
इत्येवमादिं कृत्वा अथर्ववेदमधीयते ।

अङ्गचः स्थावरजङ्गमो भूतग्रामः संभवति । तस्मात्
सर्वमापोमयं भूतं सर्वं भृग्वङ्गिरोमयम् ।
अन्तरैते त्रयो वेदा भृगूनङ्गिरसः श्रिताः¹ ॥ इति ।
अबिति प्रकृतिरपामोकारेण चैतस्माद्वाचासः²

¹ Adyar editors have treated this Mantra as prose. We have put it as an *anusṭup*. Their work is quite irresponsible.

² The translators have correctly pointed out that the Adyar editors did not notice the abrupt ending. They did not notice many things. They did not understand many things. It is merely an *arthavāda* to say that अडयार्-पुस्तकालयपण्डितैः सम्पादिताः । डाक्टर--चि -- कञ्जनराजमहाशयैः प्रत्यवेक्षिताः ।

MLBD could not care less. It is a straight copy just to make a lot of money in an easy manner. It is an unfair affair. They too claim that the book was edited by a "Shastri" ! Attempt should be made to locate a better original.

First Brāhmaṇa¹

The Brahman [n] created Brahman [m] in a lotus-flower. The latter deliberated : "Which is the one word by which all desires are obtained and all worlds, gods, Vedas, sacrifices, reward of the sacrifices, everything movable and the immovable is known?" —And he practiced the Tapas. He saw that Syllable, which consists of two letters and four moras, which is all- encompassing, all-ruling, ever new, the Brahman. Then he obtained all desires, all worlds, gods, Vedas, sacrifices, all the movable and the immovable.

Through the first letter he perceived the water (*āpas*) and the acquisition (*āpti*), through the second the fire and the light.

The first mora, the *a*-sound is the earth and the fire, the plants, the Ṛgveda. *bhūr*, the Gāyatrī, the ninefold Sāman, the East, the spring, and with reference to the self, the language, the tongue and the speech.

The second mora, the *u*-sound, is the atmosphere and the wind, [the Yajurveda], *bhuvar*, the *Triṣṭubh*, the fifteenfold Sāman, the west, the summer, and with reference to the self, the breath, the nose, and the smell.

The third mora, the *m*-sound, is the heaven and the sun, the Sāmaveda, *sva*, the Jagati, the seventeenfold Sāman, the North, the rainy season, and with reference to the self, the light, the eye, and the sight.

The fourth mora, the Anusvāra, is the water and the moon, the Atharvaveda, *janas*, the Anuṣṭubh, the twentysevenfold Sāman, the South, the autumn, and with reference to the self, the heart, the knowledge and the known.

The reverberation is the Vedāngas, creation and dissolution, the Veda-discourses, the great formulas, the Upaniṣads, the Vedic injunctions, the seven vyāhṛtis, the seven tones, and art, dance, speech and music; and the songs of Citraratha and the other [Gandharvas]; the lightening, the Bṛhatī, the thirtythreefold Sāman, the direction above, the four months of the remaining seasons, and with reference to the self, the ear, the voice and the hearing.

This Praṇava, the one syllable, originated before the Tapas, is the Brahman, the seed of the Veda; all Mantras have sprung from this Praṇava.

And this is the work of the Praṇava: When one studies the Vedas without Tapas, attendance on the teacher, or at a forbidden time, then their power declines and they do not remain; but through the Praṇava, which is the essence of the Atharvaveda, they get back their power and remain again. And just as a child at birth, if its posi-

¹ Translated by Bedekar and Palsule, p. 925+

tion is disastrous, kills the mother, and if it is favorable, frees her, similarly in the case of the study the *Mantras* go well by the Praṇava and remain and in the case of the sacrifice, through the Praṇava the sacrifices become faultless.

Therefore it is said : "The Praṇava is the one syllable which they utter at the beginning of every sacrificial act and at its end.

The syllable of the hymn in the highest heaven,
Supporting on which the gods all are enthroned.
If one doesn't know it, what's the use of the hymn? —
We, who know it, are assembled here¹

This syllable is the Praṇava.

He who has a desire, may observe abstinence for three nights, sleep on straw. sit silently facing East and every night he should go over the Praṇava mentally a thousand times; then he will receive his desired object and will obtain the fruit of his sacrificial acts.

Second Brahmana

When Sudhā,² the city of Indra, was stormed on all sides by the Asuras, the gods were afraid and said : "Who will conquer the Asuras?" They said to the Om-sound, the first born of the Brahman : "You are the strongest amongst us; let us conquer the Asuras through you !" — "What will be my reward?" said he. — They said : "What do you demand?"—The Praṇava said : "That they shall not study Veda without first uttering me; and that if they do not utter me first, the study of the Veda shall not bring any fruit !" — "Let it be so," said they. Then the gods attacked from the place where the sacrifice was, from the north (above, Chand. Up. 4, 17, 9, note), said "Om !" and defeated the Asuras by the help of the Praṇava.

Therefore one says the word *Om* in all sacred activities, and one who does not know it, he is not capable of accomplishing the activity; but one who knows it, he has the Veda in his power. That is why when one utters it in the beginning of the Ṛg-veda, it is the Ṛgveda; of the Yajurveda, the Yajurveda, of the Sāmaveda, the Sāmaveda. And in every work, because one utters Praṇava at the beginning that is its form —the form of it.

Third Brahmana

They asked [Prajāpati] with regard to the Om-sound :

¹ Ṛgv. 1, 164, 39; the last line is misunderstood by the Persian translators, unless they had a different reading before them.

² *Sudhāyām* = *svarge* (Sāyana to Ait. Br. 3, 47, 8). Weber thinks of *Sobha* (Cf. *Ind. Stud.* II, 38n.)

1. Which is its root (*Prakṛti*)?
2. What is its pronunciation?
3. How does it get into the Sandhi?
4. Should one treat it as masculine, feminine or as neuter ?
5. Is it singular, dual or plural?
- 6-13. Can it be put into the case relations : 6. "it," 7. "from it," 8. "with it," 9. "in it," 10. "by it," 11. "out of it," 12. "to it," 13. and through which suffixes are these relations with it shown !
14. Is it to be uttered in a low, medium, or loud tone ?
15. Is its meaning changed if a sound is prefixed to it [e. g. *śom*, Taitta. Up. 1, 8] , and can its sounds be modified [e. g. in prolating, Atharvaśikhā 2, or the substitution of the Anusvāra *m̐* in the place of *m* with *Virāma*] ? [The sense is uncertain, for the answer which follows is incomplete.]
16. What is its interpretation? What is after it and after what is it formed?
- 17-21. How many mātrās has it? How is it composed? How many signs has it? How many sounds? What is it followed by?
22. With which organ is it uttered?
- 23a. How is it uttered? 23b. How is its pronunciation taught?
24. Which is its metre?
25. What is its color?
26. What is its main effect?
27. How frequently is it uttered?
28. Which narration serves as its explanation?
29. In which sound [of *om*] is the Ṛgveda, in which the Yajurveda, in which the Sāmaveda?
30. Why do the reciters of the Veda first utter the Praṇava?
31. Which is its divinity?
32. Which is the right time to say it?
33. What is the explanation of its sounds?
34. Which is its abode (*loka*) ?
35. And which is the place, where it sprang up?
36. With what is it connected in the body?

Prajāpati said : Splitting these thirty-six questions I will explain the Praṇava.

1. Its root is *ap*; according to the others *av*; according to the former it surrounds (*āpnoti*), according to the latter it supports. But the surrounding is more than supporting; and *ap* (the water) is so called because, like Brahman, it surrounds.

2. Its pronunciation is joint or separate; whether the letters are pronounced jointly or separately, it gives the same meaning.

3. The sounds with which it enters into sandhi (*a*, *ā*), give up their pronunciation, but maintain their meaning (Pāṇ. 6. 1. 95).

4. It undergoes no difference in pronunciation as masculine or feminine (is

uttered with a loud voice¹) and can be constructed with a masculine, feminine, or neuter [adjective] equally well.

5. (The answer is inserted in 23).

6-13. It can be put into the case-relation. 6. "it", 7. "from it", 8. "with it", 9. "in it", 10. "by it", 11. "out of it", 12. "to it", 13. In all these cases it remains the same (without suffix).

14. (The answer is inserted in 23).

15. (The answer is inserted in 23).

16. The *a* (in *ap* 'water') becomes *o* and the *p* [becomes] *m* and out of these two signs, the sound *o-m* is formed.

17-21. Its mātrās are three *a, u, m*. It is uttered (above, Atharvaśikhā 1) with three reverberations (*mad = nāda* ?). The reverberation is its fourth element. Thus it consists of three and a half mātrās.

22. It is uttered with the lips.

23a. For *o* the throat is widened, for *m* the lips are closed :— (Answer to 19):. It has two marks not one :—(Answer to 15):. The addition of the virāma does not change its meaning :— (Answer to 14 :). It can be uttered in a low, medium, or loud tone; —(Answer to 5):. It can be used as singular, dual or plural.

23b. The ancestors have thus uttered and handed it down, so that the students need not ask such questions; for they know that its pronunciation can be learnt by merely hearing.

Now among the juniors in Kanyakubjas there was the learned *Anheh*, who discussed with the wise similar questions. And he asked the Ṛṣis : Which is the way to pronounce the Praṇava badly so that one knows that it is badly pronounced; and which is the way, of which they say, it is correctly pronounced? [And they answered] : "There are six characteristics of its pronunciation, place of its articulation, mode, correctness, quantity, duration and the acts in which it is to be uttered. For that they praise the speaker. But one who does not know these six, cannot pronounce the Praṇava correctly."

24. Its metre is the Gāyatrī ; for the gods pronounce it in one word.

25. Its colour is white (See above Atharvaśiras 5 and Atharvaśikhā 1).

¹ Answer to 14, out of place here.

26. The way of its effect is that it is uttered at the beginning.

27. Twofold, is the answer [is the *Om*-sound to be uttered, viz. firstly (if we have understood the passage correctly) in the form of the four *Vyāhrtis*, secondly as the *Praṇava*].

I. There are the Mantras, the Vidhis, and the Brahman [?] as parts of the Vedas, viz. of the Ṛgveda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda and the Atharvaveda, whose glory (*mahiman*) is the *Praṇava*. What is uttered at the beginning of the four Vedas is particularly the glory of the four Vedas. These are four words : *Om* at the beginning of the Atharvaveda, *bhur* of the Ṛgveda, *bhuvar* of the Yajurveda, *sva* of the Sāmaveda. II. But the glory of all is *Om*, in so far as it is uttered at the beginning of all the four Vedas; if not, their power decreases, and they do not yield any fruit.

28. After the passing of the *Satyam* and *Tretā*, at the beginning of the age of *Dvāparam* the Ṛṣis discussed : "Now they will perform sacrifice without sufficient knowledge of the Ṛg-, Yajur-, and Sāmaveda and their work will be defective and without fruit; how may such a harm affect the works?" They were seized with fear for the ancestors had not left any instructions as to what is to be done, should the Vedas become fruitless. And they said : "Come on, let us go all together to Atharvan, worthy of veneration, and request him to grant us freedom from fear, and instruct us in this matter." And they thought : "How will he talk to us, if we do not approach him submissively?" And they went thither and approached in submissiveness. But having admitted them as pupils Atharvan said to them : My pupils utter at the beginning of the study of all the Vedas that great word which stands at the head of the Veda which is named after me; thereby the Mantras of Vedas bring fruit. If you do not say the beginning of the Atharvaveda in the work of your Vedas, then your works will be defective and fruitless and will harm him who offers and also him who makes offer. Therefore teach your decendants, to do so; thus the Ṛg-, Yajur- and the Samaveda will bring fruit." Then the Ṛṣis said : "Be it so, O venerable one; we are free from fear and grief and are full of joy."

29. (The answer is missing; it is to be gathered from the *Brahmavidyā*, *Atharvaśikhā* I and the first *Brāhmaṇam* of the *Praṇava-Upaniṣad*).

30. Therefore it happens that the students of the Veda utter the great word *Om* before the Mantras, works and sections of the Veda, viz. of the Ṛg-, Yajur- and Sāmaveda.

31-34. When they utter the *Praṇava* at the beginning of the Ṛgveda, its divinity is Fire, its light the *Praṇava*, its metre the *Gāyatri*, its place the earth; and they begin with the first verse of the Ṛgveda, because it praises the fire (Ṛgv. 1, 1, 1: *agnim ilē* etc.).

And when they utter the *Praṇava* at the beginning of the Yajurveda, its divinity is Wind, its light the *Praṇava*, its metre is *Triṣṭubh*, its place the atmosphere, because

it praises the rain (Vaj. Samh. 1, 1, 1: *iṣe [=vr.ṣṭyai] tvā* etc.).

And when they utter the Praṇava at the beginning of the Sāmaveda, its divinity is the Sun, its light the Praṇava, its metre the Jagatī, its place the heaven, and they begin with the first verse of the Sāmaveda because it praises the fire (Sāmav. 1, 1, 1): (*agna' āyāhi*, etc.).

And when they utter Praṇava at the beginning of the Atharvaveda, its divinity is the Moon, its light the Praṇava, its metre all metres, its place the water, and they begin with the first verse of the Atharvaveda because it praises the water (Atharav. 1, 6, 1¹: *Śam no devīr* etc.).

35. This is the water from which everything movable and immovable has sprung up. Therefore everything is water, one should know, and everything Atharvaveda. Therefore the water and the Praṇava is the same; for the water is called *ap* and *ap* is as *o*, the initial sound of the Praṇava. Therefore the Ṛṣi Vyāsa has said, those who follow the injunctions of the Atharvaveda, do not study any Veda on the last day of the month of Śravaṇa, because it will not bring any profit. Therefore one who desires to claim the Vedas should study the Atharvaveda; without this, it is profitless. The Sāmaveda is the greatest, because it brings the fruit if one reads it with Tapas; but the Atharvaveda brings the fruit even without Tapas. Therefore, one who studies the Atharvaveda knows the three other Vedas, also, for they are contained in it. —Thus reads the instruction of the Veda.

36. But the main result of the Atharvaveda is that one suffering from the ignorance of the Ātman is cured by the Praṇava which is the beginning of the Atharvaveda. And it is the fruit of the meditation of the Praṇava that one becomes the pure Ātman. By meditating over the Praṇava one should unite in the heart the individual and the highest soul; then one leaves all scriptures and remains as consisting of the highest Ātman; "I am *Om* ! This is the state of the submerging; in this state one lets go all duality and obtains indistinguishable submerging (*nirvikalpa samādhi*), in which one remains without "I" and without "this" as the pure Ātman.

One who has understood these questions becomes omniscient. He knows the answers to all questions.

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Praṇava Upaniṣad (2) (2nd version)

(From the Gopatha Brāhmaṇam, 1, 1, 16-30)

First Brāhmaṇa = (Gop. B. I. 1. 16-22)

¹ This is the reference to the current Śaunaka recension. the stanza is 1. 1. 1 (and hence the symbol of the Atharva.) in the new discovered Paippalāda recension, —GBP.

First Brāhmaṇa = (Gop. B. I. 1. 16-22)

ब्रह्म¹ ह वै ब्रह्माणं पुष्करे ससृजे । स खलु ब्रह्मा सृष्टश्चिन्तामापेदे-केनाहमेकेना-
क्षरेण सर्वांश्च कामान्त्सर्वांश्च लोकान्त्सर्वांश्च देवान्त्सर्वांश्च वेदान्त्सर्वांश्च यज्ञान्
त्सर्वांश्च शब्दान्त्सर्वांश्च² व्युष्टीः³ सर्वाणि च भूतानि स्थावरजङ्गमान्यनुभवेयमिति ।
स ब्रह्मचर्यमचरत् । स ओमित्येतदक्षरमपश्यद् । द्विवर्णं चतुर्मात्रं सर्वव्यापि सर्वविश्वया-
तयाम ब्रह्म ब्राह्मीं व्याहृतिं ब्रह्मदैवतम्⁴ । तथा सर्वांश्च कामान्त्सर्वांश्च लोकान्त्
सर्वांश्च देवान्त्सर्वांश्च वेदान्त्सर्वांश्च यज्ञान्त्सर्वांश्च शब्दान्त्सर्वांश्च व्युष्टीः सर्वाणि
च भूतानि स्थावरजङ्गमान्यन्वभवत् । तस्य प्रथमेन वर्णेनापः स्नेहं⁵ चान्वभवत् । तस्य
द्वितीयेन वर्णेन तेजो ज्योतीष्यन्वभवत् । (गोपथ० ब्रा० 16).

16. The Brahman [n] created Brahman [m] in a [!] lotus flower : This Brahman, when he was created, hit upon the idea : "Which is the only syllable, through which I can obtain all desires, all worlds, all gods, all Vedas, all sacrifices, all speech, and all rewards and all beings, movable and immovable ?"— And he practiced the Brahman-conduct. Then he saw the syllable "Om", which consists of two letters and four moras, which is all-encompassing, all-ruling, ever new, the Brahman, the exclamation signifying the Brahman, having Brahman as its divinity. By that he obtained all desires, all worlds, all gods, all Vedas, all sacrifices, all speech, all rewards and all beings, movable and immovable.

✕ Through its first letter he obtained the water and the moisture [read : *āpas snehañca*]; through its second letter he obtained the fire and the lights.

तस्य प्रथमया स्वरमात्रया पृथिवीमग्निमोषधिवनस्पतीन् ऋग्वेदं भूरिति व्याहृतिं
गायत्रं छन्दस्त्रिवृतं स्तोमं प्राचीं दिशं वसन्तम् ऋतुं वाचमध्यात्मं जिह्वां रसमिती-
न्द्रियाण्यन्वभवत् । (गोपथ० ब्रा० 17).

17. Through its first phenotic mora he obtained the earth, the fire, the plants and trees, the R̥gveda, the exclamation [read : *vyāhṛtim*] *bhūr*, the Gāyatrī metre, the Stoma Trivṛt, the eastern direction, the season of spring, and with reference to the self the speech, the tongue and the taste, these organs.

¹ गो० ब्रा० 1. 1. 16-30. प्रणवोपनिषद् इति ब्लूमफील्ड-गास्ट्र-प्रभृतयः । The text is derived from the *Gopatha Brāhmaṇam*. The title page glorifies the name of the editor as सम्पादकः डा० विजयपालो विद्यावारिधिः ।

² गा० सं० । सर्वांश्च इति कोशेषु पाठः । पुणे-कोशे सर्वांश्च इति पाठः ।

³ यथाकोशं पाठः । व्युष्टीः इति गास्ट्रेण कल्प्यते ।

⁴ यथाकोशं पाठः ।

⁵ बोधलिङ्गसंशोधितः पाठः । वर्णेनापस्नेहश्चा० इति कोशेषु पाठः ।

तस्य द्वितीयया स्वरमात्रयाऽन्तरिक्षं वायुं यजुर्वेदं भुव इति व्याहृतिं त्रैष्टुभं छन्दः पञ्चदशं स्तोममुदीचीं दिशं ग्रीष्मम् ऋतुं प्राणमध्यात्मं नासिके गन्धघ्राणमितीन्द्रियाण्यन्वभवत् । (गोपथ० ब्रा० 18).

18. Through its second phonetic mora he obtained the atmosphere, the wind, the Yajurveda, the exclamation *bhuvar*, the Triṣṭubh metre, the fifteenfold Stoma, the western direction, the season of summer, and with reference to the self the breath, the nose and the smelling of the odour, these organs.

तस्य तृतीयया स्वरमात्रया दिवमादित्यं सामवेदं स्वरिति व्याहृतिं जागतं छन्दः सप्तदशं स्तोममुदीचीं दिशं वर्षां ऋतुं ज्योतिरध्यात्मं चक्षुषी दर्शनमितीन्द्रियाण्यन्वभवत् । (गोपथ० ब्रा० 19).

19. Though its third phonetic mora he obtained the heaven, the sun, the Sāmaveda, the exclamation *svar*, the Jagatī metre, the seventeenfold Stoma, the northern direction, the season of rain, and with reference to the self the light, the eye and the sight, these organs.

तस्य वकारमात्रयापश्चन्द्रमसमर्धवेदं नक्षत्राण्योमिति स्वमात्मानं जनदित्यङ्गिरसामानुष्टुभं छन्द एकविंशं स्तोमं दक्षिणां दिशं शरदम् ऋतुं मनोऽध्यात्मं ज्ञानं ज्ञेयमितीन्द्रियाण्यन्वभवत् । (गोपथ० ब्रा० 20).

20. Through its phonetic mora *va-* (?), he obtained the water, the moon, the Atharvaveda, the stars, as the sound *Om* their own self, as the sound *janar* that of the Angiras', the Anuṣṭubh metre, the twentyonefold Stoma, the southern direction, the season of autumn, and with reference to the self the Manas, the knowledge and the known, these organs.

तस्य मकारश्रुत्येतिहासपुराणं वाकोवाक्यं¹ गाथा नाराशंसीरुपनिषदोऽनुशासनानीति² वृधत् करद् रुहन् महत् तच्छमोमिति व्याहृतीः स्वरशम्यनानातन्त्रीः स्वरनृत्यगीतवादित्राण्यन्वभवत् । चैत्ररथं दैवतं वैद्युतं ज्योतिर्बर्हितं छन्दस्त्रिणवतत्रयः [?] त्रिंशौ स्तोमौ ध्रुवामूर्ध्वा दिशं हेमन्तशिशिरावृत् श्रोत्रमध्यात्मं शब्दश्रवणमितीन्द्रियाण्यन्वभवत् । (गोपथ० ब्रा० 21).

21. Through the hearing of the *ma* sound he obtained the epic and the mytho-

¹ गास्टृसंशोधितः पाठः । कोशेषु वाकोवाक्यगाथानारा इति पाठः ।

² कोशेषु नुशासनानामिति पाठः । अत्र तुलनार्थं शतपथः (11. 5. 6. 8) सन्दर्भो विमर्शनीयः ।

logical poems, the Veda-discourses, the Nārāsaṃsa songs, the Upaniṣads, [the contents] of the Vedic injunctions, the [seven] exclamations *vr̥dhat, karat, guhat, mahat, tat, śam* and *Om*, the various kinds of string music, salutary owing to its tunes, the [seven] tunes, dance, song and music, he further obtained the divine song of Citra-ratha, the light of lightning, the Br̥hatī metre, the three-times-ninefold and thirtythree fold Stoma, the firm direction above, the seasons of winter [*hemanta*] and postwinter [*śiśira*] and with reference to the Self the ear, the sounds and the hearing, these organs.

सैषैकाक्षरर्गं ब्रह्मणस्तपसोऽग्रे प्रादुर्बभूव । ब्रह्मवेदस्याथर्वणं शुक्रम् । अत एव मन्त्राः प्रादुर्बभूवुः । स तु खलु मन्त्राणामतपसाऽशुश्रूषानध्यायाध्ययनेन यदूनं च विरिष्टं च यातयामं च करोति, तदथर्वणां तेजसा प्रत्याप्याययेत्, मन्त्राश्च मामभिमुखीभवेयुर्गर्भा इव मातरमभिजिघांसुः¹ । पुरस्तादोकारं प्रयुङ्क्ते । एतयैव तदृचा प्रत्याप्याययेत् । एषैव यज्ञस्य पुरस्ताद् युज्यते,² एषा पश्चात् । सर्वत एतया यज्ञस्तायते । तदप्येतदृचोक्तम्—या पुरस्ताद् युज्यते, ऋचो अक्षरे परमे व्योमन्³ इति । तदेतदक्षरं ब्राह्मणो यं काममिच्छेत्, त्रिरात्रोपोषितः प्राङ्मुखो वाग्यतो बर्हिष्युपविश्य सहस्रकृत्व⁴ आवर्तयेत् । सिध्यन्त्यस्यार्थाः सर्वकर्माणि चेति ब्राह्मणम् । (गोपथ० ब्रा० 22).

22. This R̥g-verse consisting of only one syllable originated as the Brahman before Brahmā and Tapas as the Atharvaseed of the Veda; from it the Mantras originated. This [Praṇava] however, verily, when one makes the Mantras defective or injures them or makes them unusable by studying them without Tapas, unobediently at a forbidden time, then it restores them to their power through the energy of the Atharvan; the Mantras could turn towards me [inimically], just as the embryos could wish to kill [read *abhi jighāṃseyus*] the mother [so he thinks] and he first employs the Om-sound and restores it to its powers through this R̥c; it is also employed before the sacrifice and after so the sacrifice spreads through it on all sides.

This very thing is said in a verse :

"She, who is employed first,
On the syllable of this Vedic R̥c, in the highest heaven" . . .
(Atharvav. 9, 10, 18 = 1, 164, 39)⁵

When a Brāhmaṇa has a desire, he should repeat to himself this syllable a thousand times, after he has observed abstinence for three nights and sat silently on the

1 सार्वत्रिकोऽप्ययं पाठः सन्दिग्धः । 'अभिजिघांसेयुः' इति केचित् 'अभिजिघांसेयुः' इति चापर ऊहन्ते ।

2 अथर्व० (पै० सं०) 16. 102.4 . अथर्व० (शौ० सं०) 10. 8. 10.

3 अथर्व० (पै० सं०) 16. 69. 8. अथर्व० (शौ० सं०) 9. 10. 18.

4 बोधलिङ्गसंशोधितः पाठः । कोशेषु 'सहस्रकृत्व' इति पाठः । पुणे-कोशयोः 'सहस्रकृत्व' इत्येवमौलिकः पाठः, पश्चात् शोधो व्यायामि ।

5 Actually only the second line is found at the Vedic place mentioned. GBP.

straw, facing the East, then all his desires come true and so also all his sacrificial acts.—Thus reads the Brāhmaṇam.

Second Brāhmaṇa = Gop. B. I, 1. 23

वसोर्धाराणामैन्द्रं नगरम्। तदसुराः पर्यवारयन्त। ते देवा भीता आसन्—क इमानसुरानपहनिष्यतीति। त ओंकारं ब्रह्मणः पुत्रं ज्येष्ठं ददृशुः। ते तमब्रुवन्—भवता मुख्येनेमानसुराञ्जयेमेति।¹ स होवाच—किं मे प्रतीवाहो भविष्यतीति। वरं वृणीष्वेति। वृणा इति। स वरमवृणीत—न मामनीरयित्वा ब्राह्मणा ब्रह्म वदेयुः, यदि वदेयुरब्रह्म तत् स्यादिति। तथेति। ते देवा देवयजनस्योत्तरार्धेऽसुरैः संयत्ता आसन्। तानोंकारेणाग्नीधीयाद् देवा असुरान् पराभावयन्त। तद् यत् पराभावयन्त, तस्मादोंकारः पूर्वमुच्यते। यो ह वा एतमोंकारं न वेदावशः स्यादिति, अथ य एवं[नं?] वेद ब्रह्मवशः स्यादिति। तस्मादोंकार ऋच्यृभवति, यजुषि यजुः, साम्नि साम, सूत्रे सूत्रं, ब्राह्मणे ब्राह्मणं, श्लोके श्लोकः, प्रणवे प्रणव इति ब्राह्मणम्।(गोपथ० ब्रा० 23).

23. There is a city of Indra by name Vasordhārā (Goods' flood); the Asuras stormed it on all sides; then the gods were afraid and said : "Who will ward off these Asuras?" They saw the *Om*-sound, the first born son of Brahman. To him they said : "Let us conquer these Asuras with yourself as the mouth² ! He said : "What will be my reward?"—"Choose a gift[!]", said they — "I will choose it", said he. And he chose a gift³ : "The Brāhmaṇas shall not recite the Veda-word without uttering me first, and if they do not utter me first, it shall be ineffective. (*abrahman*) !" — "Let it be so" said they. Then the gods came into a close combat with the Asuras from the northern side of the sacrificial place and the gods defeated the Asuras from the place of the Āgnīdhriya fire by means of the *Om*-sound.

Because they defeated them, therefore the Om-sound is uttered first, and one who does not know the Om-sound, he is powerless, but one who knows it, he has the Veda-word in his power. That is why the Om-sound is the *Ṛc* in the *Ṛc*, the *Yajus* in the *Yajus*, the *Sāman* in the *Sāman*, the *Sūtram* in the *Sūtram*, the *Brāhmaṇam* in the *Brāhmaṇam*, the *Śloka* in the *Śloka*, the *Praṇava* in the *Praṇava*. — Thus reads the Brāhmaṇam.

Third Brāhmaṇa—Gop. B. I, 1. 24-30

¹ मुखेन is wrong. Elsewhere (P- Adyar ed. p. 33) we read मुख्येन। That is the correct word. To represent (read it) as mouth is absurd. This is the editorial product of a विद्यावारिधिः। We are not even a क्षुद्रपल्लव! (MLN).

² The Adyar ed. reads *mukhyena* ! (MLN).

³ *Vara* does not mean gift, it means boon ! (MLN).

ओंकारं पृच्छामः- को धातुः? किं प्रातिपदिकम्? किं नामाख्यातम्? किं लिङ्गम्? किं वचनम्? का विभक्तिः? कः प्रत्ययः? कः स्वर उपसर्गो निपातः? किं वै व्याकरणम्? को विकारः? को विकारी? कतिमात्रः? कतिवर्णः? कत्यक्षरः? कतिपदः? कः संयोगः? किं स्थानानुप्रदानकरणम्? शिक्षकाः किमुच्चारयन्ति? किं छन्दः? को वर्ण इति पूर्वे प्रश्नाः। अथोत्तरे - मन्त्रः कल्पो ब्राह्मणमृग्यजुः साम? कस्माद् ब्रह्मवादिन ओंकार-मादितः कुर्वन्ति? किं दैवतम्? किं ज्योतिषम्? किं निरुक्तम्? किं स्थानम्? का प्रकृतिः? किमध्यात्ममिति। षट्त्रिंशत् प्रश्नाः, पूर्वोत्तराणां त्रयो वर्गा इवादशकाः। एतैरों-कारं व्याख्यास्यामः।(गोपथ० ब्रा० I, 1.24).

24. We are asking questions about the *Om*-sound :

1. Which is its root?
2. Which is its stem?
3. What is its connection with noun and verb (*nāmākhyātam*)?
4. What is its gender?
5. what its pronunciation?¹
6. Which its case?
7. What its suffix?
8. What its accent?
9. What its preposition?
10. What its particle?
11. What its analysis?
12. What its modification?
13. What its element that under goes modification?
14. How many moras has it?
15. How many letters?
16. How many syllables?
17. How many words?
18. What is its consonantal euphony?
19. What effects augmentation of its reverberation [read *nāda*]²
20. Its phoneticians?
21. As what do they pronounce it ?
22. Which is its metre ?
23. What is its colour ?

This read the prior questions. Now follow the latter :

[We believe there were three sets of questions consisting of 12 each].

24. Its formula ?
25. Its ritual ?

¹ 'Aussprache'. *vacanam* should rather mean number.—GBP.

² Deussen's proposed emendation and interpretation are questionable. *sthana*, *anupradāna* and *karāṇa* respectively mean (1) point of articulation, (2) mode or (effort) and (3) the organ (i.e. the mobile organ of articulation). But see 27. below.—GBP.

26. Its Brahmaṇam?
27. Its Ṛc?
28. Its Yajus?
29. Its Sāman?
30. Why do the Brahman-teachers place the Om-sound at the beginning?
31. What has it as its divinity?
32. What its luminary-principle?
33. What its etymology?
34. What its place?
35. Which its origin?
36. What its connection with the self?

These are the thirty-six questions. The earlier and the later form three groups, each consisting of twelve; according to these we will explain the Om-sound.

इन्द्रः प्रजापतिमपृच्छत्—भगवन्! अभिष्टुय पृच्छामीति। पृच्छ वत्सेत्यब्रवीत्। किम-यमोंकारः, कस्य पुत्रः, किं चैतच्छन्दः, किं चैतद्दर्णः, किं चैतद्ब्रह्मा ब्रह्म संपद्यते? तस्माद् वै तद् भद्रमोंकारं पूर्वमालेभे। स्वरितोदात्त एकाक्षर ओंकार ऋग्वेदे, त्रैस्व-योदात्त एकाक्षर ओंकारो यजुर्वेदे, दीर्घप्लुतोदात्त एकाक्षर ओंकारः सामवेदे, ह्रस्वोदात्त एकाक्षर ओंकारोऽथर्ववेदे। उदात्तोदात्तद्विपद अ उ इत्यर्धचतस्रो मात्रा मकारे व्यञ्जनमित्याहुः।

या सा प्रथमा मात्रा ब्रह्मदैवत्या रक्ता वर्णेन। यस्तां ध्यायते नित्यं, स गच्छेद् ब्राह्मं पदम्। या सा द्वितीया मात्रा विष्णुदैवत्या कृष्णा वर्णेन। यस्तां ध्यायते नित्यं, स गच्छेद् वैष्णवं पदम्। या सा तृतीया मात्रा शानदैवत्या कपिला वर्णेन। यस्तां ध्यायते नित्यं, स गच्छेद् शानं पदम्। या सार्धचतुर्थी मात्रा सर्वदैवत्या, व्यक्तीभूता खं विचरति शुद्धस्फटिकसन्निभा वर्णेन। यस्तां ध्यायते नित्यं, स गच्छेत् पदमनामकम्। ओंकारस्य चोत्पत्तिः¹ विप्रो यो न जानाति तत्पुनरुपनयनम्। तस्माद् ब्राह्मणवचनमा-दर्तव्यम्—यथा लातव्यो गोत्रो, ब्रह्मणः पुत्रो, गायत्रं छन्दः, शुक्लो वर्णः, पुंसो वत्सो, रुद्रो देवता, ओंकारो वेदानाम्। (गोपथ० ब्रा० 25).

25. Indra asked Prajāpati : O holy one, consecrating myself [by taking the fuel-sticks], I ask you.— Ask, my dear, so said he.— What is this Om-sound? Whose son is he? What is its metre? What is its colour. And as what does the priest reach that Brahman? For it is for that reason he immolated first [as it were] that Om-sound which brings welfare. In the Ṛgveda the Om-sound is with the Svarita tone and monosyllabic; in the Yajurveda the Om-sound is with the three accents as its tone and monosyllabic; in the Sāmaveda the Om-sound is with the long-drawn tone + and

¹ Original reads चोत्पत्तिः। विप्रो

monosyllabic; in the Atharvaveda the Om-sound is with a short tone and monosyllabic; with Udātta as the tone it is dissyllabic, viz as *a* and *u*; there are three and a half moras, for which there is an indication in the *m*-sound, as they say (?).

As regards the first mora, it has Brahman [m] as the divinity, is red in colour, and one who meditates over it constantly, goes to the abode of Brahmā [m]. As regards the second mora, it has Viṣṇu as the divinity, is black in colour, and one who meditates over it constantly, goes to the abode of Viṣṇu. As regards the third mora, it has Īśāna (Śiva) as the divinity, is brown in colour, and one who meditates over it constantly goes to the abode of Īśāna. As regards the three-and-the-halfth mora, it is dedicated to all the divinities, he goes into the ether when it manifests itself and resembles a pure crystal in colour; one who meditates over it constantly, he goes to the nameless abode and it is the origin of the Om-sound. If a Brāhmaṇa does not know this, then a repeated initiation by the teacher is [necessary]; therefore the word our Brāhmaṇam is to be taken care of like a firebrand which is not to be touched [alātavyo].¹ Its family? He is a son of Brahman; its metre is Gāyatrī, its colour white. He is preferably masculine [pumso vatso]² Rudra is the divinity. Such is the Om-sound of the Vedas.

को धातुरिति-आपृधातुः, अवतिमप्येके। रूपसामान्यादर्थसामान्यं नेदीयः। तस्मादापेरोंकारः, सर्वमाप्नोतीत्यर्थः। कृदन्तमर्थवत् प्रातिपदिकमदर्शनं प्रत्ययस्य नाम संपद्यते, निपातेषु चैनं वैयाकरणा उदात्तं समामनन्ति। तदव्ययीभूतम् अन्वर्थवाची शब्दो, न व्येति कदाचनेति।

सदृशं त्रिषु लिङ्गेषु सर्वासु च विभक्तिषु।
वचनेषु च सर्वेषु यन्न व्येति तदव्ययम् ॥

को विकारीति- अवते: [सं?]प्रसारणम्, आप्नोतेराकारपकारौ विकार्यौ। आदित ओंकारो विक्रियते, द्वितीयो मकारः। एवं द्विवर्ण एकाक्षर ओमित्योकारो निवृत्तः[?]. (गोपथ० ब्रा० 26).

26. Which is its root? the root is *āp*; some think it is *av*. But the Semantic accord is closer than the formal accord; so it comes from *āp* and means that the Om-sound sorrounds [*āpnoti*] everything. That it is a radical compound, corresponds to the fact. A nominal stem is not noticeable. The name suffix [for *m*] is pertinent, and the grammarians mention it expressly under the exceptions. It is an adverbial compound (*avyayibhūtam*); this name is significant and means that as such it never

¹ H. C. Patyal (unpublished dissertation on the Gopatha-Brāhmaṇa) translates : "He is of the lineage of Lātavya" (i.e. a descendant Lātu). The text still remains obscure — GBP. [*Lā ādāne. Lā=take. alātavyo=not to be handled? mln*].

For अभ्यादाने we have Pāṇini: प्लवते; Becomes प्लुतः।

² 'male-calf' (Patyal).—GBP.

changes. For it is said :

What remains the same in the three genders,
In all cases and numbers
Remains unmodified, is called indeclinable (*avyayam*).
(Mahābhāṣyam I, 1, 38, p. 96, 16.)

Which is dropped as a changeable element? A vocalization takes place. Of the root *āp*, the letters *ā* and *p* must be modified. In its initial the Om-sound is modified; the second element is the sound *m*. Thus the monosyllabic Om-sound consisting of two letters results as *Om*.

कतिमात्र इति--आदेस्तिस्रो मात्राः, अभ्यादाने हि प्लवते¹, मकारश्चतुर्थी²। किं स्थानमिति- उभावोष्ठौ स्थानं, नादानुप्रदानकरणौ च द्विस्थानम्। संध्यक्षरमवर्णलेशः कण्ठ्यो यथोक्तशेषः। पूर्वो³ विवृत्ता[त?]करणस्थितश्च, द्वितीयः स्पृष्टकरणस्थितश्च। न संयोगो विद्यते। आख्यातोपसर्गानुदात्तस्वरितलिङ्गविभक्तिवचनानि च संस्थानाध्यायिन आचार्याः पूर्वं बभूवुः। श्रवणादेव प्रतिपद्यन्ते न कारणं पृच्छन्ति।

अथापरपक्षीयाणां कविः पञ्चालचण्डः परिपृच्छको बभूवांबु पृथग्दगीथदोषान् भवन्तो ब्रुवन्त्विति। तद् वाच्युपलक्षयेद् वर्णाक्षरपदाङ्कशः। विभक्त्यामृषिनिषेविताम् इति वाचं स्तुवन्ति। तस्मात् कारणं ब्रूमः- वर्णानामयमिदं भविष्यतीति। षडङ्गविदस्तत् तथाधीमहे। किं छन्द इति- गायत्रं हि छन्दः। गायत्री वै देवानामेकाक्षरा श्वेतवर्णा च व्याख्याता। द्वौ द्वादशकौ वर्गौ। एतद् वै व्याकरणं धात्वर्थवचनं शैक्ष्यं छन्दोवचनं च। अथोत्तरो द्वौ द्वादशकौ वर्गौ वेदरहसिकी व्याख्याता। मन्त्रः कल्पो ब्राह्मणमृग्यजुःसामाथर्वाणि। एषा व्याहृतिः चतुर्णां वेदानामानुपूर्वणो भूर्भुवः स्वरिति व्याहृतयः। (गोपथ० ब्रा० 27).

27. How many moras? The initial contains three moras, for it becomes *pluta* at the beginning;² the *m*-sound is the fourth mora. What is its place? The two lips are its place, and as effecting the augmentation they are a twofold place. The diphthong [*au*] and the low-sounding *a* come out of the throat with the [consonantal] supplementation mentioned earlier. The first stands there to bring about an open sound, the second [*m*] stands there to bring about a consonant. A consonantal euphony does not take place. As far as the verbal form, preposition, grave, circumflex, gender, case and the pronunciation³ are further concerned, it is given by the old teachers studying its constitution, who say : "One learns it only by hearing, one does not ask about a cause." But the wise Pañcālacaṇḍa of the opposite party asked them and said : "You

¹ For अभ्यादाने we have Pāṇini. 8. 2. 87. अभ्यादानं प्रारभ्यः तत्र य ओम्शब्दः तस्य प्लुतो भवति।

² Of Vedic recitation — GBP.

³ See our note under 5.—GBP..

should some time point out to me by turn and individually (*anu u prthag?*)¹ the mistakes which one is likely to commit in the matter of the Udgītha." Therefore, one should be attentive to the division according to letters, syllables, words and signs; one thus holds in honour the speech which is prized by the wise. Therefore, we discuss the cause, because we believe that this contributes to the health of letters and we, who know the six Vedāngas, study it in this way.

What its metre ? Its metre is Gāyatrī, for the Gāyatrī of the gods is declared as mono-syllabic and white in colour. So much about two groups of twelve each. This therefore is its analysis, the explanation of the meaning of its root, its phonetical treatment and explanation of its metre. Now as far as the last two groups of twelve each are concerned, the esoteric teaching of the Veda [regarding the Om-sound] has been explained. Formula, ritual and sacred speech are found in the Ṛg-, Yajur-, Sāma- and Atharva-veda, but this is a sacred exclamation as it is used in turn in the four Vedas, viz. the exclamation; *Om bhūr, bhūvar, and svar*.

असमीक्ष्य प्रवल्हितानि श्रूयन्ते । द्वापरादावृषीणामेकदेशो दोषपतिरिह [?] चिन्ता-
मापेदे - त्रिभिः सोमः पातव्यः समाप्तमिव भवति । तस्माद् ऋग्यजुःसामान्यपक्रान्त-
तेजांस्यासन् । तत्र महर्षयः परिदेवयांचक्रिरे-महच्छोकभयं प्राप्ताः स्मः, न चैतत् सर्वैः
समभिहितम्, ते वयं भगवन्तमेवोपधावाम, सर्वेषामेव शर्म भवानिति । ते तथेत्युक्त्वा
तूष्णीमतिष्ठन् । नानुपसन्नेभ्य इति । उपोपसीदाम इति नीचैर्बभूवुः । स एभ्य उपनीय
प्रोवाच - मामिकामेव व्याहृतिमादित आदितः [?] कृणुध्वमिति । एवं मामका अधी-
यन्ते । नर्ते भृग्वङ्गिरोविद्भ्यः सोमः पातव्यः । ऋत्विजः पराभवन्ति, यजमानो रजसाप-
वधस्यति [ध्व?], श्रुतिश्चापध्वस्ता तिष्ठतीति । एवमेवोत्तरोत्तराद् योगात् तोकं तोकं
प्रशाध्वमिति । एवं प्रतापो न पराभविष्यतीति । तथा ह तथा ह भगवन्निति प्रति-
पेदिर आप्याययन् । ते तथा वीतशोकभया बभूवुः । तस्माद् ब्रह्मवादिन ओंकार-
मादितः कुर्वन्ति । (गोपथ० ब्रा० 28).

28. As a means to put to the test the non-circumspect, the following is handed down. At the beginning of the *Dvāparam* age a particular Ṛṣi, author of a fault just here hit upon an idea of drinking Soma by means of the three Vedas and thought that that should suffice. The consequence of this was that the Ṛg-, Yajur- and the Sāma-songs lost their lustre. Then the great Ṛṣis lamented and said : "We have come to great grief and fear, and that [which is to be done] is not transmitted by the ancestors. Come on. Let us go together to [Atharvan] worthy of veneration." [The latter said to them :] "I shall be the shelter of all of you." — "Be it so" said they and stood silently. "Not, if you do not approach submissively" said he. "We will approach you submissively" they said and prostrated themselves before him. But after admitting them as pupils he said: You should employ every time as the beginning the exclamation pro-

¹ The Bibliotheca Indica ed. reads *babhūvam vu prthag*, the Adyar ed, *babhūvāmbuḥ* p. The text continues to be obscure.—GBP.

per to me; that is how they recite; those who are my pupils.

The Soma is not to be drunk except by those who know the Bṛgu — and the Aṅgiras-formulas (the Atharvaveda); otherwise the sacrificial priests perish, the sacrificer is covered with impurity and the holy scripture also remains dusty. So you should teach it in an ever continuing tradition to each coming generation, then the lustre will not be lost." — "Be it so, be it so, O sir," with these words they ascended him, prospered and were free from the grief and fear. Therefore the teachers of Brahman employ the Om-sound at the beginning.

किं दैवतमिति- ऋचामग्निर्दैवतं, तदेव ज्योतिः, गायत्रं छन्दः पृथिवी स्थानम्।
अग्निमीडे पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देवमृत्विजम्।
होतारं रत्नधातमम्।¹
इत्येवमादिं कृत्वा ऋग्वेदमधीयते।

यजुषां वायुर्दैवतं, तदेव ज्योतिः, त्रैष्टुभं छन्दः, अन्तरिक्षं स्थानम्। इषे त्वोर्जे त्वा वायव स्थ देवो वः सविता प्रार्पयतु श्रेष्ठतमाय कर्मण इत्येवमादिं कृत्वा यजुर्वेदमधीयते।

साम्नामादित्यो दैवतं, तदेव ज्योतिः, जागतं छन्दः, द्यौ स्थानम्।
अग्न आयाहि वीतये गृणानो हव्यदातये।
नि होता सत्सि बर्हिषि॥²
इत्येवमादिं कृत्वा सामवेदमधीयते।

अथर्वणां चन्द्रमा दैवतं, तदेव ज्योतिः, सर्वाणि छन्दांसि, आपः स्थानम्। शं नो देवीरभिष्टय³ इत्येवमादिं कृत्वाथर्ववेदमधीयते।

अङ्गचः स्थावरजङ्गमो भूतग्रामः संभवति। तस्मात्
सर्वमापोमयं भूतं सर्वं भृग्वङ्गिरोमयम्।
अन्तरैते त्रयो वेदा भृगूनङ्गिरसः श्रिता। इति॥
अबिति प्रकृतिरपामोकारेण च। एतस्माद् व्यासः पुरोवाच-भृग्वङ्गिरोविदा संस्कृतो ऽन्यान् वेदानधीयीत, नान्यत्र संस्कृतो भृग्वङ्गिरसोऽधीयीत। सामवेदेऽथ खिलश्रुतिः- ब्रह्मचर्येण चैतस्मादथर्वाङ्गिरसो ह यो वेद स वेद सर्वमिति ब्राह्मणम्। (गोपथ० ब्रा० 29).

¹ ऋ० 1. 1. 1.

² सा० पू० 1. 1.

³ अथर्व० (पै० सं०) 1. 1. 1. अथर्व० (शौ० सं०) 1. 6. 1.

29. What divinity has it ? For the R̥c's the divinity is Agni, the same the light principle, the Gāyatrī the metre, the earth is the place. *Agnim ile puruhitam yajñasya devam ṛtvijam, hotāram ratnadhātāmam* (R̥gv. 1, 1, 1) beginning with these words they study the R̥gveda.

For the Yajus' the divinity is Vāyu, the same the light, the *Tr̥ṣṭubh* the metre, the atmosphere the place. *Iṣe tvā ūrje tvā vāyava stha devo vaḥ savitā prārpayatu śreṣṭhatamāya karmaṇa* (Vāj Saṃh I, 1. 1) beginning with these words they study the Yajurveda.

For the Sāmans the divinity is Āditya, the same the light, Jagati the metre, the heaven the place. *Agna' āyāhi vītaye gr̥ṇāno havyadātaye, ni hotā satsi barhiṣi* (Sāmav. 1, 1. 1) beginning with these words they study Sāmaveda.

For the Atharva-songs the divinity is the moon, the same the light, all metres the metre, the water the place. *Śam no devīr abhiṣṭaye* (Atharva 1. 6. 1),¹ beginning with these words they study the Atharvaveda.

The whole host of beings, movable and immovable, springs from waters, therefore everything has come from water, everything comes from the Bhṛgu—and Aṅgiras-songs. The other three Vedas have gone into Bhṛgu—and Aṅgiras-songs. Therefore, the water is called *ap*, and the origin of waters is from the Om-sound. Therefore, Vyāsa² said formerly, "One who is initiated by a knower of the Bhṛgu — and Aṅgiras-songs, should study the other Vedas, but even without being initiated by another, one may study the Bhṛgu-and Aṅgiras-songs³. Also in the Sāmaveda a supplementary text says : "Therefore also one who learns as the Brahman student the Bhṛgu-and the Atharvan-songs, he has thereby learnt everything." Thus reads the Brāhmaṇam.

अध्यात्ममात्मभैषज्यमात्मकैवल्यमोकारः। आत्मानं निरुध्य सङ्गममात्रीं भूतार्थ-
चिन्तां चिन्तयेत्। अतिक्रम्य वेदेभ्यः सर्वपरमध्यात्मफलं प्राप्नोतीत्यर्थः। सवितर्कं ज्ञान-
मयमित्येतैः प्रश्नैः प्रतिप्रश्नैश्च यथार्थं पदमनुविचिन्त्य प्रकरणज्ञो हि प्रबलो विषयी
स्यात् सर्वस्मिन् वाकोवाक्य इति ब्राह्मणम्। (गोपथ० ब्रा० 30).

30. With reference to the self : The Om-sound is the healing of the Ātman and the liberation of the Ātman. Shutting his Ātman in himself one should meditate on the thought, based only on the union with it [thought] of its [of the Om-sound] real

¹ This is the reference to the current Śaunaka recension. The stanza is 1, 1, 1 (and hence the symbol of the Atharvav.) in the now discovered Paippalada recension.—GBP.

² In the Adyar ed. the Upaniṣad ends abruptly with *cattasmad Vyāsaḥ*, the editor there does not seem to be aware of the abrupt termination.

³ Deussen's translation of this last clause is not quite correct. (Had he a different reading before him?). Patyal (ibid) translates better : "and he who is consecrated elsewhere should not study the Veda of the Bhṛgus and Aṅgiras."—GBP.

sense;¹ then one elevates oneself above the Vedas and obtains the full reward of the highest inner self; that is the meaning [of the Om-sound], subjected to reflection, having the nature of knowledge, through corresponding questions and answers, appropriate to the word, he is expert, powerful, and wanted at every Vedic conference—Thus reads the Brāhmaṇam.

ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ



शौनकोपनिषद्²

ॐ देवासुराः संयत्ता आसन्। तेषामिन्द्रो न प्रत्यपद्यत। ते ह वसूनेव प्रातःसवनेषु पुरोधाय व्यजिगीषन्त। ते ह नुशेषु नारा-

शंसेषु ऋषीणां यज्ञवास्त्वभ्यायन् - हनिष्याम वा एतद्द्वो यद्देवान्न पराभावयिष्यथेति। ते ह बिभ्यत एव स्तोकानुदकल्पयन् - विजेष्यध्वे वावैतानन्विति। ते ह तत एवार्तिम् आर्च्छंस्तानन्वितरान् पराभावयन्। ततो हेन्द्रोऽपश्यत्। स ह गायत्रीमेव प्रतिसन्दिदेश। सा होवाच। बिभेमि वा एतदेतेभ्यो यथैतत्परावृतन्निति। स प्रणवमेवास्याः पुरोगमकरोदेष वाव ते गोप्यायेति। सा होवाच। यदेष पुरोगाः उदेष मे भागधेयी स्यादिति। स होवाच। न ह वावैष त्वद्भागधेयी भवति। महान्वा अस्य महिमा न ह वा महीयांसो भागकृप्तिमप्याभजन्तीति। विश्वमिन्नु समन्वालभध्वमिति। सेनान्यास्तु प्रथमजानाप्यायिष्यसीत्योमिति होवाच। स होवाच यत्प्रथमं नाभ्यकीर्तयो[?] नामग्राहमथ नानुवत्स्य इति। नामग्राहमेतेन सर्वमभिपद्यन्ते। सर्वं वा एष सर्वमश्नोतीति। अक्षरं वा एषः। तस्मादोमित्यनुजानन्ति। ओमिति प्रतिपद्यन्ते, ओमित्यभ्याददते, ओम् इत्यभिनिधापयन्ति। तदेतदक्षरं जैत्रमभित्वरं सर्वाणि भूतान्यभ्यात्तं यदनेकमेकं नानावर्णं नानारूपं नानाशब्दं नानागन्धं नानारसं नानास्पर्शमिति। अथो खल्वाहुरिन्द्रो वा चैतदक्षरम्। सर्वाणि ह वा इमानि भूतान्येतदक्षरमन्वायत्तानि सर्वे वेदाः सर्वे यज्ञा इत्यथ खल्विन्द्रमन्वायत्तमिति।

स मन्त्रेणैवान्वाभक्तो विदिद्युतेऽञ्जसैव भ्रातृव्यानपहनानीति। तस्मान्मन्त्रं प्रातः-सवनमभवद्यज्ञायत्रं तद्गायत्री तद्गायत्रं यद्दसवः तद्दसव्यम्। स ह प्रणव उवाच। यदहं

¹ I have translated Deussen liberally. The sentence remains obscure. Unconvincing is Patyal's translation also : "Having stopped the anxiety about creatures, (which is) the only union (with Om), he should think about the (supreme) spirit,"—GBP.

² Source : *Un-published Uoanishads*. Ed. by the Pandits of Adyar Library, under supervision of C. Kunhan Raja. Adyar (Madras) : Adyar Library, 1938. pp. 51-54.

सर्वं भवानि यद्गायत्री वै पुरोगाः तत्किं मे स्यादिति। गायत्रमन्वेव गायत्रीमन्वेव त्वा सर्वरूपमिमं कृत्वा हिं कुर्वन्ति। स हापश्यन्नैतदञ्जसैव सर्वा रूपाण्येवमभिचक्षीरन्निति। स हान्तत एवात्मानमुपसंहृत्य तावदेवाग्राहयत्। स विश्रुङ्ग एवाभवत्। तस्माद्विश्रुङ्ग-मेवैतदिहानुद्रवन्ति। तदाहुर्यद्वा एतस्य वीर्यं यच्छुक्रं यज्ज्योतिर्यदमृतं यदजर्यं तदवर-मिति। तस्मात्तत एवातो ज्योतिरमृतं यदजर्यं प्रतिपद्यन्ते। ततो हासुराः पराभवन्। स एष इन्द्रः सर्वं यद्गायत्री उद्गीथो वसवः प्रातस्सवनमिति। तदाहुः। सर्वं वा एतदिन्द्रो यज्जगद्यथैवेति।

ततो हासुराः पुनरेवोदयन्ति। ते ह माध्यन्दिनस्यैव सवनस्य पवमानेषु यज्ञवास्त्व-भ्यायन्। तेषां जरितारो बिभ्यत एव वसतीवरीरुपाकल्पयन्। ते ह ताभिरेव जिघांसन्। तेषामिन्द्रो रुद्रानेव सेनान्योऽकः। तेहाक्षीयन्त। स ह त्रिष्टुभमेव प्रतिसंददत्। साब्रवीत्। बिभेमि वा एतदेतेभ्यो यथौजीयांसो बलीयांस इमे पराभवन्निति। स ह प्रणवमेवो-वाच पुरोगायमेवारभस्वेति। सोऽब्रवीत्। किं मेऽतः स्यादिति। यदहं स त्वं ममैव रूपेण न्यूंखयिष्यन्ति त्वामिति। स हापश्यत्। सर्व एव न्यूंखयन्तो मामभिचक्षीरन्निति। स ह सर्वमेवात्मानमुपसंहृत्य श्रृंग एवागूहयत्। स ह विश्रुङ्ग एवाभवत्। तस्मादित्यैव न्यूंखयन्ति। ततो हासुराः पराभावयन्। तस्माद्रुद्रानेव माध्यन्दिनं सवनं त्रैष्टुभं चेति।

ते हासुराः पुनरेवोदपतिष्यन्त। ते ह तृतीयस्येह सवनस्य पवमानेषु यज्ञवास्त्वभ्या-यन्। तेषामिमे बिभ्यत एवांशुनुपाकल्पयन्। ते ह तैरेव देवानपाजिघांसन्। तेषामिन्द्रो जगतीमेव प्रतिसंदिदेश। साब्रवीत् बिभेमि वा एतदेतेभ्यो यथौजीयांसो बलीयांस इमे परावृतन्निति। तस्या इन्द्रः प्रणवमेव पुरोगा[ग?]मकरोत्। स हो वाच। किं मेऽतः स्यादिति। स होवाचेन्द्रो यत्त्वामुद्गीथेनोपावनेष्यन्ते तेनैव ते कल्पयिष्यन्तीति। सेना-न्यो हि तहर्चादित्यानकल्पयन्। तस्माज्जागतं तृतीयसवनमादित्यानाम्। स हापश्य-दादित्यो वा उद्गीथोऽसौ खल्वादित्यो ब्रह्म। न ह वा एनं मिथु चिदेमीति। स ह स्वेनैव रूपेणादित्यानगच्छत्। स ह तेनैव वज्रेणासुरान् पराभावयन्। तद्यत् स्वेनैव रूपेणाविस्तरामगच्छत्तत्रतिष्ठामविन्दत्। प्रतिष्ठा ह वा एषा यत्प्रणवः। सर्वाणि ह वा इमानि भूतानि प्रणव एव प्रतितिष्ठन्ति। तस्य ह वा एषा प्रतिष्ठा यत्रासावात्मान-मुपसंहृत्याजृगुपत्। तस्मात्तदेवोपन्वीतेति। तदेवोपासीत। तदेतदृचाभ्युक्तम्-

चत्वारि श्रुङ्गा त्रयो अस्य पादाः
द्वे शीर्षे सप्त हस्तासो अस्य।
त्रिधा बद्धो वृषभो रोरवीति
महो देवो मर्त्यां आविवेश ॥ इति।



यदिमास्तिस्त्रोऽथासाविति चत्वार्यिति । यदिमे द्वे एवाक्षरे त्रिभिरुपन्वन्ति तत्रय इति । यत्प्रत्यक्षं तद्वे¹ इति । यदुद्गीथं सप्तभिरभिप्रपद्यन्ते तत्सप्तेति । अथो खल्वाहुः । सप्तभिरेनं स्वारयन्ति इति । यदीदि?]मान् त्रीनभिधत्ते तत्रिधेति । यदिन्द्र एवोद्गीथः तद्दृषभ इति । तदेतद्वचाभ्युक्तम् – "मरुत्वन्तं वृषभं वावृधानम् ।" यद्वावयन्ति² तद्रोर- वीति । यदेष सर्वाणि भूतान्यनुप्रविष्टस्तन्मर्त्या³ आविवेशेति । तस्मादोमित्येकाक्षरमुद्गी- थमुपासीतेत्याह भगवान् शौनकः शौनक इति ।

Śaunakopaniṣad

The "Introductory note" to this Upaniṣad in *Sixty Upaniṣads of the Veda* by Paul Deussen, as translated [in English] by Bedekar and Palsule, says :-

"The wise "Schavank", to whom the teaching of this Upaniṣad is attributed, is without doubt Śaunaka (cf. Oupnek'hat I, 375 with the Muṇḍ 1,1. 3, above), although a Śaunaka Upaniṣad, as far as we know, is nowhere else mentioned."³ The legend imitated from the old myth of war between the Devas and the Asuras forms the contents in order to glorify the Om-sound (*Praṇava*). The demons attack thrice, at 1. Prātaḥsavanam, 2. Mādhyandināsavanam, and 3. Tṛtīyasavanam, the sacrificial priests and receive from them as settlement, 1. drops of sacrificial clarified butter, 2. sacrificial water, 3. tips of sacrificial grass with which they thrice defeat the gods headed by 1. Vasus, 2. Rudras, 3. the Jagatī, and since these do not feel sufficiently strong, Indra prefixes them every time with the Om-sound, as a result of which the demons are defeated. But twice the demons recover from their defeat while the Praṇava, ashamed of showing himself to the gods, withdraws himself from the Mātrās into the reverberation (cf. also the Chānd. I. 4), and only the third time, when he appears in his full glory, he defeats the demons for ever.

The Praṇava- and Śaunaka- Upaniṣads are closely connected in purpose, contents, and bearing; in the glorification of the Om-sound they go farther than all other Upaniṣads received by us and as such are not without interest. Unfortunately, even now the latter had to be understood only through the muddy medium of the translation of

¹ Could we read. तद् द्वे ।

² We believe this does not make any sense. The text should read : यद् रावयन्ति [derived from causal *rava*], i.e. they make the humming sound as they pronounce the Praṇava. It is the Omkāra-Brahma-Nāda. द्रावयन्ति may mean make them flee away by fear. The Adyar editors have not understood the nature and meaning of the two clusters of words. They have taken these words to be the continuation of the Ṛg, as if they are a part of the mantra !

³ However, the [English] translators have referred to the Adyar ed. which contains this Upanishad. Of course, the pirates by the name of Motilal Banarasidass have stolen it and put it into their collection without any acknowledgement whatsoever.

a translation,¹ both of which, the one through excessive freedom and the other through excessive faithfulness, have equally contributed much to disfigure the contents. [!] We may hope to have reconstructed correctly the original text on the whole; but in many individual cases we were left to our own guess and we cannot everywhere assume responsibility for having handled it correctly. [We say "Om" to it. Stress added. MLN].

The gods and demons were preparing for war; Indra however had not yet joined the gods.

1. In the morning pressing the gods placed the Ṛṣis and Vasus in the front to conquer the demons and prepared for the war. But during the course of the sacrifice the demons appeared and said to the Ṛṣis: "Let us sacrifice with you so that today we shall win a victory over the gods." The Ṛṣis were frightened and gave them that much clarified butter which one is to pour in the fire at a sacrifice and said: "With this you will conquer the gods." The demons took it and with it they conquered the gods. Then Indra said to Gāyatrī: "Lead the gods to victory!" She said: "I see the gods retreating, what can I do with them." Then Indra made Praṇava the constant beginning of the Gāyatrī and said: "This one will protect you." Then Gāyatrī said: "If this one leads me then he will take a share in my fame." Indra said: "Do not be afraid that he will share with you. His greatness is superior to all and [he] does not share in the greatness of others. The whole world rests on his greatness. You have nothing to do with the Praṇava but have to go to the Vasus for help."— "Om" (be it so), said the Gāyatrī. The Praṇava said: "It is my condition that they begin every work with me. If not, then I shall not help them." "Om", (be it so), said the gods. That is to say, when one says "Om", all names and forms are contained in it; for the Praṇava is everything and contains everything; therefore one calls it "the one syllable" (*eka-akṣaram*), allegedly from *aś* surround, pervade (*vyāptau*). Therefore one says: "Om, I will do this," and when they allow for this, they say: "Om"; and when they wish to speak, all say "Om". This sound grants victory and is constant and contains in it all beings. It is only a syllable and yet infinite; being infinite, it is one and contains all forms, sounds, smells, tastes and touches. Therefore they call the Praṇava Indra. Verily, all syllables and all beings are linked with this one syllable, all the Vedas and all the sacrifices are under its power. And just as everything is under Indra's power, because he is the king ^{above} all, so everything is under the power of Praṇava; he is the king of all the syllables.

Therefore they utter the Praṇava softly and lightly in the mornings; for when the demons were near, the gods uttered it softly; there the Praṇava became light to them and said: "Lightly I shall crush your enemies."

Therefore, the Mantras also, which are preceded by the Praṇava, are said softly in the morning; and because the Gāyatrī was linked with it, therefore all the Mantras, which they recite in the morning, are linked with Gāyatrī, and the gods of the morn-

¹ Now, of course, we have the Sanskrit original in the Adyar ed.—GBP.

ing offerings are the Vasus.

Then the Praṇava said: "While I am everything and the beginning of the Gāyatrī, what will be my reward for the help I give to the gods?"

Indra said: "This, that they first utter you in the Sāmans, and when they sing the Sāman, they will sing you as all the syllables." Therefore it happens that when they sing the Sāman, they sing the Praṇava as all syllables.

The Praṇava pondered : "If I am all as syllables, then the gods will see my forms, and that is not good." Then he withdrew all his forms within himself in the reverberation; he was hornless (without the moras). Therefore they ran after the hornless one, in order to search for him. And they said: "The power, the seed, the light, the indestructible, the flawless, all this is the reverberation." Therefore one obtains the light, the indestructible, the flawless through the reverberation.

And it happened that the demons were defeated and the gods won.

This Praṇava is Indra, is everything that exists. The Gāyatrī, the Sāman, the Vasus, the morning pressing, all that is the Praṇava. Indra is the movable and immovable, so they say, but Indra is the Praṇava.

2. But the defeated demons gathered again and as the midday-pressing Sāman was being chanted, they made their appearance at the sacrifice. The Ṛṣis were frightened and gave them ^{of} the water which is used at the sacrifice and said: "With this you will conquer the gods." The demons were desirous of conquering the gods with the water. And Indra sent the Rudras with the gods in the battle, but the gods were defeated by the demons. Then Indra said to the Triṣṭubh: Go to them for aid!" She said : "The gods are defeated, what can I do with them?" Then Indra again said to the Praṇava : "Place yourself at the head of the Triṣṭubh." The Praṇava said : "What will be my reward?" Indra said : "What I am, that you are; they will pronounce you as my form."

The Praṇava pondered: "The gods will see full truth about me, and that is not good." Then he withdrew all his forms within himself and concealed himself in the reverberation. Therefore they do not pronounce its third horn (*m*) but an Anusvāra (*m*) in its place.

And it happened that the demons were defeated and the gods won.

Therefore the gods at the midday pressing are the Rudras, and that the metre is the Triṣṭubh.

3. But the demons prepared once more and as the evening pressing Sāman was being chanted they appeared at the sacrifice. The Ṛṣis were frightened, they tore off the tips of the blades of the sacrificial grass, gave them to the demons and said: "With
omission!

? !

3. But the demons prepared once more and as the evening pressing Sāman was being chanted they appeared at the sacrifice. The Ṛṣis were frightened, they tore off the tips of the blades of the sacrificial grass, gave them to the demons and said: "With these you will conquer the gods." Then Indra said to the Jagatī : Go to the gods for aid !" Then the Jagatī said : "The gods are defeated, what can I do?" Then Indra placed the Praṇava at the head of the Jagatī. The Praṇava said : "What will be my reward, that I help the gods?" Indra said : "They will pronounce you with the Udgītha, so that your glory will be visible." And he made the Āditya¹ the leader of the gods. Therefore, the divinity of the evening-pressing is the Āditya and their metre is the Jagatī. The Praṇava perceived : "The Udgītha is the manifestation of the Āditya, the manifestation of the Brahman, and I am the manifestation of the Brahman and not different from him." And he walked with his full form, which he had previously concealed in the reverberation, in front of the Āditya, and the Āditya made him his weapon. Then he defeated the demons, and they were scattered as dust, so that they could not again come together. That the Praṇava appeared in his full form, thereby he earned great fame, for the Praṇava is the pinnacle of greatness. All beings are contained in him, and his abode is in the reverberation, for in it he had concealed himself.

Therefore what one desires, one should request him for it, and the worship one performs belongs to him.

Therefore it is said :

The Praṇava² has four horns, three feet,
Two heads, seven hands, threefold is he.
Bound, great, loudly roaring, shining brightly,
Having entered into all the living beings. (cf. Ṛgv. 4, 58, 3.

His four horns are 3 1/2 moras; his three feet are *a*, *u*, and *m*; his two heads *o* and *m*; his seven hands are the seven notes (*svara*), because he is sung in all the seven. Threefold bound are its three letters (*a*, *u*, *m*) with the three fires, the three worlds, and the three Vedas; like these he is also talked of.

The Praṇava is Indra and therefore great.

Therefore it is said:

The lord over all gods, great is Indra,
Granting greatness, mitigating grief, full of light,
Helping all, ruler, mighty, granting strength,
Sustaining the universe, well-disposed to all.

¹ The German original has singular but the plural (as supported by the Adyar ed.) is evidently intended.—GBP.

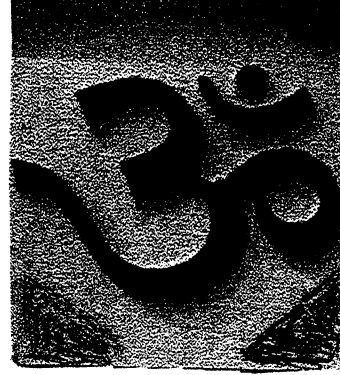
² Apparently the Persian-Latin version read here Praṇava for *vr̥ṣabha* of the Ṛg V (which latter is found in the Adyar ed. also).—GBP.

Because Indra supports himself in this way, therefore it was said that the Praṇava rings loudly, and it rings loudly because all, who worship him, earn great fame. That he has entered into all living beings (*prāṇin*) means that he dwells in all beings (*bhūta*). Therefore, one should worship Indra by syllable *Om*.

Thus spoke the revered Śaunaka.

ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ

ओम्- अव्य० अव-मन् नि०। १. प्रणवे,
२. आरम्भे, ३. स्वीकारे, "ओमित्युक्त-
वतोऽथ¹ शार्ङ्गिण इति व्याहृत्य वाचं
नभः" माघः। ४. अनुमतौ, ५. अपाकृतौ,
६. अस्वीकारे, ७. मङ्गले, शुभे, ८. ज्ञेये,
ब्रह्मणि च। अश्च उश्च म् च तेषां समा-
हारः। विष्णुमहेश्वरब्रह्मरूपत्वात्। ९.
परमेश्वरे। अव्य.।



ओम्शब्दस्य मङ्गलं तु नार्थः, किन्तु मङ्गलसाधनत्वं श्रवणेन भवतीत्येतमर्थमभि-
सन्धाय तदुत्कीर्तनम्, अथशब्दवत्। अत एव

"ओंकारश्चाथशब्दश्च द्वावेतौ ब्रह्मणः पुरा।

कण्ठं भित्त्वा विनिर्यातौ तेन माङ्गलिकावुभौ॥"

इत्यत्र ओंकारस्य माङ्गलिकत्वमुक्तम्। तथा चार्थान्तरे प्रयुक्तावथोकारशब्दौ श्रुत्या
अभिप्रेतार्थसिद्धिरूपमङ्गलं जनयत इत्याकरे दृश्यम्। अवर्णात् ओम्शब्दस्यादेः पररूपै-
कादेशः ओम्+कृ-घञ्। ओमित्यस्य करणे ओंकार क्त। ओंकृत अङ्गीकृते ओम्
इत्यादावुच्चारणयुक्ते² च त्रि०। स्रवत्यनोकृतं सर्वम्। मनुः।

ओंकारस्य माहात्म्यं स्वरूपादिकं ब्राह्मणस० दर्शितम्। यथा योगियाज्ञवल्क्यः -

"प्रणवाद्याः स्मृता मन्त्राश्चतुर्वर्गफलप्रदाः।

तस्माच्च निःसृताः सर्वे प्रलीयन्ते च तत्र वै॥

¹ वाचस्पत्यम् is resumed here.

² Cf. ओंकारस्मोकारयतीन्दुमौलिः। Cited by *Ratnākara* on p. 26.

मङ्गल्यं पावनं धर्म्यं सर्वकामप्रसाधनम् ।
ओंकारं परमं ब्रह्म सर्वमन्त्रेषु नायकम् ॥
प्रजापतेर्मुखोत्पन्नं¹ तपःसिद्धस्य वै पुरा ।"

स एव :-

"यथा पर्णं पलाशस्य शङ्कुनैकेन धार्यते ।
तथा जगदिदं सर्वमोंकारेणैव धार्यते ॥
जपेन दहते पापं प्राणायामैस्तथा मलम् ।
ध्यानेन जन्मनिर्याणं धारणाभिस्तु मुच्यते ।"

गीता :-

"ओं तत् सदिति निर्देशो ब्रह्मणस्त्रिविधः स्मृतः ।
ब्राह्मणास्तेन वेदाश्च यज्ञाश्च विहिताः पुरा ॥
तस्मादोमित्युदाहृत्य यज्ञदानतपःक्रियाः ।
प्रवर्तन्ते विधानोक्ताः सततं ब्रह्मवादिनाम् ॥"

योगियाज्ञः :-

"सिद्धानां चैव सर्वेषां वेदवेदान्तयोस्तथा ।
अन्येषामपि शास्त्राणां निष्ठाऽथोंकार उच्यते ॥
प्रणवाद्या यतो वेदाः प्रणवे पर्युपस्थिताः ।
वाङ्मयं प्रणवः सर्वं तस्मात् प्रणवमभ्यसेत् ॥

तथा स एव :-

आद्यं यत्राक्षरं ब्रह्म त्रयी यत्र प्रतिष्ठिता ।
स गुह्योऽन्यस्त्रिवृद् वेदो यो वेदैर्न स वेदवित् ॥
एक एव तु विज्ञेयः प्रणवो योगसाधनम् ।
गृहीतं सर्वसिद्धान्तैरितरैर्ब्रह्मवादिभिः ॥
वेदभारभरात्तो यः स वै ब्राह्मणगर्दभः ।
यो वेत्ति ब्रह्मगोप्यन्तं [?] त्रिमात्रार्द्धेषु तिष्ठति ॥"

तथा

¹ Cf. ओंकारश्चाथशब्दश्च द्वावेतौ ब्रह्मणः पुरा ।
कण्ठं भित्त्वा विनिर्यातौ तस्मान्माङ्गलिकावुभौ ॥

त्रिमात्रार्द्धं परं ब्रह्म मात्राक्षरविवर्जितम् ।
अचिन्त्यमव्ययं सूक्ष्मं निष्कलं परमं पदम् ॥

योगियाज्ञवल्क्यः -

"यथाऽमृतेन तृप्तस्य पयसा किं प्रयोजनम् ।
तथोंकारविधिज्ञस्य ज्ञानतृप्तिर्न विद्यते ॥
सर्वमन्त्रप्रयोगेषु ओमित्यादौ प्रयुज्यते ।
तेन संपरिपूर्णानि यथोक्तानि भवन्ति हि ॥
यन्न्यूनमतिरिक्तं च यत् छिद्रं यदयज्ञियम् ।
यदमेध्यमशुद्धं च यातयामं च यद्भवेत् ॥
तत्तदोंकारयुक्तेन मन्त्रेणाविकलं भवेत् ॥"

छन्दोगगृहचपरिशिष्टम् :-

"यदोंकारमकृत्वा तु किञ्चिदारभ्यते तद्भ्रजं भवति ।
तस्माद् वज्रभयाद् भीत ओंकारं पूर्वमारभेत् ॥"

गद्यव्यासः -

"ओंकारं स्वर्गद्वारम् । तस्मात् सर्वेष्वेव कर्मस्वादौ प्रयुञ्जीत ।"

छन्दोगगृहचपरिशिष्टम् :-

"ओंकारपूर्वं हि योगोपासनम् । यानि नित्यानि पुण्यतमानि कर्माणि दानयज्ञ-
तपःस्वाध्यायजपध्यानसन्ध्योपासनाप्राणायामहोमदेवपितृमन्त्रोच्चारणब्रह्महारम्भादि
यच्चान्यत् किञ्चित् सर्वं प्रणवमुच्चार्य प्रवर्तयेत् समापयेच्च ।"

मनुः - प्राक्कूले¹

व्यासः -

"प्रणवस्य ऋषिर्ब्रह्मा गायत्री छन्द एव च ।
देवोऽग्निः सर्वकार्येषु विनियोगः प्रकीर्तितः ॥"

तथा --

"एवमार्षादिकं स्मृत्वा तत ओंकारमभ्यसेत् ।

¹ See the section on Manu.

साद्धं त्रिमात्रमुच्चार्य दीर्घघण्टानिनादवत् ॥"

योगियाज्ञवल्क्यः -

"त्रिमात्रस्तु प्रयोक्तव्यः सर्वारम्भेषु कर्मसु ।
तिस्रः साद्धास्तु कर्त्तव्या मात्रास्तत्रार्थचिन्तकैः ॥
देवताध्यानकाले तु प्लुतं कुर्यान्न संशयः ।
तैलधारावदच्छिन्नं दीर्घघण्टानिनादवत् ॥
अप्लुतं प्रणवस्यान्तं यस्तं वेद स वेदवित् ।"

छन्दोगपरिशिष्टम् -

"स्वरितोदात्त एकाक्षर ओंकार ऋग्वेदे, त्रैस्वय्योदात्त ओंकारो यजुर्वेदे, दीर्घो-
दात्त एकाक्षरः सामवेदे, संक्षिप्तोदात्त एकाक्षर ओंकारः अथर्ववेदे ।"

बौधायनः -

"अपि वा प्रणवेन त्रिरन्तर्जले पठन् सर्वस्मात् पापात् प्रमुच्यते ।"

बृहद्यमः -

"स्वदेह¹मरणिं कृत्वा प्रणवं चोत्तरारणिम् ।
ध्याननिर्मथनाद् विष्णुं पश्येदग्निनिगूढवत् ॥"

गीता :-

ओमित्येकाक्षरं ब्रह्म व्याहरन् मामनुस्मरन् ।
यः प्रयाति त्यजन् देहं स याति परमां गतिम् ॥"

ओंकारस्य मात्राविशेषाभिध्यानफलं प्रश्नोपनिषीतं यथा :-

"एतद्वै सत्यकाम परं चापरं च
ब्रह्म यदोकारः । तस्माद्विद्वान्
एतेनैवाऽऽयतनेनैकतरमन्वेति ।
प्रश्न. उ. (5. 2).



"एतद् ब्रह्म वै परं चापरं च ब्रह्म । परं सत्यमक्षरं पुरुषाख्यमपरं च प्राणाख्यं प्रथमजं यत्तदोकार एवोका-

1 आत्मानमित्यपि पाठः ।

रात्मकम् ओंकारप्रतीकत्वात् । परं हि ब्रह्म शब्दाद्युपलक्षणानर्हं सर्वधर्मविशेषवर्जितमतो न शक्यमतीन्द्रिय-
गोचरत्वात्केवलेन मनसाऽवगाहितुम् । ओंकारे तु विष्ण्वादिप्रतिमास्थानीये भक्त्यावेशितब्रह्मभावे ध्यायिनां तत्
प्रसीदतीत्यवगम्यते शास्त्रप्रामाण्यात्तथाऽपरं च ब्रह्म । तस्मात्परं चापरं च ब्रह्म यदोंकार इति उपचर्यते ।
तस्मादेवं विद्वानेतेनैवाऽऽत्मप्राप्तिसाधनेनैवोंकाराभिधानेनैकतरं परमपरं वाऽन्वेति ब्रह्मानुगच्छति । नेदिष्ठं हचा-
लम्बनमोंकारो ब्रह्मणः । शाङ्करभा० (5. 2).

Svāmī Nikhilānanda¹ :— The syllable AUM is the Supreme Brahman and also Saguṇa Brahman. Therefore he who knows it attains, with its support, the one or the other.

Parabrahman, or the Supreme Brahman, also called the Higher Brahman is devoid of all characteristics and cannot be known through words or thought. Aparā Brahman, or Saguṇa Brahman, is the first manifestation of the Absolute, or pure Consciousness, in Māyā. It is designated by such epithets as Hiraṇyagarbha and Prāṇa.

Brahman, being transcendental in nature, cannot be directly comprehended by the mind. Therefore, many indirect meditations on Brahman are laid down in the scriptures. One such is meditation through a symbol, or pratīka, which means meditation on one aspect of an all-pervading entity, or on something associated with it, as the thing itself. Thus the omnipresent Deity Vishnu, may be worshipped through the stone symbol called Sālagrāma or through His name. Aum is the most immediate symbol of Brahman. It is much more effective than any other symbol². It must be emphasized that Brahman should not be contemplated *as* the symbol, but through the symbol. The former method brings Brahman down to the level of the symbol, and may aptly be called idolatrous; but the latter transforms the symbol into Brahman and is a valid form of worship. By contemplating the Supreme Brahman through Aum, one realizes the highest plane, and by using Aum as a symbol of the Saguṇa Brahman, one attains a lower plane.

स यद्येकमात्रमभिध्यायीत स तेनैव सम्वेदितस्तूर्णमेव जगत्यामभिसम्पद्यते । तमृचो
मनुष्यलोकमुपनयन्ते । स तत्र तपसा ब्रह्मचर्येण श्रद्धया सम्पन्नो महिमानमनुभवति ।
प्रश्न. उ. (5. 3).

स यद्यप्योंकारस्य सकलमात्राविभागज्ञो न भवति तथाऽप्योंकाराभिधानप्रभावाद्धिशिष्टामेव गतिं गच्छति ।
एतदेकदेशज्ञानवैगुण्यतयोंकारशरणः कर्मज्ञानोभयभ्रष्टो न दुर्गतिं गच्छति । किं तर्हि यद्यप्येवमोंकारमेवैकमात्रा-
विभागज्ञ एव केवलोऽभिध्यायीतैकमात्रं सदा ध्यायीत स तेनैवैकमात्राविशिष्टोंकाराभिधानेनैव संवेदितः
सम्बोधिततस्तूर्णं क्षिप्रमेव जगत्यां पृथिव्यामभिसम्पद्यते । किं, मनुष्यलोकम् । अनेकानि हि जन्मानि जगत्यां
सम्भवन्ति । तत्र तं साधकं जगत्यां मनुष्यलोकमेवर्च उपनयन्त उपनिगमयन्ति ऋचः । ऋग्वेदरूपा ह्र्योंकारस्य

¹ Quoted with some modifications and choices. Also now onward we have used N. for Svāmī Nikhilānanda. This translation and exposition has proved very useful to us.

² For more see *Upanishads*, v. 1, pp. 75-76.

उपनिषदादि-

प्रथमैकमात्राऽभिध्याता। तेन स तत्र मनुष्यजन्मनि द्विजाग्रघः सन् तपसा ब्रह्मचर्येण श्रद्धया च सम्पन्नो महिमानं विभूतिमनुभवति। न वीतश्रद्धो यथेष्टचेष्टो भवति योगभ्रष्टः। कदाचिदपि न दुर्गतिं गच्छति। शाङ्करभा० (5. 3).

N. :- Among the many planes where a man can be born after death, the earth has a special significance, being the dwelling place of human beings. The earth is inhabited by innumerable living creatures. Among these man occupies the highest position, because he alone is entitled to the Knowledge of Brahma. And lastly, among men, one endowed with faith, chastity, and austerity experiences the glories of the spiritual world. (5. 3).

अथ यदि द्विमात्रेण मनसि सम्पद्यते सोऽन्तरिक्षं यजुर्भिरुन्नीयते सोमलोकम्। स सोमलोके विभूतिमनुभूय पुनरावर्त्तते। प्रश्न. उ. (5. 4).

अथ पुनर्यदि द्विमात्राविभागज्ञो द्विमात्रेण विशिष्टमो'कारमभिध्यायीत इह्वप्नात्मके मनसि मननीये यजुर्मये सोमदैवत्ये सम्पद्यत एकाग्रतयाऽऽत्मभावं गच्छति। स एवं सम्पन्नो मृतोऽन्तरिक्षमन्तरिक्षाधारं द्वितीयमात्रारूपं द्वितीयमात्रारूपैरेव यजुर्भिरुन्नीयते सोमलोकं सौम्यं जन्म प्रापयन्ति तं यजुंषीत्यर्थः। स तत्र विभूतिमनुभूय सोमलोके मनुष्यलोकं प्रति पुनरावर्त्तते। शाङ्करभा० (5. 4).

N. :- The fruit of contemplating U, the second letter of AUM :

If again, he meditates on the second letter, he attains the mind and is led up by the Yajur verses to the intermediate space, to the Plane of the Moon. Having enjoyed greatness in the Plane of the Moon, he returns hither again.

Notes : A man practicing meditation, should contemplate his identity with the object of meditation till that identity is realized. Dream experiences are projections of the mind. The after-death experiences in the Plane of the Moon are of the same nature as ideas and are therefore, compared to dreams. The letter U is the symbol of the Yajur-Veda, the mind, and the Plane of the Moon. according to Śaṅkarānanda's explanation the verse may be translated as follows : "If, on the other hand, he meditates on two letters or *for two measured of time*, then he is led up." . . . "According to some other commentators the word *mind*, in the text, refers to Hiraṇyagarbha, who identifies Himself with the phenomenal universe, which is like the dream of the Cosmic Mind." (5. 4).

यः पुनरेतं त्रिमात्रेणोमित्येतेनैवाक्षरेण परं पुरुषमभिध्यायीत स तेजसि सूर्ये सम्पन्नः। यथा पादोदरस्त्वचा विनिर्मुच्यत एवं ह वै स पाप्मना विनिर्मुक्तः स सामभिरुन्नीयते ब्रह्मलोकम्। स एतस्माज्जीवघनात्परात्परं पुरिशयं पुरुषमीक्षते। तदेतौ श्लोकौ भवतः। प्रश्न. उ. (5. 5).

यः पुनरेतमो'कारं त्रिमात्रेण त्रिमात्राविषयविज्ञानविशिष्टेनोमित्येतेनैवाक्षरेण परं सूर्यान्तर्गतं पुरुषं प्रतीकेना-

भवति ध्यायमानः। मृतोऽपि सूर्यात्सोमलोकादिवन्न पुनरावर्तते किन्तु सूर्ये सम्पन्नमात्र एव। यथा पादोदरः सर्पः त्वचा विनिर्मुच्यते जीर्णत्वग्विनिर्मुक्तः स पुनर्नवो भवति। एवं ह वा एष यथादृष्टान्तः स पाप्मना सर्पत्वक्-स्थानीयेनाशुद्धिरूपेण विनिर्मुक्तः सामभिस्तृतीयमात्रारूपैरुर्ध्वमुन्नीयते ब्रह्मलोकं हिरण्यगर्भस्य ब्रह्मणो लोकं सत्याख्यम्। स हिरण्यगर्भः सर्वेषां संसारिणां जीवानामात्मभूतः। स ह्यन्तरात्मा लिङ्गरूपेण सर्वभूतानाम्। तस्मिन् हि लिङ्गात्मनि संहताः सर्वे जीवाः। तस्मात्स जीवघनः। स विद्वांस्त्रिमात्रोकाराभिन्न एतमाज्जवघनाद् हिरण्यगर्भात्परापरं परमात्माख्यं पुरुषमीक्षते पुरिशयं सर्वशरीरानुप्रविष्टं पश्यति ध्यायमानः। तदेतौ एतस्मिन् यथोक्तार्थप्रकाशकौ मन्त्रौ भवतः। शाङ्करभा० (5. 5).

Svāmi N. :— Again, he who meditates on the Highest Person through this syllable Aum consisting of three letters, becomes united with the effulgent Sun. As a snake is freed from its skin, even so he is freed from sin. He is led up by the Sāma verses to the world of Brahmā. From this, which is the aggregate of all lives, he beholds the Supreme Purusha, higher than the High and pervading all bodies. (5. 5).

Notes : Highest Person : Refers to Saguṇa Brahman, who is described in the Vedas as dwelling in the solar orb.

Sāma verses : The verses of the Sāma-Veda, of which M is the symbol.

World of Brahmā : That is to say, of Hiranyagarbha. This exalted plane is known also as Satyaloka. Hiranyagarbha, representing the World Soul, is the totality of the souls of all living beings. Like the cow-ness present in all cows, He is present in all beings.

From this : Unlike those who go to the Plane of the Moon, one who attains Brahmāloka does not return to earth.

The High : Refers to Hiranyagarbha, who is supreme among all phenomenal beings.

Pervading etc. : As their inmost self.

तिस्रो मात्रा मृत्युमत्यः प्रयुक्ता अन्योन्यसक्ता अनविप्रयुक्ताः।

क्रियासु बाह्याभ्यन्तरमध्यमासु सम्यक्प्रयुक्तासु न कम्पते ज्ञः॥६॥

ऋग्भिरेतं यजुर्भिरन्तरिक्षं स सामभिर्यत्तत्कवयो वेदयन्ते।

तमोकारेणैवाऽऽयतनेनान्वेति विद्वां यत्तच्छान्तमजरममृतमभयं परं चेति।

प्रश्न. उ. (5. 6-7).

तिस्रस्त्रिसंख्याका अकारोकारमकाराख्या ओंकारस्य मात्राः मृत्युमत्यः, मृत्युर्यासां विद्यते ता मृत्युमत्यो मृत्युगोचरादनतिक्रान्ता मृत्युगोचरा एवेत्यर्थः। ता आत्मनो ध्यानक्रियासु प्रयुक्ताः। किंचान्योन्यसक्ता इतरेतर-सम्बद्धाः। अनविप्रयुक्ता विशेषणैकैकविषय एव प्रयुक्ता विप्रयुक्ताः। न तथा विप्रयुक्ता अविप्रयुक्ता नाविप्रयुक्ता अनविप्रयुक्ताः। किं तर्हि विशेषणैकस्मिन्ध्यानकाले तिसृषु क्रियासु बाह्याभ्यन्तरमध्यमासु जाग्रत्स्वप्नसुषुप्त-स्थानपुरुषाभिध्यानलक्षणसु योगक्रियासु सम्यक्प्रयुक्तासु सम्यग्ध्यानकाले प्रयोजितासु न कम्पते न चलति ज्ञो योगी यथोक्तविभागज्ञ ओंकारस्येत्यर्थः। न तस्यैवंविदश्चलनमुपपद्यते। यस्माज्जाग्रत्स्वप्नसुषुप्तपुरुषाः सह स्थानै-र्मात्रात्रयरूपेणोकारात्मरूपेण दृष्टाः स ह्येवं विद्वांसर्वात्मभूत ओंकारमयः कुतो वा चलेत्कस्मिन्वा। शाङ्कर-भा० (5. 6).

सर्वार्थसंग्रहाथो¹ द्वितीयो मन्त्रः - ऋग्भरेतं लोकं मनुष्योपलक्षितम्। यजुर्भिरन्तरिक्षं सोमाधिष्ठितम्। सामभिः यत्तद्ब्रह्मलोकमिति तृतीयं कवयो मेघाविनो विद्यावन्त एव नाविद्वांसो वेदयन्ते। तं त्रिविधं लोकमोकारेण साधनेनापरब्रह्मलक्षणमन्वेत्यनुगच्छति विद्वान्। तेनैवोकारेण यत्तत्परं ब्रह्माक्षरं सत्यं पुरुषाख्यं शान्तं विमुक्तं जाग्रत्स्वप्नसुषुप्त्यादिविशेषसर्वप्रपञ्चविवर्जितमत एवाजरं जरावर्जितममृतं मृत्युवर्जितमत एव यस्माज्जराविक्रिया-रहितमतोऽभयम्। यस्मादेवाभयं तस्मात्परं निरतिशयम्। तदप्योकारेणाऽऽयतनेन गमनसाधनेनान्वेतीत्यर्थः।" इतिशब्दो वाक्यपरिसमाप्त्यर्थः। शाङ्करभा० (5. 7).

Svāmī N. :- The three letters¹ of Aum [if employed separately] are mortal; but when joined together in meditation on the total Reality and used properly on the activities of the external, internal, and intermediate states, the knower trembles not.

Of the three letters of the syllable Aum, *A* represents the earth, the Rig-Veda, and the waking state; *U*, the intermediate space, the Yajur-Veda, and the dream state; and *M*, heaven, the Sāma-Veda, and deep sleep. Further three deities, namely, Virāṭ, Hiraṇyagarbha, and Īśvara, control the three states respectively. (See Mā. Up. 3-5). The seeker meditating on the three letters separately, as the symbols of the three deities, attains corresponding planes after death. But he who meditates on the entire syllable Aum, bearing in mind his identity with Brahman, attains Brahmaloaka and ultimately final Liberation. While meditating, he should think of his oneness with Virāṭ, Hiraṇyagarbha, and Īśvara, and with the Supreme Brahman. There is no fear whatsoever in Brahmaloaka. (5. 6).

The wise man meditating on AUM, attains this world by means of the Rik verses; the intermediate world by means of the Yajur verses; and that which is known to the seers by means of the Sāma verses. And also through the syllable Aum he realizes that which is tranquil, free from decay, death, and fear and which is the Highest.

Svāmī N. :- The three letters of Aum, associated with three sounds, have been described above. There is another aspect of Aum, known as the ardhamaṭrā, or half letter, an undifferentiated sound which lingers after the three differentiated sounds die away [disappear]. This is called the Fourth and is used as the symbol of Turiya, or Pure Consciousness, the attributeless Brahman. (Mā. Up. 12).

Aum is the sound symbol of Brahman, the first sound produced at the beginning

¹ This is a very important statement. The Śruti ordains : If the aspirant meditates separately on each of the three letters consisting of A u m, he is born again in this world. (see V. 3-4). This is because A, U, and M, taken separately, do not constitute Brahman, the realization of which alone enables one to transcend death. A U M is not the real *Om*.

To give an example of this phenomenon from our mundane world : Sherbet is a prepared mixed drink made of many constituent ingredients like elā, marica, lavaṅga, sugar, and fragrance. These taken individually or separately have no taste of the desired kind. But when they are mixed and constitute a whole drink they generate a unique taste. This is a case of analysis vs. synthesis. A-U-M is the analytic form, while *Om* represents the whole पूर्ण। Let us recall the dictum of the ālaṅkārikas -- प्रपाणकरसन्यायाच्चर्व्यमाणो रसो भवेत्।

of creation. The creator, Brahmā, with the help of Aum, manifests the three principal Vedas and the three worlds. Further, the three letters of Aum comprise the three feet of the Gāyatrī. From A was produced the first foot of Gāyatrī : *Tat savitur varenyam*—"That which is adored by the Sun"—which was expanded into the Rig-Veda; from U, the second foot : *Bhargo devasya dhīmahī* — "We meditate on that which is the power of the deity"—which was expanded into the Yajur-Veda; and from M, the third foot; *dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt*—"May He awaken our consciousness"—which was expanded into the Sāma-Veda. The Atharva-Veda dealing mostly with sacrifices and rituals, is excluded from the Trayī, or Vedic triad. (5. 7).

काठकोपनिषद्

सर्वे वेदा यत्पदमामनन्ति
तपांसि सर्वाणि च यद्ददन्ति ।
यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति
तत्ते पदं सङ्ग्रहेण ब्रवीम्योम्
इत्येतत् ॥ (कठ. 1. 2. 15).¹



इत्येवं पृष्टवते मृत्युरुवाच पृष्टं वस्तु विशेषणान्तरं च विवक्षन्—सर्वे वेदा यत्पदं पदनीयं गमनीयमविभागेनाऽऽमनन्ति प्रतिपादयन्ति, तपांसि सर्वाणि च यद्ददन्ति यत्प्राप्त्यर्थानीत्यर्थः। यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं गुरुकुलवासलक्षणम् अन्यद्वा ब्रह्मप्राप्त्यर्थं चरन्ति, तत्ते तुभ्यं पदं यज्जातुमिच्छसि सङ्ग्रहेण संक्षेपतो ब्रवीमि, ओमित्येतत्। तदेतत्पदं यद्बुभूत्सितं त्वया तदेतदोमित्योऽशब्दवाच्यमोऽशब्दप्रतीकं च। शाङ्करभा० (1. 2. 15).

"Om : Pronounced ōm, as in home. Om is the most sacred word of the Vedas and may be compared to the Word referred to by St. John in the opening of the Fourth Gospel : "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." According to Hindu philosophy, the whole of this universe has name and form (nāmarūpa) as the conditions of its manifestation. The form is its outer crust, of which the name or idea is the inner essence of kernel. The name is inseparable from a word or sound. The universe perceived by the five senses is the form, behind which stands the eternal, inexpensible Sphoṭa, the Word or Logos. This eternal Sphoṭa, the essential, beginningless material of all ideas or names, is the power through which the Lord creates the universe; nay, the Lord first becomes conditioned as the Sphoṭa, by His own Māyā and then evolves Himself as the more concrete sense-perceived universe. The symbol of the Sphoṭa is Om, also written [wrongly] Aum. Since a word is inseparable from its idea, Om and the eternal Sphoṭa are inseparable. Therefore, the eternal Om is the mother or source of all names or forms, and hence is the holiest of all the holy words. There may be other words to denote the eternal and inexpensible Sphoṭa; but the Hindus contend that Om is a unique word and uniquely apposite. The

¹ See also the *Upanishads*, v. 1, pp. 75, 138-39.

Sphoṭa is the material or foundation of all sounds and words, which are inseparable from names or ideas; yet it is not any definite fully formed word. That is to say, if all the peculiarities that distinguish one word from another be removed, then what remains will be the Sphoṭa or *Om*. Therefore, Om is called the Nāda-Brahman, the Sound Brahman. The three letters *A*, *U*, and *M*, pronounced in combination as *Om*, are the generalized symbol of all possible sounds. *A* is the root sound, the key, pronounced without the tongue's touching any part of the palate. It is the least differentiated of all sounds. Again, all articulate sounds are produced in the space between the root of the tongue and the lips : the throat sound is *A*, and *M* is the last sound. *U* represents the rolling forward of the impulse that begins at the root of the tongue and ends at the lips. If properly pronounced, *Om* will represent the whole gamut of sound-production; and no other word can do this. Therefore *Om* is the fittest symbol of the Sphoṭa, the logos, the Word "which was at the beginning." As the Sphoṭa, being the finer aspect of the manifested universe, is nearer to the Lord and is, indeed, the first manifestation of His divine wisdom, *Om* is the true symbol of God.¹ It is the symbol both of the Personal God (in His aspect of Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer) and of Impersonal Reality. *A*, *U*, and *M* represent, respectively, creation, preservation, and destruction. As has been said above, all articulate sounds lie between *A* and *M*. The undifferentiated, gong-like sound that comes at the end of the utterance of *Om*, when the *M* sound is prolonged, is the symbol of Impersonal and Transcendental Reality. *Om* is eternally existent. It was not invented by any man, but was revealed to pure-souled mystics when in meditation, their minds communed with the Highest." (कठ. 1. ii. 15). (See also p. 75 of V.1. of the *Upanishads*).

The Upanishads speak of *Om* as the most efficient symbol of Brahman. All seekers of Truth—meditating on Brahman with or without attributes—can use this symbol.

एतद्ब्रुचेवाक्षरं ब्रह्म एतद्ब्रुचेवाक्षरं परम् ।
एतद्ब्रुचेवाक्षरं ज्ञात्वा यो यदिच्छति तस्य तत् ॥ (कठ. 1. 2. 16).

अतः—एतद्ब्रुचेवाक्षरं ब्रह्मापरमेतद्ब्रुचेवाक्षरं परं च । तयोर्हि प्रतीकमेतदक्षरम् । एतद्ब्रुचेवाक्षरं ज्ञात्वोपास्य ब्रह्मेति यो यदिच्छति परमपरं वा तस्य तद्भवति । परं चेज्जातव्यमपरं चेत्प्राप्तव्यम् । शाङ्करभा० (1. 2. 16).

Svāmī N. :— This syllable *Om* is indeed Brahman. This syllable is the Highest. Whosoever knows this syllable obtains all that he desires.

Notes : Brahman : Here the word means Saguṇa Brahma, or Brahman associated with creation, preservation, destruction.

The Highest : That is to say, the attributeless Absolute, or Pure Consciousness.

The worshipper of Saguṇa Brahma goes, after death, to Brahmaloaka. But, he

¹ This interpretation of Om is taken [by N.] from Bhakti-Yoga by Svāmī Vivekānanda.

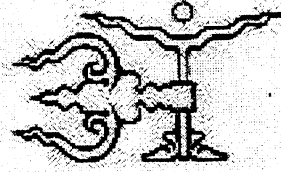
who has realized the Absolute merges in It at the time of death; he is no longer subject to the illusion of birth and death.

एतदालम्बनं श्रेष्ठमेतदालम्बनं परम्।
एतदालम्बनं ज्ञात्वा ब्रह्मलोके महीयते ॥(कठ. 1. 2. 17).

यत एवमतः - एतदालम्बनमेतद्ब्रह्मप्राप्त्यालम्बनानां श्रेष्ठं प्रशस्यतमम्। एतदालम्बनं परमपरं च परापर-
ब्रह्मविषयत्वात्। एतदालम्बनं ज्ञात्वा ब्रह्मलोके महीयते, परस्मिन्ब्रह्मण्यपरस्मिंश्च, ब्रह्मभूतो ब्रह्मवदुपास्यो
भवतीत्यर्थः। शाङ्करभा० (1. 2. 17).

Svāmī N. :— This is the best support; this is the highest support. Whosoever knows this support is adored in the world of Brahmā.

Om is the best means for the attainment of Brahmāloka and also for the realization of one's identity with Pure Consciousness. The worshipper of Om communes with Brahman alone, either in Its relative or in Its absolute aspect. He who has realized the true significance of Om is worshipped like Brahmā Himself.



छान्दोग्योपनिषद्

स च सामावयवभेदो ब्रह्मवाचक आत्मबोधकाक्षररूपश्च। तदेतत् छा० उप० भाष्य-
योर्दर्शितं यथा :-

"ओमित्येतदक्षरमुद्गीथमुपासीत। ओमिति ह्युद्गायति तस्योपव्याख्यानम्।" छा० उ०
(1. 1. 1).¹

ओमित्येतदक्षरमुपासीत। ओमित्येतदक्षरं परमात्मनोऽभिधानं नेदिष्ठम्। तस्मिन्हि प्रयुज्यमाने स प्रसीदति प्रिय-
नामग्रहण इव लोकः। तदिहेतिपरं प्रयुक्तमभिधायकत्वाद् व्यावर्तितं शब्दस्वरूपमात्रं प्रतीयते। तथा चार्चादि-
वत्परस्याऽऽत्मनः प्रतीकं सम्पद्यते। एवं नामत्वेन प्रतीकत्वेन च परमात्मोपासनसाधनं श्रेष्ठमिति सर्ववेदान्तेष्वगतम्।
जपकर्मस्वाध्यायाद्यन्तरेषु च बहुशः प्रयोगात्प्रसिद्धमस्य श्रेष्ठ्यम्। अतस्तदेतदक्षरं वर्णात्मकमुद्गीथभक्त्यवयवत्वा-
दुद्गीथशब्दवाच्यमुपासीत। कर्माङ्गावयवभूत ओंकारे परमात्मप्रतीके दृढामैकाग्रचलक्षणां मतिं सन्तनुयात्।
स्वयमेव श्रुतिरोंकारस्योद्गीथशब्दवाच्यत्वे हेतुमाह--ओमिति ह्युद्गायति। ओमित्यारभ्य हि यस्मादुद्गायत्यत
उद्गीथ ओंकार इत्यर्थः। तस्योपव्याख्यानं तस्याक्षरस्योपव्याख्यानमेवमुपासनमेवंविभूत्येवंफलमित्यादिकथनमुप-

¹ MRI ed. p. 6 ff.

उपनिषदादि—

व्याख्यानम् । प्रवर्तत इति वाक्यशेषः¹ । शाङ्करभा० (1. 1. 1).

Svāmi N. :—The syllable *OM*, called the Udgītha, should be meditated upon; for people sing the Udgītha, beginning with *Om*.

Now follows the [detailed] explanation [of the syllable] :

Om : The syllable *Om* is uttered at the beginning and the end of a hymn. The same *Om* is a symbol and the dearest name of the Supreme Self. The text describes its symbolic nature. The seeker is asked to use *Om* as a support of meditation.

Udgītha : A hymn of the Sāma-Veda. A part of the ritualistic worship laid down in the Sāma-Veda, this hymn is sung at the time of a sacrifice. *Om*, again, is a part of the Udgītha hymn.

"एषां भूतानां पृथिवी रसः। पृथिव्या आपो रसः। अपामोषधयो रसः। ओषधीनां पुरुषो रसः। पुरुषस्य वाग्रसः। वाच ऋग्रसः। ऋचः साम रसः। साम्न उद्गीथो रसः।
छा. उ. (1. 1. 2).

एषां चराचराणां भूतानां पृथिवी रसो गतिः परायणमवष्टम्भः। पृथिव्या आपो रसोऽप्सु ह्योता च प्रोता च पृथिव्यतस्ता रसः पृथिव्या। अपामोषधयो रसोऽप्परिणामत्वादोषधीनाम्। तासां पुरुषो रसोऽन्नपरिणामत्वात् पुरुषस्य। तस्यापि पुरुषस्य वाग्रसः। पुरुषावयवानां हि वाक्सारिष्ठा। अतो वाक्पुरुषस्य रस उच्यते। तस्या अपि वाच ऋग्रसः सास्तरा। ऋचः साम रसः सास्तरम्। तस्यापि साम्न उद्गीथः प्रकृतत्वादोकारः सास्तरः।
शाङ्करभा० (1. 1. 2)

Svāmi N. :— The essence of [all] these beings is the earth; the essence of the earth is water; the essence of water is plants; the essence of plants is a person; the essence of a person is speech; the essence of speech is the Rig-Veda; the essence of the Rig-Veda is the Sāma-Veda; the essence of the Sāma-Veda is the Udgītha [which is *Om*].

"The word *rasa* in the text is explained in different ways—an essence, origin, support, end, cause, and effect. *Rasa* means, originally, the sap of the trees. That sap may be conceived either as the essence extracted from the tree, or as what gives vigour and life to a tree. In the former case it might be transferred to the conception of effect, in the latter to that cause. In our sentence it has sometimes the one, sometimes the other, meaning. Earth is the support of all beings; water pervades the earth; plants arise from water; man lives by plants; speech is the best part of man; the Rig-Veda the best part of speech; the Sāma-Veda the best extract from the Rik; the Udgītha or the syllable *Om*, the crown of the Sāma-Veda." (Max Mueller).

¹ स्वयमेव . . . वाक्यशेषः—These words of bhāṣyam are not in *Vācaspatyam*. We are following Śaṅkarācārya disregarding the *Vācaspatyam*.

स एष रसानां रसतमः परमः परार्धोऽष्टमो यदुद्गीथः। छा. उ. (1. 1. 3).

एवं स एष उद्गीथाख्य ओंकारो भूतादीनामुत्तरोत्तररसानामतिशयेन रसो रसतमः। परमः परमात्मप्रतीक-
त्वात्। परार्धोऽर्धं स्थानं, परं च तदर्धं च परार्धं तदर्हतीति परार्धः परमात्मस्थानार्हः परमात्मवदुपास्यत्वाद्
इत्यभिप्रायः। अष्टमः पृथिव्यादिरससंख्यायां यदुद्गीथो य उद्गीथः। शाङ्करभा० (1. 1. 3).

Svāmī N. :— The Udgītha (Om) is the best of all essences, the Supreme, deserving
the highest place, the eighth.

Notes : Supreme : Because it represents the Supreme Self.

Deservingplace : On account of its being the object of meditation.

Eighth : It is the eighth or the last in the series of essences described in verse 2.

कतमा कतमर्कतमत्कतमत्साम कतमः कतम उद्गीथ इति विमृष्टं भवति। छा. उ.
(1. 1. 4).

वाच ऋग्रस इत्युक्तम्। कतमा सर्कतमत्साम कतमो वा स उद्गीथः। कतमा कतमेति वीप्साऽऽदरार्था।
ननु "वा बहूनां जातिपरिग्रहे डतमच्"। न ह्यत्र ऋगजातिबहुत्वं कथं डतमच्चयोगः। नैष दोषः। जातौ परिग्रहो
जातिपरिग्रह इत्येतस्मिन्विग्रहे जातावृग्व्यक्तीनां बहुत्वोपपत्तेः। न तु जातेः परिग्रह इति विगृह्यते। ननु जातेः
परिग्रह इत्यस्मिन्विग्रहे कतमः कठ इत्याद्युदाहरणमुपपन्नम्, जातौ परिग्रह इत्यत्र तु न युज्यते। तत्रापि कठादि-
जातावेव व्यक्तिबहुत्वाभिप्रायेण परिग्रह इत्यदोषः। यदि जातेः परिग्रहः स्यात्कतमा कतमर्गित्यादावुपसंख्यानं
कर्त्तव्यं स्यात्। विमृष्टं भवति विमर्शः कृतो भवति। शाङ्करभा० (1. 1. 4).

Svāmī N. :— What, then, is the Rik? What is the Sāman? What is the Udgītha?
This is to be considered.

वागेवर्क प्राणः साम ओमित्येतदक्षरमुद्गीथः तद्वा एतन्मिथुनं यद्वाक्च प्राणश्चर्क
साम च। छा. उ. (1. 1. 5).

विमर्शो हि कृते सति प्रतिवचनोक्तिरुपपन्ना वागेवर्कप्राणः सामेति। वागृचोरेकत्वेऽपि नाष्टमत्वव्याघातः।
पूर्वस्माद्वाक्यान्तरत्वादाप्तिगुणसिद्धय ओमित्येतदक्षरमुद्गीथ इति। वाक्प्राणावृक्सामयोनी इति वागेवर्कप्राणः
सामेत्युच्यते। यथाक्रममृक्सामयोर्वाक्प्राणयोर्ग्रहणे हि सर्वासामृचां सर्वेषां च साम्नामव रोधः कृतः स्यात्।
सर्वक्सामावरोधे चक्सामसाध्यानां च सर्वकर्मणामवरोधः कृतः स्यात्। तदवरोधे च सर्वे कामा अवरुद्धाः स्युः।
ओमित्येतदक्षरमुद्गीथ इति भक्त्याशंका निवर्त्यते। तद्वा एतदिति मिथुनं निर्दिश्यते। किं तन्मिथुनमित्याह यद्वाक्च
प्राणश्च सर्वमृक्सामकारणभूतौ मिथुनम्। ऋक्च साम चेति ऋक्सामकारणावृक्सामशब्दोक्तावित्यर्थः। न तु
स्वतन्त्रमृक्च साम च मिथुनम्। अन्यथा हि वाक्च प्राणश्चेत्येकं मिथुनमृक्साम चापरं मिथुनमिति द्वे मिथुने
स्याताम्। तथा च तदेतन्मिथुनमित्येकवचननिर्देशोऽनुपपन्नः स्यात्। तस्मादृक्सामयोर्वाक्प्राणयोरेव मिथुनत्वम्।
शाङ्करभा० (1. 1. 5).

Svāmī N. :— The reply to the questions raised in the following verse :

Speech, indeed, is the Rik; the vital breath (prāṇa) is the Sāman; the syllable Om is the Udgītha. Speech and the prāṇa, or Rik and the Sāman, form a couple.

"Since speech and the prāṇa are the sources of the Riks and the Sāmans, speech is therefore said to be the Rik and the prāṇa to be the Sāman. By mentioning speech and the prāṇa as the sources of the Riks and the Sāmans respectively, all Riks and all Sāmans become included; and by this inclusion of Riks and Sāmans, all actions performed by means of Riks and Sāmans become included; and the inclusion of these covers all desirable ends." (Śaṅkarācārya). Thus Om covers all desirable ends.

तदेतन्मिथुनमोमित्येतस्मिन्नक्षरे संसृज्यते। यदा वै मिथुनौ समागच्छत आपयतो वै तावन्योन्यस्य कामम्। छा. उ. (1. 1. 6).

तदेतदेवंलक्षणं मिथुनमोमित्येतस्मिन्नक्षरे संसृज्यते। एवं सर्वकामावाप्तिगुणविशिष्टं मिथुनमोकारे संसृष्टं विद्यत इत्योकारस्य सर्वकामावाप्तिगुणवत्त्वं प्रसिद्धम्। वाङ्मयत्वमोकारस्य प्राणनिष्पाद्यत्वं च मिथुनेन संसृष्टत्वं मिथुनस्य कामापयितृत्वं प्रसिद्धमिति दृष्टान्त उच्यते। यथा लोके मिथुनौ मिथुनावयवौ स्त्रीपुंसौ यदा समागच्छतो ग्राम्यधर्मतया संयुज्येयातां तदाऽऽपयतः प्रापयतोऽन्योन्यस्येतेरेतस्य तौ कामम्। तथा च स्वात्मानुप्रविष्टेन मिथुनेन सर्वकामाप्तिगुणवत्त्वमोकार सिद्धमित्यभप्रायः। शाङ्करभा० (1. 1. 6).

Svāmī N. :— And that couple become united in the syllable *Om*. When a pair come together they fulfill each other's desires.

Notes : Because speech and the prāṇa become United in the syllable *Om*, it is endowed with the power of fulfilling all desires.

आपयिता ह वै कामानां भवति य एतदेवं विद्वानक्षरमुद्गीथमुपास्ते। छा. उ. (1. 1. 7).

तदुपासकोऽप्युद्गाता तद्धर्मा भवतीत्याह—आपयिता ह वै कामानां यजमानस्य भवति य एतदक्षरमेवम् आप्तिगुणवदुद्गीथमुपास्ते तस्यैतच्चथोक्तं फलमित्यर्थः। "तं यथा यथोपासते तदेव भवति" इति श्रुतेः। शाङ्करभा० (1. 1. 7).

Svāmī N. :— He who knows this [as stated above] and meditates on the syllable *Om*, the Udgītha, becomes, indeed, a fulfiller of desires.

The scriptures say that as a person meditates, so he becomes.

तद्वा एतदनुज्ञाक्षरं यद्धि किंचानुजानात्योमित्येव तदाह एषो एव समृद्धिर्यदनुज्ञा समर्धयिता ह वै कामानां भवति य एतदेवं विद्वानक्षरमुद्गीथमुपास्ते। छा. उ. (1. 1. 8).

समृद्धिगुणवांशचोकारः। कथम्—तद्वा एतत्प्रकृतमनुज्ञाक्षरमनुज्ञा च साऽक्षरं च तत्। अनुज्ञाऽनुमतिरोकार इत्यर्थः। कथमनुज्ञेत्याह श्रुतिरेव। यदि किञ्च यत्किञ्च लोके ज्ञानं धनं वाऽनुजानाति विद्वान्धनी वा तत्रानुमतिं कुर्वन्नोमित्येव तदाह। तथा च वेदे "त्रयस्त्रिंशदित्योमिति होवाच" इत्यादिना। तथा च लोकेऽपि तवेदं धनं गृहणामीत्युक्त ओमित्याह। अत एषा उ एवैषैव समृद्धिर्यदनुज्ञा याऽनुज्ञा सा समृद्धिः तन्मूलत्वादनुज्ञायाः। समृद्धो ह्योमित्यनुज्ञां ददाति तस्मात् समृद्धिगुणवानोकार इत्यर्थः। समृद्धिगुणोपासकत्वात्तद्धर्मा सन्समर्घयिता ह वै कामानां यजमानस्य भवति। य एतदेवं विद्वानक्षरमुद्गीथमुपास्ते इत्यादि पूर्ववत्। शाङ्करभा० (1. 1. 8).

Svāmī N. :— This syllable *Om* is used to give assent, for wherever one assents to something, one says *Om* (yes). Now what is assent is gratification. He who knows this and meditates on the syllable *Om*, the Udgītha, becomes, indeed, a gratifier of desires.

Notes :— To give assent : when a person says something to another person, the latter, if he acquiesces in it, indicates his acquiescence by saying simply *Om*.

What . . .Gratification : If someone seeks wealth from a rich person, the latter gives his assent by saying *Om*. Assent is gratification because it is the source of the latter. A person who is fully gratified acquiesces in the gift. Thus this passage means that *Om* is endowed with the virtue of gratification.

तेनेयं त्रयी विद्या वर्तते ओमित्याश्रावयति ओमिति शंसति ओमित्युद्गायति एतस्य एवाक्षरस्यापचित्यै महिम्ना रसेन। छा. उ. (1. 1. 9).

अथेदानीमक्षरं स्तौत्युपासस्यत्वात्प्ररोचनार्थम्। कथं, तेनाक्षरेण प्रकृतेनेयमृगवेदादिलक्षणा त्रयी विद्या त्रयी-विद्याविहितं कर्मैत्यर्थः। न हि त्रयी विद्यैवाऽऽश्रावणादिभिर्वर्तते कर्म तु तथा प्रवर्तत इति प्रसिद्धम्। कथमोमित्या-श्रावयत्योमिति शंसत्योमित्युद्गायतीति लिङ्गाच्च सोमयाग इति गम्यते। तच्च कर्मतस्यैवाक्षरस्यापचित्यै पूजार्थम्। परमात्मप्रतीकं हि तत्। तदपचितिः परमात्मन एव सा। "स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः" इति स्मृतेः। महिम्ना रसेन। किञ्चित्तस्यैवाक्षरस्य महिम्ना महत्त्वेन ऋत्विग्यजमानादिप्राणैरित्यर्थः। तथैतस्यैवाक्षरस्य रसेन व्रीहिययवादि रसनैर्वृत्तेन हविषेत्यर्थः। यागहोमाद्यक्षरेण क्रियते। तच्चाऽऽदित्यमुपतिष्ठते। ततो वृष्ट्यादिक्रमेण प्राणोऽन्नं जायते प्राणैरन्नै च यज्ञस्तायते। अत उच्यतेऽक्षरस्य महिम्ना रसेनेति। शाङ्करभा० (1. 1. 9).

Svāmī N. :— By means of this [syllable] the threefold knowledge proceeds. When the [adhvaryu] priest gives an order [in a sacrifice], he says *Om*. When the [hotri] priest recites the [hymn], he says *Om*. When the [Udgītha] priest sings [the Sāman], he says *Om*. All this is done for the glory of the Imperishable [Ātman] by the greatness of that syllable and by its essence.

"These are allusions to sacrificial technicalities, all intended to show the importance of the syllable *Om*, partly as a mere word used at the sacrifices, partly as the mysterious name of the Highest Self. As every priest at the Soma sacrifices, in which three classes of priests are always engaged, has to begin his part of the ceremonial with *Om*, therefore the whole sacrifice is said to be dependent on the syllable *Om*, and to be for the glory of that syllable, as an emblem of the Highest Self, a knowledge of whom is the indirect result of all sacrifices. The greatness of *Om* is

explained by the vital breaths of the priest, the sacrificer, and his wife; its essence by rice, corn, etc., which constitute the oblations. Why breath and food are due to the syllable *Om* is explained by the sacrifice, which is dependent upon that syllable, ascending to the sun, the sun sending rain, rain producing food, and food providing breath and life." (Max Mueller).

तेनोभौ कुरुतः यश्चैतदेवं वेद यश्च न वेद। नाना तु विद्या चाविद्या च। यदेव विद्यया करोति श्रद्धयोपनिषदा तदेव वीर्यवत्तरं भवतीति खल्वेतस्यैवाक्षरस्योपव्याख्यानं भवति। छा. उ. (1. 1. 10).

तत्राक्षरविज्ञानवतः कर्म कर्तव्यमिति स्थितमाक्षिपति -- तेनाक्षरेणोभौ यश्चैतदक्षरमेवं व्याख्यातं वेद यश्च कर्ममात्रविदक्षरयाथात्म्यं न वेद तावुभौ कुरुतः कर्म। तयोश्च कर्मसामर्थ्यादेव फलं स्यात् किं तत्राक्षरयाथात्म्य-विज्ञानेनेति। दृष्टं हि लोके हरीतकीं भक्षयतोस्तद्रसाभिज्ञेतयोर्विरेचनम्। नैवम्। यस्मान्नाना तु विद्या चाविद्या च। भिन्ने हि विद्याविद्ये। तुशब्दः पक्षव्यावृत्त्यर्थः। नोकारस्य कर्मागतत्वमात्रविज्ञानमेव रसतमाप्तिसमृद्धिगुणवद्विज्ञानं, किं तर्हि ततोऽभ्यधिकम्। तस्मात्तदङ्गाधिक्यात् फलाधिक्यं युक्तमित्यभिप्रायः। दृष्टं हि लोके वणिक्शबरयोः पद्मरागादिमणिविक्रये वणिजो विज्ञानाधिक्यात्फलाधिक्यम्। तस्माद्यदेव विद्यया विज्ञानेन युक्तः सन्करोति कर्म श्रद्धया श्रद्धानश्च सन्नुपनिषदा योगेन युक्तश्चेत्यर्थः। तदेव कर्म वीर्यवत्तरमविद्वत्कर्मणोऽधिकफलं भवतीति। विद्वत्कर्मणो वीर्यवत्तरत्ववचनादविदुषोऽपि कर्म वीर्यवदेव भवतीत्यभिप्रायः। न चाविदुषः कर्मण्यनधिकारः। औषस्त्ये काण्डेऽविदुषामप्यात्विज्यदर्शनात्। रसतमाप्तिसमृद्धिगुणवदक्षरमित्येकमुपासनम्। मध्ये प्रयत्नान्तरादर्शनात्। अनेकैर्हि विशेषणैरनेकघोषास्यत्वात्खल्वेतस्यैव प्रकृतस्योद्गीथाख्यस्याक्षरस्योपव्याख्यानं भवति। शाङ्करभा० (1. 1. 10).

Svāmī N. :— [It may be contended] that he who knows this [true meaning of the syllable *Om*] and he who does not, perform the same sacrifice [and therefore must reap the same fruit]. But [this is not so]. [The results of] knowledge and ignorance are different. Work that is done with knowledge, faith, and the Upaniṣad (i.e. meditation on the deities) produces the more powerful fruit.

He who simply pronounces the syllable *Om* as a part of his recitation at a sacrifice, and he who knows the real meaning of that syllable, both may perform the same sacrifice; but the sacrifice performed by the latter is the more powerful, because knowledge is better than ignorance. One must perform rituals with knowledge arising from meditation on the deity, and not mechanically.

तान्यभ्यतपत्तेभ्योऽभितप्तेभ्य ओंकारः सम्प्रास्रवत्। तद्यथा शङ्कुना सर्वाणि पर्णानि सन्तृण्णान्येवमोकारेण सर्वा वाक्सन्तृण्णोकार एवेदं सर्वमोकार एवेदं सर्वम्। (छान्दो० उप० 2. 23. 3).

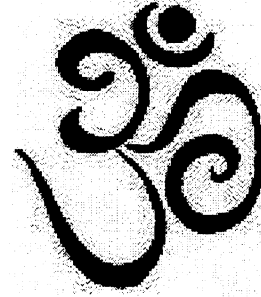
तान्यक्षराण्यभ्यतपत्तेभ्योऽभितप्तेभ्य ओंकारः सम्प्रास्रवत्तद्ब्रह्म, कीदृशमित्याह— तद्यथा शङ्कुना पर्णनालेन सर्वाणि पर्णानि पत्रावयवजातानि सन्तृण्णानि निविद्धानि व्याप्तानीत्यर्थः। एवमोकारेण ब्रह्मणा परमात्मनः प्रतीकभूतेन सर्वा वाक्शब्दजातं सन्तृण्णा। "अकारो वै सर्वा वाक्" इत्यादिश्रुतेः। परमात्मविकारश्च

नामधेयमात्रमित्यत ओंकार एवेदं सर्वमिति । द्विरभ्यास आदरार्थः । लोकादिनिष्पादनकथनमोंकारस्तुत्यर्थमिति । (शाङ्करभा० 2. 23. 3).

Svāmī N. :— He brooded on them (the three syllables), and from them, thus brooded upon, there issued forth *Om*. As all leaves [or, various parts of a leaf ? MLN] are held together by the midrib. So is all speech held together by *Om* (Brahman). *Om* is all this, yea, *Om* is all this. (2. 23. 3).

Note :—What has been presented above is a selective extract from the *Vācaspatyam*. We have incorporated the scriptures, translations and other writings from other works including translations of Svāmī Nikhilānanda. As far as the classical texts are concerned we have gone to the originals, the very sources of the *Vācaspatyam* itself.

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ब्रह्मसूत्रशाङ्करभाष्येऽक्षरोद्गीथविवेचनम्

व्याप्तेश्च समञ्जसम् । वेसू. 3. 3. 9.

"ओमित्येतदक्षरमुद्गीथमुपासीत" (छा० 1. 1. 1) इत्यत्राक्षरोद्गीथशब्दयोः सामानाधिकरण्ये श्रूयमाणेऽध्यासापवादकत्वविशेषणपक्षाणां प्रतिभासनात्कतमोऽत्र पक्षो व्याप्यः स्यादिति विचारः । तत्राध्यासो नाम--द्वयोः वस्तुनोः अनिवर्ततायामेवान्यतरबुद्ध्यावन्यतरबुद्धिरध्यस्यते । यस्मिन्नितरबुद्धिरध्यस्यतेऽनुवर्तत एव तस्मिंस्तद्वुद्धिरध्यस्ते-तरबुद्ध्यावपि । यथा नाम्नि ब्रह्मबुद्ध्यावध्यस्यमानायामप्यनुवर्तत एव नामबुद्धिर्न ब्रह्मबुद्ध्या निवर्तते । यथा वा प्रतिमादिषु विष्ण्वादिबुद्ध्यध्यासः । एवमिहाप्यक्षर उद्गीथबुद्धिरध्यस्यत उद्गीथे वाक्षरबुद्धिरिति । अपवादो नाम -- यत्र कस्मिंश्चिद्द्वस्तुनि पूर्वनिविष्टायां मिथ्याबुद्धौ निश्चितायां पश्चादुपजायमाना यथार्था बुद्धिः पूर्वनिविष्टाया मिथ्याबुद्धेर्निवर्तिका भवति । यथा देहेन्द्रियसंघात आत्मबुद्धिरात्मन्येवात्मबुद्ध्या पश्चाद्भाविन्या "तत्त्वमसि" (छा० 6. 8. 7) इत्यनया यथार्थबुद्ध्या निवर्त्यते । यथा वा दिग्भ्रान्तिबुद्धिर्दिग्गयाथात्म्यबुद्ध्या निवर्त्यते । एवमिहाप्यक्षरबुद्ध्योद्गीथबुद्धिर्निवर्त्यत उद्गीथबुद्ध्या वाक्षरबुद्धिरिति । एकत्वं त्वक्षरोद्गीथशब्दयोरनतिरिक्तार्थवृत्तित्वम् । यथा द्विजोत्तमो ब्राह्मणो भूमिदेव इति । विशेषणं पुनः सर्ववेदव्यापिन ओमित्येतस्याक्षरस्य ग्रहणप्रसङ्गा औद्गात्रविशेषस्य समर्पणम् । यथा नीलं यदुत्पलं तदानयेति । एवमिहाप्युद्गीथो य ॐकारस्तमुपासीतेति । एवम् एतस्मिन्सामानाधिकरण्ये वाक्ये विमृश्यमान एते पक्षाः प्रतिभान्ति तत्रान्यतमनिर्धारणकारणाभावादिनिर्धारणप्राप्ताविदमुच्यते-- व्याप्तेश्च समञ्जसमिति । चशब्दोऽयं तुशब्दस्थाननिवेशी पक्षत्रयव्यावर्तनप्रयोजनः । तदिह त्रयः पक्षाः सावद्या इति पर्युदस्यन्ते । विशेषणपक्ष एवैको निरखद्य इत्युपादीयते । तत्राध्यासे तावद्या बुद्धिरितरत्राध्यस्यते तच्छब्दस्य लक्षणावृत्तित्वं प्रसज्येत तत्फलं च कल्प्येत । श्रूयत एव फलम् "आपयिता ह वै कामानां भवति" (छा० 1. 1. 7) इत्यादीति चेत्, न । तस्यान्यफलत्वात् । आप्यादिदृष्टिफलं हि तन्नोद्गीथाध्यासफलम् । अपवादेऽपि समानः फलाभावः । मिथ्याज्ञाननिवृत्तिः फलमिति चेत्, न । पुरुषार्थोपयोगानवगमात् । न कदाचिदप्यो कारादोंकारबुद्धिर्निवर्तत उद्गीथाद्गोद्गीथबुद्धिः । न चेदं वाक्यं वस्तुतत्त्वप्रतिपादनपरम् । उपासनाविधिपरत्वात् । नाप्येकत्वपक्षः सङ्गच्छते । निष्प्रयोजनं हि तदा शब्दद्वयोच्चारणं स्यात् । एकेनैव विवक्षितार्थसमर्पणात् । न च हौत्रविषय आध्वर्यवविषये वाऽक्षर ओंकारशब्दवाच्य उद्गीथशब्दप्रसिद्धिरस्ति । नापि सकलायां साम्नो द्वितीयायां भक्तावुद्गीथशब्दवाच्यायामोंकारशब्दप्रसिद्धिर्यनानतिरिक्तार्थता स्यात् । परिशेषाद्विशेषण-

उपनिषदादि-

पक्षः परिगृह्यते । व्याप्तेः-सर्ववेदसाधारण्यात् । सर्वव्याप्यक्षरमिह मा प्रसञ्जीत्यत उद्गीथशब्देनाक्षरं विशेष्यते । कथं नाम ? उद्गीथावयवभूत ओंकारो गृह्येतेति । नन्वस्मिन्नपि पक्षे समाना लक्षणा । उद्गीथशब्दस्यावयव-लक्षणार्थत्वात् । सत्यमेवमेतत् । लक्षणायामपि तु संनिकर्षविप्रकषौ¹ भवत एव । अध्यासपक्षे ह्यर्थान्तरबुद्धिरर्था-न्तरे निक्षिप्यत इति विप्रकषा लक्षणा, विशेषणपक्षे त्ववयवविवचनेन शब्देनावयवः समर्प्यत इति संनिकृष्टा । समुदा-येषु हि प्रवृत्ताः शब्दा अवयवेष्वपि प्रवर्तमाना दृष्टाः पटग्रामादिषु । अतश्च व्याप्तेः हेतोरमित्येतदक्षरमित्येत-स्याद्गीथमित्येतद् विशेषणमिति समञ्जसमेतन्निरवद्यमित्यर्थः । शाङ्करभा० (वेसू. 3. 3. 9).

Svāmī G.¹ :—च and व्याप्तेः, because of the pervasion (of all the Vedas), समञ्जसम् it is proper (to qualify *Om* by Udgītha).

Since Om pervades all the Vedas, it is appropriate to qualify it by the word Udgītha.

The word "and", used in place of word "but", is meant for ruling out the three other alternatives. The three other alternatives, being defective in the present context, are rejected, while the adjectival alternative alone is accepted as it is faultless. Now, on accepting superimposition, the word denoting the idea that is to be superimposed on the other will be subject to a metaphorical interpretation, and a result also for it will have to be imagined.

Opponent : But the result is stated by the Upaniṣad itself in, "It becomes indeed the gratifier of desires" etc. (Ch. 1. 1. 7).

Vedāntin : No, since it is the result of another thing, it being the result of the meditation on (*Om* as possessed of) the qualities of being the fulfiller of desires, and so on, and not of the superimposition of Udgītha. As regards ablation also, the absence of a result is equally in evidence.

Opponent : The result can be the removal of false ignorance.

Vedāntin : No, since that (negation of (*Om* or Udgītha) is not known to lead to any desirable human goal. And the idea of *Om* can never be alienated from *Om*, nor can the idea of Udgītha from Udgītha (since these ideas are true). Besides, this passage does not aim at establishing the nature of anything, it being for enjoining a meditation.

The other alternative, identity, too is not appropriate, for in that case the utterance of two words (*Om* and Udgītha) would be useless, since one word alone could convey the intended idea. Moreover, (the term) Udgītha is not known to imply the idea of the word *Om* as implied by the letter *Om*, that is used along with the acts of the priest Hotā (of the Ṛgveda) or the priest Adhvaryu (of the YajurVeda). Nor is the word *Om* well known as standing for the whole of the second part of a Sāma song which is indicated by the word Udgītha, in which case alone the *Om* could have been a synonym for Udgītha. As a last resort, the adjectival alternative is accepted "on account of its being common to all the Vedas. Lest the letter *Om* extending over all the Vedas be taken up here, the letter *Om* is qualified by the word Udgītha, so that the *Om*, forming a part of Udgītha, may somehow be understood.

¹ G stands for Svāmī Gambhīrānanda, the translator.

Opponent : Is not a metaphorical interpretation necessary even from this point of view, since the word Udgītha is metaphorically made to imply a part of itself (viz. *Om*)?

Vedāntin : This is quite so; but even in the case of a figure of speech, there may be an approximation to or departure from the primary meaning. In the case of superimposition, the idea of something is superimposed on something else, so that the figure of speech here involves a departure; whereas in the case of the adjectival use, a word denoting a whole is made to imply a part of itself, so that the figure of speech involves a proximity; for words indicating the whole are seen to be used with regard to the parts as well, as in the case of a cloth or a village. (Even when a portion is burnt, people say, "The cloth is burnt" "The village is burnt"). Hence it is flawless and appropriate that *Om*, which is common to all the Vedas, should be qualified by the term "Udgītha" in the text, "the letter *Om*". (Ve. Su. 3. 3. 9).

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माण्डूक्योपनिषत्



ओमित्येतदक्षरमिदं सर्वं तस्योपव्याख्यानं भूतं भवद्भविष्यदिति सर्वमोङ्कार एव ।
यच्चान्यत्रिकालातीतं तदप्योङ्कार एव ॥ (माण्डू. उ. 1).

Svāmī N :— HARI AUM! Aum, the word, is all this [i.e. the whole universe]. A clear explanation of it is as follows : ॥ that is past, present, and future is, indeed, Aum. And whatever else there is, beyond the three fold division of time—that also is truly Aum. A

× सर्वं हचेतद्ब्रह्मायमात्मा ब्रह्म । सोऽयमात्मा चतुष्पात् ॥ (माण्डू. उ. 2).

Svāmī N. :— All this is, indeed, Brahman. This Ātman is Brahman. This same Ātman has four quarters (pādas).

जागरितस्थानो बहिष्प्रज्ञः सप्ताङ्गः एकोनविंशतिमुखः स्थूलभुग्वैश्वानरः प्रथमः
पादः ॥ (माण्डू. उ. 3).

Svāmī N. :— The first quarter is called Vaiśvānara whose sphere of activity is the waking state, who is conscious of external objects, who has seven limbs and nineteen mouths, and who is the experiencer of gross objects.

स्वप्नस्थानोऽन्तःप्रज्ञः सप्ताङ्गः एकोनविंशतिमुखः प्रविविक्तभुक्तैजसो द्वितीयः पादः ॥
(माण्डू. उ. 4).

उपनिषदादि-

Svāmī N. :— The second quarter (pāda) is Taijasa, whose sphere of activity is the dream state, who is conscious of internal objects who is endowed with seven limbs and nineteen mouths, and who is the experiencer of subtle objects.

यत्र सुप्तो न कञ्चन कामं कामयते न कञ्चन स्वप्नं पश्यति तत्सुषुप्तम् ।
सुषुप्तस्थान एकीभूतः प्रज्ञानघन एवाऽऽनन्दमयो हचानन्दभुक्चेतोमुखः
प्राज्ञस्तृतीयः पादः ॥ (माण्डू. उ. 5).

Svāmī N. :— That is the state of deep sleep wherein one asleep neither desires any object nor sees any dream. The third quarter is Prājna, whose sphere is deep sleep, in whom all experiences become unified, who is, verily, a mass of consciousness, who is full of bliss and experiences bliss, and who is the doer leading to the knowledge [of dreaming and waking].

एष सर्वेश्वर एष सर्वज्ञ एषोऽन्तर्याम्येष योनिः सर्वस्य प्रभवाप्ययौ हि भूतानाम् ॥ (माण्डू. उ. 6).

Svāmī N. :— He is the Lord of all. He is the knower of all. He is the inner controller. He is the source of all; for from him all beings originate and in him they finally disappear.

नान्तःप्रज्ञं न बहिष्प्रज्ञं नोभयतःप्रज्ञं न प्रज्ञानघनं न प्रज्ञं नाज्ञम् ।
अदृष्टमव्यवहार्यमग्राह्यमलक्षणमचिन्त्यमव्यपदेश्यमेकात्मप्रत्ययसारं प्रपञ्चोपशमं
शान्तं शिवमद्वैतं चतुर्थं मन्यन्ते, स आत्मा, स विज्ञेयः ॥ (माण्डू. उ. 7).

Svāmī N. :—Turiya is not that which is conscious of the inner (subjective) world, nor that which is conscious of the outer (objective) world, nor that which is conscious of both, nor that which is a mass of consciousness. It is not simple consciousness nor is It unconsciousness. It is unperceived, unrelated, incomprehensible. uninferable, unthinkable, and indescribable. The essence of the consciousness manifested as the self [in the three states]. It is the cessation of all phenomena; It is all peace, all bliss, and non-dual. This is what is known as the Fourth (Turiya). This is Ātman, and this has to be realized.

सोऽयमात्माऽध्यक्षरमोंकारोऽधिमात्रं पादा मात्रा मात्राश्च पादा अकार उकारो मकार इति ॥ (माण्डू. उ. 8).

Svāmī N. :— The same Ātman [explained before as being endowed with four quarters] is now described from the standpoint of the syllable Aum. Aum too, divided into parts, is viewed from the standpoint of letters. The quarters [of Ātman] are the same as the letters of Aum, and the letters are the same as the quarters. The letters

are A, U, and M.

जागरितस्थानो वैश्वानरोऽकारः प्रथमा मात्राऽऽप्तेरादिमत्त्वाद्वाऽऽप्नोति ह वै सर्वान्कामानादिश्च भवति य एवं वेद ॥(माण्डू. उ. 9).

Svāmī N. :— Vaiśvānara Ātman, whose sphere of activity is the waking state, is A, the first letter [of Aum], on account of his all-pervasiveness or on account of his being the first. He who knows this obtains all desires and becomes first [among the great].

स्वप्नस्थानस्तैजस उकारो द्वितीया मात्रोत्कर्षाद्भयत्वाद्वा, उत्कर्षति ह वै ज्ञानसन्ततिं समानश्च भवति नास्याब्रह्मवित्कुले भवति य एवं वेद ॥(माण्डू. उ. 10).

Svāmī N. :— Taijasa Ātman, whose sphere of activity is the dream state. is U, the second letter [of Aum], on account of his superiority or intermediateness. He who knows this attains a superior knowledge, receives equal treatment from all, and finds in his family no one ignorant of Brahman.

सुषुप्तस्थानः प्राज्ञो मकारस्तृतीया मात्रा मितेरपीतेर्वा मिनोति ह वा इदं सर्वमपीतिश्च भवति य एवं वेद ॥(माण्डू. उ. 11).

Svāmī N. :— Prājña Ātman, whose sphere is deep sleep, is M, the third letter [of Aum], because both are the measure and also because in them all become one. He who knows this is able to measure all and also comprehends all within himself.

अमात्रश्चतुर्थोऽव्यवहार्यः प्रपञ्चोपशमः शिवोऽद्वैत एवमोङ्कार आत्मैव संविशत्यात्मनाऽऽत्मानं य एवं वेद ॥(माण्डू. उ. 12).

Svāmī N. :— The fourth (Turiya) is without parts and without relationship. It is the cessation of phenomena; It is all good and non-dual. This Aum is verily Ātman. He who knows this merges his self in Ātman—yes, he who knows this.

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तैत्तिरीयोपनिषद्



ओमिति ब्रह्म । ओमितीदं सर्वम् । ओमित्येतदनुकृति ह स्म वा । अप्यो श्रावयेत्या-
श्रावयन्ति । ओमिति सामानि गायन्ति । ओं शोमिति शस्त्राणि शंसन्ति । ओमित्य-
ध्वर्युः प्रतिगरं प्रतिगृणाति । ओमिति ब्रह्मा प्रसौति । ओमित्यग्निहोत्रमनुजानाति । ओम्
इति ब्राह्मणः प्रवक्ष्यन्नाह ब्रह्मोपाप्नवानीति । ब्रह्मैवोपाप्नोति । (तैत्ति. उप. 1. 8. 1).

व्याहृत्यात्मनो ब्रह्मण उपासनमुक्तम्। अनन्तरं च पाङ्क्तस्वरूपेण तस्यैवोपासनमुक्तम्। इदानीं सर्वोपासनाङ्गभूतस्योकारस्योपासनं विधित्स्यते। परापरब्रह्मदृष्ट्या ह्युपास्यमान ओंकारः शब्दमात्रोऽपि परापरब्रह्मप्राप्तिसाधनं भवति। स ह्यलम्बनं ब्रह्मणः परस्यापरस्य च। प्रतिमेव विष्णोः। "एतेनैवाऽऽयतनेनैकतरमन्वेति" इति श्रुतेः। ओमिति। इतिशब्दः स्वरूपपरिच्छेदार्थः। ओमित्येतच्छब्दरूपं ब्रह्मेति मनसा धारयेदुपासीत। यत ओम् इति इदं सर्वं, सर्वं हि शब्दरूपमोकारेण व्याप्तम्। "तद्यथा शङ्कुना" इति श्रुत्यन्तरात्। अभिधानतन्त्रं ह्यभिधेयमित्यत इदं सर्वमोकार इत्युच्यते ?

ओंकारस्तुत्यर्थमुत्तरो ग्रन्थः उपास्यत्वात्तस्य। ओमित्येतदनुकृतिरनुकरणम्। करोमि यास्याम वेति कृतमुक्तमोम् इत्यनुकरोत्यन्यः। अत ओंकारोऽनुकृतिः। ह स्म वा इति प्रसिद्धावद्योतकाः। प्रसिद्धं ह्योकारस्यानुकृतित्वम्। अपि च "ओ श्रावय" इति प्रेषपूर्वकमाश्रावयन्ति प्रतिश्रावयन्ति। तथोमिति सामानि गायन्ति सामगाः। ओमिति शस्त्राणि शंसन्ति शस्त्रशंसितारोऽपि। तथा ओमित्यध्वर्युः प्रतिगरं प्रतिगृणाति। ओमिति ब्रह्मा प्रसौत्यनुजानाति प्रेषपूर्वकम्। ओमित्यग्निहोत्रमनुजानाति। जुहोमीत्युक्त ओमित्येवानुज्ञां प्रयच्छति। ओमित्येव ब्राह्मणः प्रवक्ष्यन् प्रवचनं करिष्यन्नध्येष्यमाण ओमित्येवाऽऽह। ओमिति प्रतिपद्यतेऽध्येतुमित्यर्थः। ब्रह्म वेदमुपाप्नवानीति उपाप्नुयां ग्रहीष्यामीति। उपाप्नोत्येव ब्रह्म। अथवा ब्रह्म परमात्मा तमुपाप्नवानीत्यात्मानं प्रवक्ष्यन्प्रापयिष्यन्नोमित्येवाऽऽह। स च तेनोकारेण ब्रह्म प्राप्नोत्येव। ओंकारपूर्वं प्रवृत्तानां क्रियाणां फलवत्त्वं यस्मात्तस्मादोकारं ब्रह्म इत्युपासीतेति वाक्यार्थः। (शाङ्करभा० 1. 8. 1)

The syllable *Om* is the Brahman, the syllable *Om* is this whole world. When one says 'OM', it implies a compliant act and when also the Adhvaryu says : 'O, let us hear the call or invocation', the Āgnīdhra lets him hear it. With *OM*, they sing the Sāmans, with *Om*, *Śom* they recite the *Śāstras* (the prayers), with *Om*, the Adhvaryu responds in reply to the invocation, with *Om*, the *Brahman* requests, with *Om*, the *yajamāna* (the sacrificer) gives his assent during the Agnihotram. The Brāhmaṇa also utters *Om*, when he wants to recite the Veda : "May I attain the (Vedic word) Brahman", and he attains the Brahman. (Taittirīya. 1. 8. 1).¹

ॐंकारमात्रमखिलं विश्वप्राज्ञादिलक्षणम्।

वाच्यवाचकताऽभेदाद् भेदेनानुपलब्धितः ॥ (पंवा. 46).

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वेद्यं पवित्रमोकार ऋक् साम यजुरेव च। (गीता. 9. 17cd).

I am the Knowable, the sanctifier, the syllable *Om* as also Ṛk., Sāma and Yajus. (9. 17cd).

¹ Translation from *Sixty Upaniṣads*, p. 227.

अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमम्। (गीता)

एतस्य वा अक्षरस्य प्रशासने गार्गी
सूर्याचन्द्रमसौ विधृतौ तिष्ठतः। एतस्य
वा अक्षरस्य प्रशासने गार्गी द्यावा-
पृथिव्यौ विधृते तिष्ठतः। एतस्य वा
अक्षरस्य प्रशासने गार्गी निमेषा मुहूर्ता
अहोरात्राण्यर्धमासा मासा ऋतवः संवत्सरा इति विधृतास्तिष्ठन्ति। एतस्य वा
अक्षरस्य प्रशासने गार्गी प्राच्योऽन्या नद्यः स्यन्दन्ते श्वेतेभ्यः पर्वतेभ्यः प्रतीच्योऽन्याः।
यां यां च दिशमनु। एतस्य वाऽक्षरस्य प्रशासने गार्गी ददतो मनुष्याः प्रशंसन्ति
यजमानं देवा दर्वीं पितरोऽन्वायत्ताः। (बृह. उ. 3. 8. 9).



Svāmī N. :— Verily, under the mighty rule of this Imperishable, O Gārgi, the sun and moon are held in their respective positions. Under the mighty rule of this Imperishable, O Gārgi, heaven and earth are held in their respective positions. Under the mighty rule of this Imperishable, O Gārgi, moments, muhurtas, days and nights, fortnights, months, seasons, and years are held in their respective positions. Under the mighty rule of this Imperishable, O Gārgi, some rivers flow eastward from the white mountains, others flowing westward continue in that direction, and still others keep to their respective courses. Under the mighty rule of this Imperishable, O Gārgi, men praise those who give, the gods depend upon the sacrificer, and the manes up on the Darvī offering. (For more see Svāmī Nikhilānanda, pp. 231-32).

यो वा एतदक्षरं गार्ग्यविदित्वाऽस्मिंल्लोके जुहोति यजते तपस्तप्यते बहूनि
वर्षसहस्राण्यन्तवदेवास्य तद्भवति। यो वा एतदक्षरं गार्ग्यविदित्वास्माल्लोकात्प्रैति स
कृपणः। अथ य एतदक्षरं गार्गी विदित्वास्माल्लोकात्प्रैति स ब्राह्मणः॥ (बृह. 3. 8. 10).

Svāmī N. :— Whosoever in this world, O Gārgi, without knowing this Imperishable, offers oblations, performs sacrifices, and practices austerities, even for many thousands of years, finds all such acts but perishable. Whosoever, O Gārgi, departs from this world without knowing this Imperishable is miserable. But he, O Gārgi, who departs from this world after knowing the Imperishable is a knower of Brahman.

The apparently endless series of births and deaths in saṃsāra cannot be brought to an end by dualistic worship, sacrifices, or the practices of austerities. These merely produce temporary results in the phenomenal universe. It is only through the knowledge of the Imperishable that rebirth and the suffering in the world come to an

उपनिषदादि-

end and one obtains Freedom and Bliss. This fact supplies another proof of the existence of Brahman. (3. 8. 10).

तद्वा एतदक्षरं गार्ग्यदृष्टं द्रष्टृश्रुतं श्रोत्रमतं मन्त्रविज्ञातं विज्ञातृ नान्यदतोऽस्ति द्रष्टृ नान्यदतोऽस्ति श्रोतृ नान्यदतोऽस्ति मन्तृ नान्यदतोऽस्ति विज्ञातृ। एतस्मिन्नु खल्वक्षरे गार्ग्याकाश ओतश्च प्रोतश्चेति ॥(बृह. 3. 8. 11).

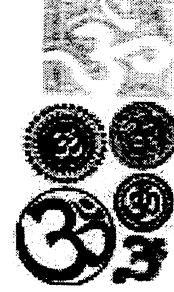
"Verily, that Imperishable, O Gārgi, is never seen but is the Seer; It is never heard, but is the Hearer; It is never thought, but is the Thinker; It is never known, but is the Knower. There is not other seer but This, there is no other hearer but This, there is no other thinker but This, there is no other knower but This. By this Imperishable, O Gārgi is the [unmanifested] ākāśa pervaded."

The Brahman which is immediate and direct, which is the Self within all and is beyond the relative attributes of hunger and thirst, etc. and by which the unmanifested ākāśa is pervaded, is the extreme limit, the ultimate goal, the Truth of truth.

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ब्रह्मसूत्रशाङ्करभाष्येऽक्षरविवेचनम्

अक्षरमम्बरान्तधृतेः। वेसू. 1. 3. 10.



"कस्मिन्नु खल्व्वाकाश ओतश्च प्रोतश्चेति। स होवाचैतद्वै तदक्षरं गार्गि ब्राह्मणा अभिवदन्त्यस्थूलमनणु" (बृ. 3. 8. 7-8) इत्यादि श्रूयते। तत्र संशयः—किमक्षरशब्देन वर्ण उच्यते, किंवा परमेश्वर इति। तत्राक्षरसमान्नाय इत्यादावक्षरशब्दस्य वर्णं प्रसिद्धत्वात्, प्रसिद्धतिक्रमस्य चायुक्तत्वात्, "ॐकार एवेदं सर्वम्" (छा. 2. 23. 3) इत्यादौ च श्रुत्यन्तरे वर्णस्याप्युपास्यत्वेन सर्वात्मकत्वावधारणात् वर्ण एवाक्षरशब्द इति, एवं प्राप्त उच्यते—पर एवात्माक्षरशब्दवाच्यः। कस्मात्? अम्बरान्तधृतेः— पृथिव्यादेराकाशान्तस्य विकारजातस्य धारणात्। तत्र हि पृथिव्यादेः समस्तविकारजातस्य कालत्रयविभक्तस्य "आकाश एव तदोतं प्रोतं च" इत्याकाशे प्रतिष्ठितत्वमुक्तत्वा "कस्मिन्नु खल्व्वाकाश ओतश्च प्रोतश्च" इत्यनेन प्रश्नेनेदमक्षरमवतारितम्। तथा चोपसंहृतम्— एतस्मिन्नु खल्वक्षरे गार्ग्याकाश ओतश्च प्रोतश्च" इति। न चयमम्बरान्तधृतिर्ब्रह्मणोऽन्यत्र सम्भवति। यदपि "ॐकार एव इदं सर्वम्" इति, तदपि ब्रह्मप्रतिपत्तिसाधनत्वात् स्तुत्यर्थं द्रष्टव्यम्। तस्मान्न क्षरत्यश्नुते चेति नित्यत्वव्यापि त्वाभ्यामक्षरं परमेव ब्रह्म। शाङ्करभा० (1. 3. 10).

Svāmī G. :— अक्षर Akṣara is Brahman because of supporting all things up to (and including) space.¹

¹ "Space" is a poor word for आकाश! English language is too poor to represent or express the totality of thought contained in Sanskrit words (as "enumeration of letters" group of fourteen aphorisms of ...).

Doubt :— It is heard in the Upaniṣad : "(Gārgi asked), 'On what is space woven and transfixed? (Br. III. viii. 7). (Yājñavalkya replied), O Gārgi, the knowers of Brahman say, this Akṣara (immutable Brahman) is that. It is neither gross nor minute' " etc. (Br. III. viii. 8). With regard to this the doubt arises ! Is the letter (*Om*) meant by the term Akṣara (lit. letter), or is the Supreme Lord Himself meant?

Opponent : As to that, in such passages as "The enumeration of letters" (group of 14 aphorisms of Pāṇini), the word Akṣara is familiarly used in the sense of letter, and it is not reasonable to ignore common usage. Another Upaniṣad also says, "*Om* is certainly all this" (Ch. II. xxiii. 3), where for the sake of meditation, the letter *Om* is declared to be identical with all. Therefore the word *akṣara* is used to indicate a letter.

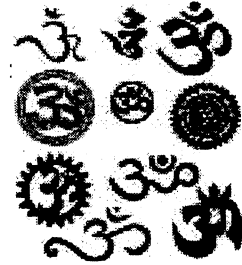
Vedāntin : This being the position, we say, the Supreme Self is meant by the term Akṣara.

Why?

"Because of holding everything up to and including space", because of supporting all created things from earth to space. For it is first stated in the text. "That remains woven and transfixed on unmanifested space." (Br. III. viii. 7), that all created things counting from earth, which are comprised within the three divisions of time, are supported by space; and then this topic of Akṣara is mooted through the question. "On what is space woven and transfixed?" (ibid). The conclusion is also made in a similar way : "On this Akṣara, O Gārgi, is the (unmanifested) space woven and transfixed" (Br. III. viii. 11). This supporting of everything including space is not possible for something else but Brahman. As for the quotation, "*Om* is surely all this" (ch. II.xxiii. 3), that must be understood in the sense of praise, since *Om* is a means for the realization of Brahman. Therefore Akṣara must be the Supreme Brahman according to its derivative sense of that which does not decay and that which pervades all, conveying thereby the ideas of eternity and omnipresence.

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गीतायामक्षरम्



कर्म ब्रह्मोद्भवं विद्धि ब्रह्माक्षरसमुद्भवम् ।
तस्मात्सर्वगतं ब्रह्म नित्यं यज्ञे प्रतिष्ठितम् ॥ (गीता. 3. 15).

Know that action has the Vedas as its origin; the Vedas have the Immutable as their source. Hence, the all-pervading Vedas are for ever based on sacrifice.

अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमं स्वभावोऽध्यात्ममुच्यते ।
भूतभावोद्भवकरो विसर्गः कर्मसंज्ञितः ॥ (गीता. 8. 3).

The Immutable is the Supreme Brahman; self-hood is said to be the entity present

उपनिषदादि-

in the individual plane. By action is meant the offerings which bring about the origin of the existence of things.

यदक्षरं वेदविदो वदन्ति विशन्ति यद्यतयो वीतरागाः ।
यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति तत्ते पदं संग्रहेण प्रवक्ष्ये ॥ (गीता. 8. 11).

I shall speak to you briefly of that Immutable Goal which the knowers of the Vedas declare, into which enter the diligent ones free from attachment and aspiring for which people practice celibacy.

ओमित्येकाक्षरं ब्रह्म व्याहरन्मामनुस्मरन् ।
यः प्रयाति त्यजन्देहं स याति परमां गतिम् ॥ (गीता. 8. 13).

He who departs by leaving the body while uttering the single syllable viz. Om which is Brahman and thinking of me, he attains the supreme goal.

अव्यक्तोऽक्षर इत्युक्तस्तमाहुः परमां गतिम् ।
यं प्राप्य न निवर्त्तन्ते तद्धाम परमं मम ॥ (गीता. 8. 21).

He who has been mentioned as the Unmanifest, the Immutable, they call Him the Supreme Goal. That is the Supreme abode of Mine, reaching which they do not return. (8. 21).

महर्षीणां भृगुरहं गिरामस्म्येकमक्षरम् ।
यज्ञानां जपयज्ञोऽस्मि स्थावराणां हिमालयः ॥ (गीता. 10. 25).

Among the great sages I am Bhṛgu, of words I am the single syllable (Om).¹
Among ritual I am the ritual of Japa; of the immovables, the Himālaya.

त्वमक्षरं परमं वेदितव्यं त्वमस्य विश्वस्य परं निधानम् ।
त्वमव्ययः शाश्वतधर्मगोप्ता सनातनस्त्वं पुरुषो मतो मे ॥ (गीता. 11. 18).

You are the Immutable, the supreme One to be known; you are the most perfect

¹ Om is the best because it is the name (denoter) as well as the symbol of Brahman).

repository of this Universe. You are the Imperishable, the protector of the ever-existing religion; You are the eternal person. This is my belief.

कस्माच्च ते न नमेरन्महात्मन् गरीयसे ब्रह्मणोऽप्यादिकर्त्रे ।
अनन्त देवेश जगन्निवास त्वमक्षरं सदसत्त्परं यत् ॥ (गीता. 11. 37).

And why should they not bow down to you, O exalted¹ one, who are greater [than all] and who are the first creator even of Brahmā ! O infinite one, supreme God, Abode of the Universe, You are the Immutable, being and non-being, that which is Transcendental.

एवं सततयुक्ता ये भक्तास्त्वां पर्युपासते ।
ये चाप्यक्षरमव्यक्तं तेषां के योगवित्तमाः ॥ (गीता. 12. 1).

Those devotees who, being thus ever dedicated, meditate on you, and those again, (who meditate) on the Immutable, the unmanifested,— of them, who are the best among the experiencers of yoga ?²

ये त्वक्षरमनिर्देश्यमव्यक्तं पर्युपासते ।
सर्वत्रगमचिन्त्यं च कूटस्थमचलं ध्रुवम् ॥ (गीता. 12. 3).

Those, however, who meditate in every way on the Immutable, the Indefinable, the Unmanifest, which is all-pervading, is comprehensible, changeless, immovable and constant. (12. 3).

द्वाविमौ पुरुषौ लोके क्षरश्चाक्षर एव च ।
क्षरः सर्वाणि भूतानि कूटस्थोऽक्षर उच्यते ॥ (गीता. 15. 16).

There are these two persons in the world—the mutable and the immutable. The mutable consists of all things; the one existing as Māyā is called the immutable. (15. 16).

यस्मात्क्षरमतीतोऽहमक्षरादपि चोत्तमः ।
अतौऽस्मि लोके वेदे च प्रथितः पुरुषोत्तमः ॥ (गीता. 15, 18).

Since I am transdental to the mutable, above even the immutable, hence I am well-known in the world and in the Vedas as the Supreme Person.

¹ Not narrow-minded).

² (Here) yoga means *samādhi*, spiritual absorption.

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मनुस्मृतिः
द्वितीयोऽध्यायः



अध्येष्यमाणं तु गुरुर्नित्यकालमतन्द्रितः।
अधीष्व भो इति ब्रूयाद्विरामोऽस्त्विति चारमेत् ॥ (73).

अध्ययनं करिष्यमाणं शिष्यं सर्वदा अनलसो गुरुधीष्व भो इति प्रथमं वदेत्। शेषे विरामोऽस्त्वित्यभिधाय विरमेन्नैवर्तेत। (भाष्य 73).

But to him who is about to begin studying, the teacher, always unwearied, must say : Ho, recite ! He shall leave off (when the teacher says) : Let a stoppage take place !¹

ब्रह्मणः प्रणवं कुर्यादादावन्ते च सर्वदा।
स्रवत्यनोङ्कृतं पूर्वम्, पुरस्ताच्च विशीर्यति ॥ (74).

ब्रह्मणो वेदस्याध्ययनारम्भे, अध्ययनसमाप्तौ च ॐकारं कुर्यात्। यस्मात्पूर्वं यस्योकारो न कृतस्तत्स्रवति-
शनेः शनैर्नश्यति। यस्य पुरस्तान्न कृतस्तद्विशीर्यति-अवस्थितिमेव न लभते। (भाष्य 74).

Let him always pronounce the syllable Om at the beginning and at the end of (a lesson in) the Veda; (for) unless the syllable Om precede (the lesson) will slip away (from him), and unless it follow it will fade away.

प्राक्कूलान्पर्युपासीनः पवित्रैश्चैव पावितः।
प्राणायामैस्त्रिभिः पूतस्तत ओंकारमर्हति ॥ (75).

प्राक्कूलान्-प्रागग्रानन्दभान्ध्यासीनः पवित्रैः कुशैः कर्द्वयस्थैः पवित्रीकृतः "प्राणायामास्त्रयः पञ्चदशमात्राः"
[1-19] गीतमस्मरणात्पञ्चदशमात्रैस्त्रिभिः प्राणायामैः प्रयतः। अकारादिलघ्वक्षरकालश्च मात्रा। ततोऽध्ययनार्थ-
मोकारमर्हति ॥ (भाष्य 75).

Seated on (blades of Kusa grass) with their point to the east, purified by Pavitras (blades of Kusa grass), and sanctified by three suppressions of the breath (Prāṇāyāma), he is worthy (to pronounce) the syllable Om. (75).

¹ Translated by George Buehler, SBE 25. We have left the English as is.

अकारं चाप्युकारं च मकारं च प्रजापतिः।
वेदत्रयाद्ग्यजुःसामलक्षणाद् भूर्भुवःस्वरिति व्याहृतित्रयं च क्रमेण निरदुहदुद्धृतवान् ॥ (76).

"एतदक्षरमेतां च" (म. स्मृ. २-७८) इति वक्ष्यति तस्यायं शेषः। अकारमुकारमकारं च प्रणवावयवभूतं ब्रह्मा वेदत्रयाद्ग्यजुःसामलक्षणाद् भूर्भुवःस्वरिति व्याहृतित्रयं च क्रमेण निरदुहदुद्धृतवान् ॥ (भाष्य 76).

Prajāpati (the lord of creatures) milked out (as it were) from the three Vedas the sounds A, U, and M, and (the vyāhṛtis) Bhūḥ, Bhuvah, Svah. (76).

त्रिभ्य एव तु वेदेभ्यः पादं पादमदुद्धृतम्।
तदित्युचोऽस्याः सावित्र्याः परमेष्ठी प्रजापतिः ॥ (77).

तथा त्रिभ्य एव वेदेभ्य ऋग्यजुःसामभ्यः तदित्युचोः इति प्रतीकेनानूदितायाः सावित्र्याः पादं पादमिति त्रीन्पादान्ब्रह्मा चकर्ष। परमे स्थाने तिष्ठतीति-परमेष्ठी ॥ (भाष्य 77).

Moreover from the three Vedas Prajāpati, who dwells in the highest heaven (Parameshṭhin) milked out (as it were) that Rik-verse, sacred to Savitr (Sāvitri), which begins with the word tad, one foot from each. (77)

एतदक्षरमेतां च जपन्व्याहृतिपूर्विकाम्।
संध्ययोर्वेदविद्विप्रो वेदपुण्येन युज्यते ॥ (78).

एतदक्षरमोकाररूपम्, एतां च त्रिपदां सावित्रीं व्याहृतित्रयपूर्विकां संध्या [द्वय]काले जपन्वेदज्ञो विप्रादित्रयो ऽध्ययनपुण्येन युक्तो भवति। अतः संध्याकाले प्रणवव्याहृतित्रयोपेतां सावित्रीं जपेदिति विधिः कल्प्यते ॥ (भाष्य 78).

A Brāhmaṇa, learned in the Veda, who recites during both twilights that syllable and that (verse) preceded by the Vyāhṛtis, gains the (whole) merit which (the recitation of) the Vedas confers. (78).

सहस्रकृत्वस्त्वभ्यस्य बहिरेतत्त्रिकं द्विजः।
महतोऽप्येनसो मासात्त्वचेवाहिर्विमुच्यते ॥ (79).

संध्यायामन्यत्र काल एतत्प्रकृतं प्रणवव्याहृतित्रयसावित्र्यात्मकं त्रिकं ग्रामाद्बहिर्नदीतीरारण्यादौ सहस्रावृत्तिं जपित्वा महतोऽपि पापात्सर्प इव कञ्चुकान्मुच्यते। तस्मात्पापक्षयार्थमिदं जपनीयमित्यप्रकरणेऽपि लाघवार्थमुक्तम्। अन्यथैतत्त्रयोच्चारणमपि पुनः कर्तव्यं स्यात् ॥ (भाष्य 79).

उपनिषदादि-

A twice-born man who (daily) repeats those three one thousand times outside (the village) will be freed after a month even from great guilt, as a snake from its slough.

एतयर्चा विसंयुक्तः काले च क्रियया स्वया ।
ब्रह्मक्षत्रियविड्योनिर्गर्हणां याति साधुषु ॥ (80).

संध्यायामन्यत्र च समय ऋचैतया सावित्र्या विसंयुक्तस्त्यक्तसावित्रीजपः स्वकीयया क्रियया सायम्प्रात-
होमादिरूपया स्वकाले त्यक्तो ब्राह्मणः क्षत्रियो वैश्योऽपि सज्जनेषु निन्दां गच्छति । तस्मात्स्वकाले सावित्रीजपं
स्वक्रियां च न त्यजेत् ॥ (भाष्य 80).

The Brāhmaṇa, the Kshatriya, and the Vaiśya who neglect (the recitation of) that
Ṛk-verse and the timely (performance of the) rites (prescribed for) them, will be
blamed among virtuous men.

ओंकारपूर्विकास्तिस्रो महाव्याहृतयोऽव्ययाः ।
त्रिपदा चैव सावित्री विज्ञेयं ब्रह्मणो मुखम् ॥ (81).

ओंकारपूर्विकास्तिस्रो व्याहृतयो - भूर्भुवःस्वरित्येता अक्षरब्रह्मावाप्तिफलत्वेनाव्ययाः, त्रिपदा च सावित्री
ब्रह्मणो वेदस्य मुखमाद्यम्, तत्पूर्वकवेदाध्ययनारम्भात् । अथवा ब्रह्मणः- परमात्मनः प्राप्तेर्द्वारमेतत्, अध्ययन-
जपादिना निष्पापस्य ब्रह्मज्ञानप्रकर्षण मोक्षावाप्तेः । अत एवाह-

Know that the three imperishable Mahāvyaṛtis, preceded by the syllable Om, and
(followed) by the three-footed Sāvitrī are the portal of the Veda and the gate leading
(to union with) Brahman.

योऽधीतेऽहन्यहन्येतांस्त्रीणि वर्षाण्यतन्द्रितः ।
स ब्रह्म परमभ्येति वायुभूतः खमूर्तिमान् ॥ (82).

यः प्रत्यहनमनलसः सन्सावित्रीं प्रणवव्याहृतियुक्तां वर्षत्रयमधीते, स परं ब्रह्माभिमुखेन गच्छति । स वायु-
भूतो वायुखि कामचारी जायते । खं ब्रह्म तदेवास्य मूर्तिरिति खमूर्तिमान् भवति, शरीरस्यापि नाशाद् ब्रह्मैव
सम्पद्यते ॥ (भाष्य 82).

He who daily recites that (verse), untired, during three years, will enter (after
death) the highest Brahman, move as free as air, and assume an ethereal form.

एकाक्षरं परं ब्रह्म, प्राणायामाः परं तपः ।
सावित्र्यास्तु परं नास्ति मौनात्सत्यं विशिष्यते ॥ (83).

एकाक्षरमोकारः— परं ब्रह्म, परब्रह्मावाप्तिहेतुत्वात् । ओंकारस्य जपेन तदर्थस्य च परब्रह्मणो भावनया तदवाप्तेः । प्राणायामः सप्रणवसव्याहृतिसशिरस्कगायत्रीस्त्रिरावृत्तिभिः कृताश्चान्द्रायणादिभ्योऽपि परं तपः । प्राणायामा इति बहुवचननिर्देशात्त्रयोऽवश्यं कर्तव्या इत्युक्तम् । सावित्र्याः प्रकृष्टमन्यन्मन्त्रजातं नास्ति । मौनाद् अपि सत्यं वाग्विशिष्यते । एषां चतुर्णांस्तुत्या चत्वार्येतान्युपासनीयानीति विधिः कल्पते ॥ (भाष्य 83).

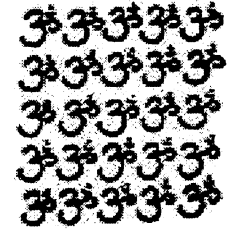
The monosyllable (Om) is the highest Brahman, (three) suppressions of the breath are the best (form of) austerity, but nothing surpasses the Sāvitrī ; truthfulness is better than silence.

क्षरन्ति सर्वा वेदिक्यो जुहोतियजतिक्रियाः ।
अक्षरं दुष्करं ज्ञेयं ब्रह्म चैव प्रजापतिः ॥ (84).

सर्वा वेदविहिता होमयागादिरूपाः क्रियाः स्वरूपतः फलतश्च विनश्यन्ति । अक्षरं तु प्रणवरूपमक्षयम्, ब्रह्म-प्राप्तिहेतुत्वात् । तत् फलद्वारेणाक्षरं ब्रह्मीभावस्याविनाशात् । कथमस्य ब्रह्मप्राप्तिहेतुत्वमत आह—ब्रह्म चैवेति । चशब्दो हेतौ । यस्मात्प्रजानामधिपतिर्यद् ब्रह्म तदेवायमोकारः । स्वरूपतो ब्रह्मप्रतिपादकत्वेन चास्य ब्रह्म-त्वम् । उभयथाऽपि ब्रह्मत्वप्रतिपादकत्वेन वाऽयमुपासितो जपकाले मोक्षहेतुरित्यनेन दर्शितम् ॥ (भाष्य 84).

All rites ordained in the Veda, burnt oblations and (other) sacrifices, pass away ; but know that the syllable(Om) is imperishable, and (it is) Brahman, (and) the Lord of creatures (Prajāpati).

ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ



लौकिकन्यायरत्नाकरे ओमक्षरप्रणवमहिमा

What follows are some select citations from the *Laukikanyāyaratnākara* of Raghunātha Varmā Udāsīna, glorifying the greatness, efficacy, and efficiency of the Prāṇava-upadeśa by Śiva Śaṅkara Mahādeva to those who leave their mortal bodies in Kāśī. The holy message of Om provided by God Himself enables them to achieve *nirvāṇa* (liberation) from the vicious cycle of birth and death. Their individual souls get assimilated and merged forever into the Supreme Soul (Reality) instantaneously.

यत्र साक्षान्महादेवो देहान्ते स्वयमीश्वरः ।
आचष्टे तारकं ब्रह्म तदेवमतिमुक्तिदम्¹ ॥ (कूर्म. 1. 29. 59)

'काशीखण्डे' च --

ब्रह्मज्ञानेन मुच्यन्ते नान्यथा जन्तवः क्वचित् । (काशी. 32. 115ab)

¹ We have omitted some of the fns from our originals of the *Ratnākara*.

ब्रह्मज्ञानं तदेवाहं काशीसंस्थितिभागिनाम् ।
दिशामि तारकं प्रान्ते मुच्यन्ते ते तु तत्क्षणात् ॥ (काशी. 32. 116)

'पाञ्चे'ऽपि --

निर्वाणपदमेवैतदधितिष्ठामि नित्यशः ।
म्रियमाणस्य जन्तोश्च वाक्यं कर्णं समुच्चरन् ॥
विना वाक्योपदेशेन ब्रह्मात्मैक्यं न भासते ।
ब्रह्मात्मैकत्वविज्ञानादृते मुक्तिर्न जायते ॥

अन्यत्रापि --

पुण्यानि पापान्यखिलान्यशेषं सार्थं सबीजं सशरीरमार्ये ।
इहैव संहृत्य ददामि बोध्यं यतः शिवानन्दमवाप्नुवन्ति ॥

येन केनापि यः कश्चिन्निमित्तेन परित्यजेत् ।
काश्यां प्राणान् स वै जन्तुर्मुक्त इत्यवगम्यताम् ॥

इत्यादि । मुक्त इत्यस्येशोपदिष्टतारकजन्यतत्त्वसाक्षात्कारेणेत्यादिः । तारकं किमिति
चेत्प्रणव इत्यवेहि ।

तदुक्तं 'काशीखण्डे' --

न वर्ण्यते कैः किल काशिकेयं जन्तोः स्थितस्यात्र यतोऽन्तकाले ।
पचेलिमैः प्राक्तनपुण्यभारैरोङ्कारमोङ्कारयतीन्दुमौलिः ॥ (काशी. 7. 78)

अन्यत्रापि --

प्रणवं तारकं ब्रूते काश्यां देवो महेश्वरः ।

प्रणवतारकशब्दयोर्निर्वचनं 'लैङ्गे'ऽभिहितम् --

प्राणानवति यत्तस्मात् प्रणवेत्यभिधीयते ।
यत्तारयति संसारात् तारमित्यभिधीयते ॥

प्राणपदमर्शाद्यजन्तम् । अवनं च मोचनम् । तारशब्दात्स्वार्थं कः ।

प्रणवेन कथं ब्रह्मात्मैक्यबोधः

ननु कथं प्रणवेन ब्रह्मात्मैक्यबोधः। श्रृणु --- अकारोकारमकारवाच्यान्विश्ववैश्वानरतैजससूत्रात्मप्राज्ञेश्वरान् ज्ञात्वा, प्रथमं विश्वं वैश्वानरात्मत्वेनाहमेव वैश्वानरोऽस्मि इति विभाव्य, ततस्तैजसं सूत्रात्मत्वेनाहमेव सूत्रात्मास्मीति विभाव्य, पश्चात्प्राज्ञमीश्वरात्मत्वेनाहमेवेश्वरोऽस्मीति विभाव्य, अनन्तरं समष्टिव्यष्टिस्थूलसूक्ष्मकारणोपाधिक-मोङ्कारवाच्यं परं ब्रह्माहमस्मीति सर्वात्मत्वेन विभाव्य, पश्चान्मनस्येकाग्रतामापन्ने सति स्थूलसूक्ष्मादि सर्वं जगत् सोपानावरोहण-न्यायेनोक्तक्रमेण निर्विशेषे चिन्मात्रेऽखण्डैकरसानन्दे परब्रह्मणि विलाप्य, तदनन्तरमेकाग्रेण मनसा तस्याखण्डैकरसब्रह्मानन्दात्मतां साक्षात्करोति इति¹।

वार्तिककारैर्विश्वादीनामपि विलापनक्रम उक्तः -

अकारं पुरुषं विश्वमुकारे प्रविलापयेत्।

उकारं तैजसं सूक्ष्मं मकारे प्रविलापयेत् ॥

मकारं कारणं प्राज्ञं चिदात्मनि विलापयेत्।(पंवा. 49-50ab).

ओमित्यस्य परमात्माऽहमित्यर्थः

यद्वा तद्योऽहं सोऽसौ योऽसौ सोऽहम् (ऐत.?)² इत्यत्र सशब्देन परमात्मोच्यते। अहंशब्देन प्रत्यगात्माऽवगम्यते। ततश्च सोऽहमित्यस्य यथा परमात्माऽहमित्यर्थः तथा प्रणवस्यापि। सोऽहमित्यस्यैव प्रणवत्वेन निपातनात्। तथा हि - सोऽहमित्यस्य पृषोदरादित्वेन निपातनात्सकारहकारलोपे कृते परिशिष्टयोरोअमित्यनयोः एङ्ः पदान्तादिति (पासू. 6. 1. 109) इति पूर्वरूपैकादेशात्मकं सन्धिं कृत्वोच्चारणे ओमिति शब्दो निष्पन्नः। तदुक्तम् ---

सकारं च हकारं च लोपयित्वा प्रयोजयेत्।

सन्धिं च पूर्वरूपाख्यं ततोऽसौ प्रणवो भवेत् ॥ इति।

एवं च ओमित्यस्य परमात्माऽहमित्यर्थ इति सिद्धम्।

प्रणवश्रवणे द्विजातिरिक्तस्याप्यधिकारः

¹ Cf. माण्डूक्योपनिषद्, आगमप्रकरण, मन्त्र 3 प्र. Also see p. 108b of Ratnākāra विश्ववैश्वानर....

² Cited by Śāṅkarācārya under वेसू. 3. 3. 37, adding the following :- इत्यादित्यपुरुषं प्रकृत्यैतरेयिणः समासनन्ति। Thus the source could be उपनिषद्, ब्राह्मण अथवा आरण्यक of ऐतरेय। The editors don't give any specific identification in the text but only the abbreviated form ऐ. in the index without giving the exact location of the citation. Strange, isn't it? Sadhale traces this to ऐतरेयोपनिषद् 2. 4. 3 but we don't find it therein!

प्रणवश्रवणे द्विजातिरिक्तस्य कथमधिकार इति चेत्। सत्यम्। अस्मदाद्युपदिष्ट-
प्रणवश्रवणे तदितरस्य नाधिकारः। अपारजन्मार्जितपुण्यपुञ्जप्रसादितपरमेश्वरोपदिष्ट-
प्रणवश्रवणे तु काशीमाहात्म्यसोमपरमेश्वरसाक्षात्काराभ्यां ध्वस्ताशेषकल्मषस्य
प्राणिमात्रस्याधिकारः।

गणयति न कथञ्चिच्छङ्करः काशिकायाम्
अयमिह मम भक्तो ब्राह्मणः पुल्लसो वा¹ ।
उपदिशति सदान्ते वाक्यमेकात्मनिष्ठं
द्विजकुलमनपेक्ष्योद्भाव्य² तत्राधिकारम् ॥

वाराणसीं पुरीं रम्यां येऽधितिष्ठन्ति जन्तवः।
व्याचष्टे तारकं ब्रह्म रुद्रस्तेषां दयानिधिः ॥

मुमूर्षोर्मणिकर्ण्यन्तरधोदकनिवासिनः।
अहं दिशामि ते मन्त्रं तारकं ब्रह्मवाचकम् ॥
श्रीरामरामरामेति एतत्तारकमुच्यते।

स्यादेतत्। मृतिसमये वातपित्तकफावरुद्धकण्ठस्यौदर्यवाताभिघातेन विदीर्य-
माणाशेषमर्मणो व्याकुलबाह्यान्तरिन्द्रियस्य प्रणवात्मकशब्दस्य श्रावणसाक्षात्कार
एव दुर्लभः। सत्यपि तस्मिंस्तदर्थो दुरवगमः। तस्मिन्नपि सति तस्य सर्वेषां वेदान्तानां
चाद्वितीये तात्पर्यनिर्धारणानुकूलविचारात्मकस्य तादृशतात्पर्यविशिष्टशब्दज्ञाना-
त्मकस्य वाऽस्य वा श्रवणस्य, श्रुतस्यार्थस्य युक्तिभिरनुचिन्तनरूपस्य विपरीतभावना-
निवृत्तिफलकप्रमेयतत्त्वावधारणानुकूलतर्कानुसन्धानात्मकस्य वा मननस्यासम्भवे, अत
एवासम्भावनाविपरीतभावनयोस्तत्त्वसाक्षात्कारप्रतिबन्धकयोरभावाभावे च शब्द-
प्रमाणादुत्पन्नोऽपि ब्रह्मसाक्षात्कारः पुरुषापराधासम्भावनादिप्रतिबद्धत्वान्नाविद्या-
निवर्तनक्षमः। तदनिवृत्तौ च तन्मूलकसंसारानिवृत्तेः कथं मोक्षः। तस्मात्काशीमरणान्
मुक्तिप्रतिपादकवचनजातं तद्वासविध्येकवाक्यतया तदर्थवाद एवेति चेत् मैवम्।
वृन्दारकवृन्दवन्दितपादारविन्दोमासहायाचिन्त्यशक्त्यपरिमेयमहिमश्रीशङ्कर-

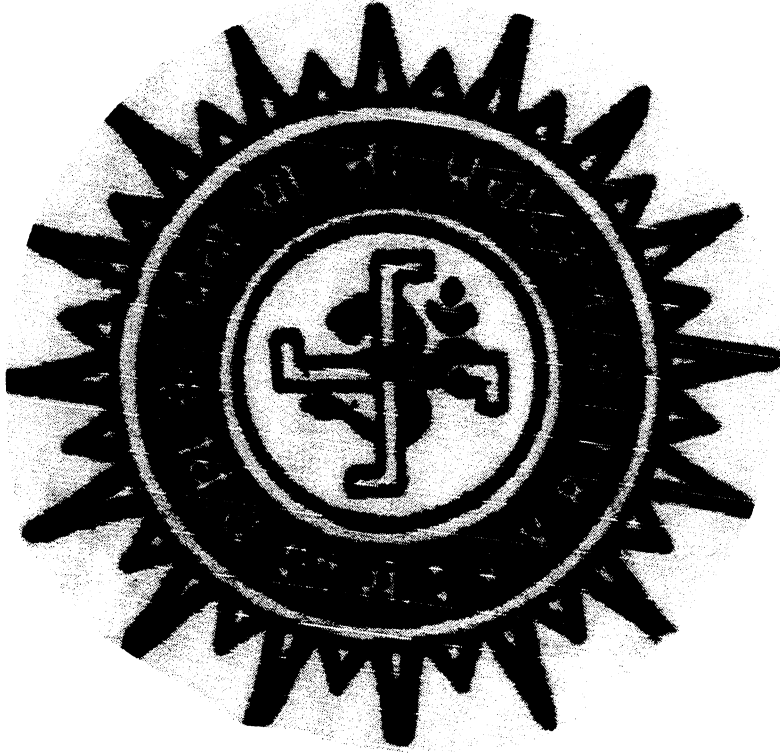
¹ See प्रमेयबिन्दुसंदोह।

² L reads द्विजकुलनिपेक्षोभाव्य। The meaning is not clear to us as it reads. Probably it is wrong.
The meaning seems to be द्विजकुलमनपेक्ष्य तत्राधिकारमुद्भाव्य = without insisting on the birth in a
द्विजकुल, and by generating the right to receive the प्रणवोपदेश by a person otherwise ineligible.

कृपया, श्रीकृष्णकृपया भीष्मस्य शरतल्पजवेदनानिवृत्तिवत्,¹ काश्यां मुमूर्षोः सकल-
वेदनानिवृत्त्या चित्तप्रसादकरणपाटवादिसम्भवेन श्रवणादिसम्भवात्।

अनिलो मृगनाभिरेणुगन्धैरधिकाशि प्रणवोपदेशकाले।
हरते मरणश्रमं नराणां हरवामार्द्धकुचोत्तरीयजन्मा ॥ इति ।

प्रसादः सत्प्रार्थ्यस्त्रिपुरहर कोऽप्यत्र भविता
पुरे ते द्रष्टा त्वाममरसरितो रोधसि यतः।
शयानोऽम्बोपेतं शिरसि निदधानं करतलं
श्रुतौ वक्त्राब्जं² च प्रणवविवृतावुद्यतमहम् ॥



¹ For all these notes (and many more) see the original *Lukikanyāyarnāka*.

² शङ्करभगवद्वक्त्राब्जम्।

परिशेषलहरी

मैत्रायण्युपनिषत्सु षष्ठः प्रपाठकः

द्वे वाव ब्रह्मणो रूपे मूर्तं चामूर्तं च। अथ यन्मूर्तं तदसत्यम्। यदमूर्तं तत् सत्यम्। तद्ब्रह्म तज्ज्योतिः। यज्ज्योतिः स आदित्यः। स वा एष ओमित्येतदात्माऽभवत्। स त्रिधात्मानं व्यकुरुत। ओमिति तिस्रो मात्राः। एताभिः सर्वमिदमोतं प्रोतं चैवास्मिन् इत्येवं हचाह। एतद्वा आदित्य ओमित्येवं ध्यायताऽऽत्मानं युञ्जीतेति। (मैत्रा० उप० 6. 3).

अथान्यत्राप्युक्तम्-अथ खलु य उद्गीथः स प्रणवो यः प्रणवः स उद्गीथ इत्यसौ वा आदित्य उद्गीथ एष प्रणव इत्येवं हचाह उद्गीथं प्रणवाख्यं प्रणेतारं भारूपं विगतनिद्रं विजरं विमृत्युं त्रिपदं त्रचक्षरं पुनः पञ्चधा ज्ञेयं निहितं गुहायामित्येवं हचाह।

ऊर्ध्वमूलं त्रिपाद् ब्रह्म। शाखा आकाशवाय्वग्न्युदकभूभ्यादयः। एकोऽश्वत्थ-नामैतद् ब्रह्म। एतस्यैतत्तेजो यदसावादित्यः। ओमित्येतदक्षरस्य चैतत्। तस्मादोमिति अनेनैतदुपासीताजस्रमिति। एकोऽस्य सम्बोधयतेत्येवं हचाह।

एतदेवाक्षरं पुण्यमेतदेवाक्षरं परम्।

एतदेवाक्षरं ज्ञात्वा यो यदच्छति तस्य तत् ॥ (6. 4).

अथान्यत्राप्युक्तम् --

स्वनवत्येषास्य तनूर्या ओमिति। स्त्रीपुंनपुंसकेति लिङ्गवत्येषा। अथाग्निर्वायुरादित्य इति भास्वत्येषा। अथ ब्रह्मा रुद्रो विष्णुरित्यधिपतिवत्येषा। अथ गार्हपत्यो दक्षिणा-ग्निराहवनीय इति मुखवत्येषा। अथ ऋग्यजुःसामेति विज्ञानवत्येषा। अथ भूर्भुवःस्व-रिति लोकवत्येषा। अथ भूतं भव्यं भविष्यदिति कालवत्येषा। अथ प्राणोऽग्निः सूर्य इति प्रतापवत्येषा। अथान्नमापश्चन्द्रमा इत्याप्यायनवत्येषा। अथ बुद्धिर्मनोऽहङ्कार इति चेतनवत्येषा। अथ प्राणोऽपानो व्यान इति प्राणवत्येषा। इत्यत ओमित्युक्तेनैताः प्रस्तुता अर्चिता अर्पिता भवन्तीत्येवं हचाह। एतद्वा सत्यकाम परं चापरं च यदोमिति एतदक्षरमिति।¹ (6. 5).

¹ We consulted three versions. All are full of errors.

अथाव्याहृतं वा इदमासीत्स सत्यं प्रजापतिस्तपस्तप्त्वाऽनुव्याहरद्भुवः स्वरित्येषै-
वास्य प्रजापतेः स्थविष्ठा तनूर्या लोकवतीति स्वरित्यस्याः शिरो नाभिर्भुवो भूः पादा
आदित्यश्चक्षुः। चक्षुरायत्ता हि पुरुषस्य महती मात्रा चक्षुषा हचयं मात्राश्चरति सत्यं
वै चक्षुरक्षिण्यवस्थितो हि पुरुषः सर्वोऽर्थेषु चरति। एतस्माद्भुवः स्वरित्युपासीत।
अनेन हि प्रजापतिर्विश्वात्मा विश्वचक्षुरिवोपासितो भवतीत्येवं हचाह। एषा वै
प्रजापतेर्विश्वभृत्तनूरेतस्यामिदं सर्वमन्तर्हितमस्मिंश्च सर्वस्मिन्नेषाऽन्तर्हितेति तस्मादेवो-
पासीत। (6. 6).

The light of the Sun, as a form of Brahma,¹
represented by the mystic syllable 'Om'

3. There are, assuredly, two forms of Brahma : the formed [manifested] and formless [unmanifested]. Now, that which is the formed is unreal; that which is formless is real, is Brahma, is light.

That light is the same as the sun. Verily, that came to have *Om* as its soul (*ātman*). He divided himself (*ātmānam*) threefold. *Om* is three prosodial; units (*a + u + m*). By means of these the whole world is woven, warp and woof, across Him.

For thus has it been said : 'One should absorb himself meditating that the Sun is *Om*'.

4. Now it has elsewhere been said : 'Now, then, the Udgītha is *Om*; *Om* is the Udgītha. And so, verily, the Udgītha is yonder sun, and it is *Om* !

For thus has it been said : '...the Udgītha, which is called *Om*, a leader, brilliant, sleepless, ageless, deathless, three-footed², three-syllable³, also to be known as five-fold⁴ hidden in the secret place [of the heart].

For thus it has been said⁵ : The three quartered Brahma has its root above. Its branches are space, wind, fire, water, earth, and the like. This Brahma has the name of 'the Lone fig-tree.' Belonging to It is the splendor which is yon son, and the splendor too of the syllable *Om*. Therefore, one should worship it with *Om* continually. He is the only enlightener of a man'

¹ Translated by Robert Ernest Hume, p. 425 +.

² Waking etc.

³ ■ + u + m.

⁴ Embracing the पञ्च प्राणाः।

⁵ RV. 10. 90. 3-4.

For thus has it been said :

That syllable, indeed is the holy (*punya*)
That syllable, indeed, is supreme.
By knowing that syllable, indeed
Whatever one desires, is his !

**Various triads of the forms of the soul worshiped
by the use of the threefold 'Om'**

5. Now it has elsewhere been said : 'This namely, *a*, *u*, and *m* [= *Om*] is the sound-form of this [Ātman, Soul]'.
Feminine, masculine, and neuter : this is the sex-form [लिङ्ग].

Fire, wind, and sun : this is the light-form. [ज्योतिर्].

Brahmā, Rudra, and Vishṇu : this is the lordship-form. [ईश्वर].

The Gārhapatya sacrificial fire, the Dakshiṇāgni sacrificial fire
and the Āhavanīya sacrificial : this is the mouth-form. [अग्नि, मुख].

The Rig-Veda, the Yajur-Veda, and the Sāma-Veda : this is the
understanding-form [विज्ञान].

Earth (*bhūr*), atmosphere (*bhuvās*) and sky (*svār*) : this is
the world-form. [लोक].

Past, present, and future : this is the time-form. [काल].

Breath, fire, and sun : this is heat form. [प्रताप].

Food, water, and moon : this is the swelling-form. [आप्यायन].

Intellect (*buddhi*), mind (*manas*), and egoism (*ahānkāra*) : this is the
intellegence-form. [चेतन].

The Prāṇa breath, the Apāna breath, and Vyāna breath : this is the
breath-form. [प्राण].

Hence these are praised, honored, and included by saying *Om*. For thus has it
been
said : 'This syllable *Om*, verily, O Satyakāma, is both the higher and the lower Brahma.

**Worship of the world and the Soul by the use of the
original three world-creating Utterances**

6. Now [in the beginning], verily, this world was unuttered.

When he [the Soul, Ātman], who is the Real (*satya*), who is Prajāpati (Lord of
Creation), had performed austerity, he uttered *bhur* (earth), *bhuvās* (atmosphere), and
svār (sky).

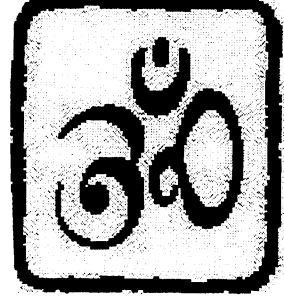
This indeed, is Prajāpati's coarsest form, this 'world-form.' Its head is the sky
(*svār*). The atmosphere (*bhuvās*) is the navel. The feet are the earth (*bhūr*). The eye
is the sun (*āditya*), for a person's great material world (*mātrā*) depends upon the eye,
for with the eye he surveys material things. Verily, the eye is the real; for stationed
in the eye a person moves about among all objects.

Therefore one should reverence *bhur* (earth), *bhuvas* (atmosphere), and *sva* (sky); for thereby Prajāpati, the Soul of all, the eye of all, becomes revered, as it were.

For thus has it been said : 'Verily, this is the all-supporting form of Prajāpati. This whole world is hidden in it, and it is hidden in this whole world. Therefore this [is what] one should worship.'

ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ

ॐ तत् सत् ।



ॐ तत्सदिति निर्देशो ब्रह्मणस्त्रिविधः स्मृतः ।
ब्राह्मणास्तेन वेदाश्च यज्ञाश्च विहिता पुराः । (गीता. 17. 23).

'*Om tat sat*' this is regarded to be the threefold designation of Brahman. The Brāhmaṇas, the Vedas, and the sacrifices were ordained by that in the days of yore. (17. 23ab).

तस्मादोमित्युदाहृत्य यज्ञदानतपःक्रियाः ।
प्रवर्तन्ते विधानोक्ताः सततं ब्रह्मवादिनाम् ॥ (गीता. 17. 24).

Therefore, acts of sacrifice, charity and austerity, as prescribed through injunctions, of those who study and expound the Vedas, always commence after pronouncing the syllable of *Om*.

तदित्यनभिसन्धाय फलं यज्ञतपःक्रियाः ।
दानक्रियाश्च विविधाः क्रियन्ते मोक्षकाङ्क्षिभिः ॥ (गीता. 17. 25).

After (pronouncing) the word *tat*, acts of sacrifice and austerity as also the various acts of charity, are performed without regard for results by persons aspiring for Liberation.

सद्भावे साधुभावे च सदित्येतत्प्रयुज्यते ।
प्रशस्ते कर्मणि तथा सच्छब्दः पार्थ युज्यते ॥ (गीता. 17. 26).

This word *sat* is used with regard to (something) coming into being and with re-

gard to (someone) becoming good. So also, O Son of Pṛtha, the word *sat* is used with regard to an auspicious rite.

यज्ञे तपसि दाने च स्थितिः सदिति चोच्यते ।
कर्म चैव तदर्थीयं सदित्येवाभिधीयते ॥ (गीता. 17. 27).

And the steadfastness in sacrifice, austerity and charity is spoken of as *sat*. And even the action meant for these is, verily, called as *sat* (good).

[प्रणवोपनिषत्]

On pages 17-18 of our collection we have presented an Upanishad under the title प्रणवोपनिषत् (1). There are 13 verses. We had noted in our footnote that the text was terribly corrupt in many places and that we did not understand the Upanishad fully well. We had not found any translation and there was no question of locating a better reading in the absence of a better version.

We had taken the above Upanishad from pp. 30-32 of the II part of the *Upaniṣad Saṅgraha* pub. by MLBD, copied from the Adyar ed. of *Unpublished Upanishad*. We saw this too at a later date. There was no scope for any improvement

Just recently we happened to see an Upaniṣad called *Brahmavidyopaniṣad* on p. 292 of MLBD first part. The first 13 verses of the *Brahmavidyopaniṣad* were exactly identical with what is presented as प्रणवोपनिषत् on p. 30-32 of pt 2 by MLBD. Then we saw the tr. of *Brahmavidyopaniṣad* in *Sixty Upaniṣads*. ब्रह्मविद्योपनिषद् runs to 14 verses. The version adopted by *Sixty Upaniṣad* had only 14 verses. However, the translator has indicated that the Telugu version was eight times longer. Yes, the ब्रह्मविद्योपनिषद् as presented in MLBD pt. one has 112 verses-- 14 x 8 = 112 !

When we consider the question of 13 vs 14, we find that the first two verses of the translation are presented in Sanskrit in a mixed, compressed, inverted, distorted form ! The two verses as translated in English make full sense, but the singular verse in Sanskrit does not make any sense.

Evidently, someone, somewhere, some day long ago, extracted these 13 (or 14) verses and named them as प्रणवोपनिषत्, but they constitute an extract from ब्रह्मविद्योपनिषद्

It is to be noted that the readings of this text that appear under *Brahmavidyā* are far superior to what they appear under प्रणवोपनिषत् on pages 30-32 in the 2nd part of the MLBD collection ! Even the text appearing in ब्रह्मविद्योपनिषद् is corrupt. To correct it is outside the scope of our present work.

ब्रह्मविद्योपनिषद्

स्वाविद्यावत्कार्यजातं यद्विद्यापह्नवं गतम् ।
तद्धंसविद्यानिष्पन्नं रामचन्द्रपदं भजे ॥
ॐ सह नाववत्विति शान्तिः ॥



अथ ब्रह्मविद्योपनिषदुच्यते ॥

प्रसादाद्ब्रह्मणस्तस्य विष्णोरद्भुतकर्मणः ।
रहस्यं ब्रह्मविद्याया ध्रुवाग्निं संप्रचक्षते ॥
ॐमित्येकाक्षरं ब्रह्म यदुक्तं ब्रह्मवादिभिः ।
शरीरं तस्य वक्ष्यामि स्थानं कालत्रयं [कालं लयं ?] तथा ॥
तत्र देवास्त्रयः प्रोक्ता लोका वेदास्त्रयोऽग्नयः ।
तिस्रो मात्रार्धमात्रा च त्रचक्षरस्य शिवस्य तु ॥
ऋग्वेदो गार्हपत्यं च पृथिवी ब्रह्म एव च ।
अकारस्य शरीरं तु व्याख्यातं ब्रह्मवादिभिः ॥
यजुर्वेदोऽन्तरिक्षं च दक्षिणाग्निस्तथैव च ।
विष्णुश्च भगवान्देव उकारः परिकीर्तितः ॥
सामवेदस्तथा द्यौश्चाहवनीयस्तथैव च ।
ईश्वरः परमो देवो मकारः परिकीर्तितः ॥
सूर्यमण्डलमध्येऽथ हचकारः शङ्खमध्यगः ।
उकारश्चन्द्रसंकाशस्तस्य मध्ये व्यवस्थितः ॥
मकारस्त्वग्निसंकाशो विधूमो विद्युतोपमः ।
तिस्रो मात्रास्तथा ज्ञेयाः सोमसूर्याग्निरूपिणः ॥
शिखा तु दीपसंकाशा तस्मिन्नुपरि वर्तते ।
अर्धमात्रा तथा ज्ञेया प्रणवस्योपरि स्थिता ॥
पद्मसूत्रनिभा सूक्ष्मा शिखा सा दृश्यते परा ।
सा नाडी सूर्यसंकाशा सूर्यं भित्त्वा तथापरा ॥
द्विसप्ततिसहस्राणि नाडीं भित्त्वा य मूर्धनि ।
वरदः सर्वभूतानां सर्वं व्याप्यावतिष्ठति ॥
कांस्यघण्टानिनादस्तु यथा लीयति शान्तये ।
ओंकारस्तु तथा योज्यः शान्तये सर्वमिच्छता ॥

सा नाडी सूर्यसंकाशा सूर्यं भित्त्वा तथापरा ॥
द्विसप्ततिसहस्राणि नाडीं भित्त्वा य मूर्धनि ।
वरदः सर्वभूतानां सर्वं व्याप्यावतिष्ठति ॥
कांस्यघण्टानिनादस्तु यथा लीयति शान्तये ।
ओंकारस्तु तथा योज्यः शान्तये सर्वमिच्छता ॥
यस्मिन् विलीयते शब्दस्तत्परं ब्रह्म गीयते ।
धियं हि लीयते ब्रह्म सोऽमृतत्वाय कल्पते ॥ इति ॥

Below is given the translation of the above from *sixty Upaniṣads*, pt. II, p. 668-670.

1. I proclaim the Brahman-lore
Which is omniscience, which the highest;
It shows as origination and end
Brahman, Viṣṇu Maheśvara.¹
2. Viṣṇu working with his miraculous power,
Becomes, at intervals, a human being through compassion,
His secret, as the Om-fire,
Lies in the Brahman-lore.
3. The syllable Om is the Brahman,
Thus, verily, teach the Brahman-knowers;
Body, location, time and dying away
of this syllable, I shall proclaim.

I. The body of the sound Om.

4. There are three gods and three worlds,
Three Vedas and three fires,
Three moras and the half mora
In that trisyllabic, blissful one.
5. The Ṛgveda, Gārhapatya,
The earth and Brahman as god,
That is the body of the *a*-sound,
As expounded by the Brahman-knowers.
6. The Yajurveda and the mid-region,
And the fire Dakṣiṇa,

¹ For no. 1 we don't see the original of this translation in what is presented in our Sanskrit text (MLBD).

And the holy god Viṣṇu,
Thus is the *u*-sound proclaimed to us.

7. The Sāmaveda and heaven,
The Āhavanīya fire also,
And Īśvara, the highest god,
Thus is the *m*-sound proclaimed to us.

II. The location of the sound Om.

8. In the midst of the Brain-conch
Like the sunshine glitters *a*;
Within it is situated
The *u*-sound of the moonlike splendour.
9. The *m*-sound too, like the fire,
Smokeless, resembling a lightning flash--
Thus shine the three moras
Like the moon, the sun, and the fire.
10. Thereupon a pointed flame
Like a torch light exists;
Know it as the half mora
Which one writes above the syllable.

III. The terminus (*kalā*) of the sound Om.

11. Yet one, like a pointed flame
Subtle, like lotus-fibre, shines
The sunlike cerebral artery
[Passing through it] penetrates [the Om].
12. Through the sun and seventy-two thousand
Arteries, breaks through the head,
And remains as bringer of blessings to all
Pervading the whole universe.

IV. The vanishing, the fading away (*laya*) of the sound Om.

13. And just as the sound of a metal utensil
Or of a gong dies in silence,
So he, seeks the All,
Lets the Om-sound fade away in silence.
14. For that wherein the sound fades away,
Is the Brahman, the higher;

Yea, the whole sound is Brahman
And conduces to immortality.

ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ

ओंकारजपोपासना

यश्छन्दसामृषभो विश्वरूपश्छन्दोभ्योऽध्यमृतात्संबभूव । स मेन्द्रो मेधया स्पृणोतु ।
अमृतस्य देव धारणो भूयासम् । शरीरं मे विचर्षणम् । जिह्वा मे मधुमत्तमा । कर्णाभ्यां
भूरि विश्रुवम् । ब्रह्मणः कोशोऽसि मेधया पिहितः । श्रुतं मे गोपाय । (तैत्ति. उप. 1. 4. 1).

यश्छन्दसामिति । मेधाकामस्य श्रीकामस्य च तत्रापितिसाधनजपहोमावुच्येते "स मेन्द्रो मेधया स्पृणोतु" "ततो मे श्रियमावह" इति च लिङ्गदर्शनात् । यश्छन्दसां वेदानामृषभ इवर्षभः प्राधान्यात् । विश्वरूपः सर्वरूपः सर्व-
वाग्व्याप्तेः, "तद्यथा शङ्कुना इत्यादिश्रुत्यन्तरात् । अत एवर्षभत्वमोंकारस्य । ओंकारो ह्यत्रोपास्य इति ऋषभा-
दिशब्दैः स्तुतिन्याय्यैवोंकारस्य । छन्देभ्यो वेदेभ्यो वेदा ह्यमृतं तस्मादमृतादधिसम्बभूव । लोकदेववेदव्याहृतिभ्यः
सारिष्ठं जिघृक्षोः प्रजापतेस्तपस्यत ओंकारः सारिष्ठत्वेन प्रत्यभादित्यर्थः । न हि नित्यस्योंकारस्याञ्जसैवोत्पत्तिरव-
कल्पते । स एवंभूत ओंकार इन्द्रः सर्वकामेशः परमेश्वरो मा मां मेधया प्रज्ञया स्पृणोतु प्रीणयतु¹ बलयतु वा ।
प्रज्ञाबलं हि प्रार्थ्यते । अमृतस्यामृतत्वहेतुभूतस्य ब्रह्मज्ञानस्य तदधिकारात् । हे देव, धारणो धारयिता भूयासं
भवेयम् ।

किञ्च शरीरं मे मम विचर्षणं विचेक्षणं योग्यमित्येतत् । भूयादिति प्रथमपुरुषविपरिणामः । जिह्वा मे मधुमत्तमा
मधुमत्यतिशयेन मधुरभाषिणीत्यर्थः । कर्णाभ्यां श्रोत्राभ्यां भूरि बहु विश्रुवं व्यश्रवं श्रोता भूयासमित्यर्थः । आत्म-
ज्ञानयोग्यः कार्यकारणसङ्घातोऽस्त्विति वाक्यार्थः । मेधा च तदर्थमेव हि प्रार्थ्यते । ब्रह्मणः परमात्मनः कोशोऽसि ।
असेरिवोपलब्ध्यधिष्ठानत्वात् । त्वं हि ब्रह्मणः प्रतीकं त्वयि ब्रह्मोपलभ्यते । मेधया लौकिकप्रज्ञया पिहितः आच्छा-
दितः स त्वं सामान्यप्रज्ञैरविदिततत्त्व इत्यर्थः । श्रुतं श्रवणपूर्वकमात्मज्ञानादिकं मे गोपाय रक्ष । तत्राप्यविस्मरणा-
दिना । जपार्था एते मन्त्रा मेधाकामस्य ।

Svāmī N : MAY HE (Om) who is the bull (i.e. the foremost) of the Vedic hymns,
who assumes all forms, who has sprung from the immortal hymns of the Vedas--May
that Indra (the Lord) cheer me with wisdom (medhā). O God, may I be the possessor
of immortality !

May my body be competent [to acquire Self-knowledge] ; may my tongue be ex-
ceedingly sweet ; may I hear abundantly with my ears. Thou (Om) art the sheath of
Brahman, concealed by (worldly) intelligence. Guard for me what I have learnt.

¹ MRI ed. reads प्रणोयतु !

Notes : May He etc. : In this chapter will be taught the recitation of the mantras and the offering of oblations as a means of obtaining wisdom and fortune.

Bull etc. : As the bull (ṛṣabhaḥ) is the foremost in a herd of cattle, so is Om foremost among the Vedic chants.

All forms : Om pervades all words. Compare : "As all leaves are held together by a midrib, so is all speech held together by Om. Om is all this, yea, Om is all this." (Chh. Up. II. xviii. 4).

Who has sprung etc. : In the beginning, the Lord of the creation meditated with the object of knowing what was the most essential element in all the Vedic and worldly knowledge, and it was revealed to Him that Om is that element. Om is eternal and therefore cannot be produced. What is meant here is that the sacred syllable became revealed.

Cheer : The word may also mean strengthen.

Wisdom : The Sanskrit word *medhā* signifies retentiveness of mind, without which wisdom cannot be acquired.

May my body etc. : This is a prayer for physical health and moral vigour.

Sheath : As the sheath is the resting place of a sword, so is Om the resting place of Brahman. Om is the symbol of Brahman.

Concealed etc. : Men endowed with worldly intelligence cannot perceive Brahman which is endowed with great power and splendour.

Guard etc. : That is to say, the knowledge of Brahman acquired through scriptural study.

A man who does not possess retentiveness of mind cannot acquire the knowledge of Brahman. Nor can he who, owing to sickness or some other cause, lacks physical vigour, nor he who suffers from want of food and clothing, devote himself to the study of the scriptures and acquire the Knowledge of Brahman. The present section of the Upanishad shows the way to remove all such obstacles.

ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ

ओंकारं बिन्दुसंयुक्तं नित्यं ध्यायन्ति योगिनः।

कामदं मोक्षदं चैव ओंकाराय नमो नमः॥

Obeisance to Omkāra! Obeisance to Omkāra!! The yogins meditate upon Omkāra, embellished with a *bindu*, constantly, continuously, and regularly. He fulfills all the desires. He blesses us all with the nectar of immortality. Om. Om. Om.

. यो यदिच्छति तस्य तत् ॥ (कठ. 1. 2. 16d)¹

¹ For more see our p. 56.

OM MAṆI PADME HUM ☞ Skt., lit. “OM, jewel in the lotus, hum” (Tib., om mani peme hung); Sanskrit formula associated with → Avalokiteśvara, the most important and oldest mantra of Tibetan Buddhism. The simplest explanation of the two words, enclosed by so-called seed-syllables, that mean “jewel in the lotus” is equation of the jewel with enlightenment-mind (→ *bodhicitta*), which arises in the lotus of human consciousness. The complex meaning of this sequence of sounds is connected with the role it plays in → *sādhanas* and must be described in the context of the entire symbology of the → Vajrayāna. For Tibetan Buddhists, these six syllables are an expression of the basic attitude of compassion, and the recitation of them expresses the longing for liberation (→ *nirvāna*) “for the sake of all sentient beings.” For this reason, the six syllables are also associated with the six modes of existence in the wheel of life (→ *bhava-chakra*).



The mantra OM MAṆI PADME HUM in its Tibetan form

अथर्वशिरउपनिषद्¹

अथर्वशिरसामर्थमनर्थप्रोतवाचकम् ।

सर्वाधारमनाधारं स्वमात्रत्रैपदाक्षरम् ॥

ॐ भद्रं कर्णेभिरिति शान्तिः ।

ॐ देवा ह वै स्वर्गं लोकमायंस्ते रुद्रमपृच्छन्को भवानिति । सोऽब्रवीदहमेकः प्रथम-
मासं वर्तामि च भविष्यामि च । नान्यः कश्चिन्मत्तो व्यतिरिक्त इति । सोऽन्तरादन्तरं
प्राविशत् । दिशश्चान्तरं प्राविशत् । सोऽहं नित्यानित्योऽहं व्यक्ताव्यक्तो ब्रह्माब्रह्माहं
प्राञ्चः प्रत्यञ्चोऽहं दक्षिणाञ्च उदञ्चोहम् । अधश्चोर्ध्वं चाहं दिशश्च प्रतिदिशश्चाहं
पुमानपुमान् स्त्रियश्चाहं गायत्रचहं सावित्रचहं त्रिष्टुब्जगत्यनुष्टुप् चाहं छन्दोऽहं गार्ह-
पत्यो दक्षिणाग्निराहवनीयोऽहं सत्योऽहं गौरहं गौर्यहमृगहं यजुरहं सामाहमथर्वा-
ङ्गिरसोऽहं ज्येष्ठोऽहं श्रेष्ठोऽहं वरिष्ठोऽहमापोऽहं तेजोऽहं गुह्योऽहमरण्योऽहमक्षरम्
अहं क्षरमहं पुष्करमहं पवित्रमहमुग्रं च मध्यं च बहिश्च पुरस्ताज्ज्योतिरित्यहमेव सर्वेभ्यो
मामेव स सर्वः स मां यो मां वेद स सर्वान्देवान्वेद सर्वांश्च वेदान्साङ्गानपि । ब्रह्म
ब्राह्मणैश्च गां गोभिर्ब्राह्मणान् ब्राह्मणेन हविर्हविषा आयुरायुषा सत्येन सत्यं धर्मेण धर्मं
तर्पयामि स्वेन तेजसा ।

ततो ह वै ते देवा रुद्रमपृच्छन् । ते देवा रुद्रमपश्यन् । ते देवा रुद्रमध्यायन् । ततो
देवा ऊर्ध्वबाहवो रुद्रं स्तुवन्ति ॥ 1 ॥

ॐ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्च ब्रह्मा तस्मै वै नमोनमः ॥ 1 ॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्य-
श्च विष्णुस्तस्मै वै नमोनमः ॥ 2 ॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्च स्कन्दस्तस्मै वै नमोनमः ॥ 3 ॥
यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्चेन्द्रस्तस्मै वै नमोनमः ॥ 4 ॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्चाग्निः
तस्मै वै नमोनमः ॥ 5 ॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्च वायुस्तस्मै वै नमोनमः ॥ 6 ॥ यो वै रुद्रः
स भगवान्यश्च सूर्यस्तस्मै वै नमोनमः ॥ 7 ॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्च सोमस्तस्मै वै
नमोनमः ॥ 8 ॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्ये चाष्टौ ग्रहास्तस्मै वै नमोनमः ॥ 9 ॥ यो वै रुद्रः स

¹ Source : ईशाद्यष्टोत्तरशतोपनिषदः । वाराणसी : व्यास प्रकाशन, pp. 154 ff. उपनिषद्सङ्ग्रहः । MLBD pp. 172 ff. .

स भगवान्ये चाष्टौ प्रतिग्रहास्तस्मै वै नमोनमः॥10॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्च भूस्तस्मै वै नमोनमः॥11॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्च भुवस्तस्मै वै नमोनमः॥12॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्च स्वस्तस्मै वै नमोनमः॥13॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्च महस्तस्मै वै नमोनमः॥14॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्या च पृथिवी तस्मै वै नमोनमः॥15॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्चान्तरिक्षं तस्मै वै नमोनमः॥16॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्या च द्यौस्तस्मै वै नमोनमः॥17॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्याश्चापस्तस्मै वै नमोनमः॥18॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्च तेजस्तस्मै वै नमोनमः॥19॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्च कालस्तस्मै वै नमोनमः॥20॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्च यमस्तस्मै वै नमोनमः॥21॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्च मृत्युस्तस्मै वै नमोनमः॥22॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्चामृतं तस्मै वै नमोनमः॥23॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्चाकाशं तस्मै वै नमोनमः॥24॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्च विश्वं तस्मै वै नमोनमः॥25॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्च स्थूलं तस्मै वै नमोनमः॥26॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्च सूक्ष्मं तस्मै वै नमोनमः॥27॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्च शुक्लं तस्मै वै नमोनमः॥28॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्च कृष्णं तस्मै वै नमोनमः॥29॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्च कृत्स्नं तस्मै वै नमोनमः॥30॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्च सत्यं तस्मै वै नमोनमः॥31॥ यो वै रुद्रः स भगवान्यश्च सर्वं तस्मै वै नमोनमः॥32॥

2॥

भूस्ते आदिर्मध्यं भुवः स्वस्ते शीर्षं विश्वरूपोऽसि ब्रह्मैकस्त्वं द्विधा त्रिधा वृद्धिस्त्वं शान्तिस्त्वं पुष्टिस्त्वं हुतमहुतं दत्तमदत्तं सर्वमसर्वं विश्वमविश्वं कृतमकृतं परमपरं परायणं च त्वम्।

अपाम सोमममृता अभूमागन्म ज्योतिरविदाम देवान्।
किं नूनमस्मान्कृणवदरातिः किमु धूर्तिरमृतं मर्त्यस्य ॥

सोमसूर्यपुरस्तात् सूक्ष्मः पुरुषः। सर्वं जगद्धितं वा एतदक्षरं प्राजापत्यं सूक्ष्मं सौम्यं पुरुषम्। ग्राहचमग्राहचेण भावं भावेन सौम्यं सौम्येन सूक्ष्मं सूक्ष्मेण वायव्यं वायव्येन ग्रसति स्वेन तेजसा तस्मादुपसंहर्त्रे महाग्रासाय वै नमो नमः।

हृदिस्था देवताः सर्वा हृदि प्राणाः प्रतिष्ठिताः।
हृदि त्वमसि यो नित्यं तिस्रो मात्राः परस्तु सः।

तस्योत्तरतः शिरो दक्षिणतः पादौ। य उत्तरतः स ओंकारः, य ओंकारः स प्रणवः,

यः प्रणवः स सर्वव्यापी, यः सर्वव्यापी सोऽनन्तः, योऽनन्तस्तत्तारम्, यत्तारं तत्सूक्ष्मम् यत् सूक्ष्मं तच्छुक्रं, यच्छुक्रं तद्वैद्युतम्, यद्वैद्युतं तत्परं ब्रह्म, यत्परं ब्रह्म स एकः, य एकः स रुद्रो, यो रुद्रः स ईशानः, य ईशानः स भगवान् महेश्वरः। (3).

अथ कस्मादुच्यते ओंकारः, यस्मादुच्चार्यमाण एव प्राणानूर्ध्वमुत्क्रामयति तस्माद् उच्यते ओंकारः।

अथ कस्मादुच्यते प्रणवः, यस्मादुच्चार्यमाण एव ऋग्यजुःसामाथर्वाङ्गिरसं ब्रह्म ब्राह्मणेभ्यः प्रमाणयति नामयति च तस्मादुच्यते प्रणवः।

अथ कस्मादुच्यते सर्वव्यापी, यस्मादुच्चार्यमाण एव सर्वाङ्गोकान्व्याप्नोति स्नेहो यथा पल्लपिण्डमिव शान्तरूपमोतप्रोतमनुप्राप्तो व्यतिषक्तश्च तस्मादुच्यते सर्वव्यापी।

अथ कस्मादुच्यतेऽनन्तः, यस्मादुच्चार्यमाण एव तिर्यगूर्ध्वमधस्ताच्चास्यान्तो नोप-
लभ्यते, तस्मादुच्यतेऽनन्तः।

अथ कस्मादुच्यते तारं, यस्मादुच्चार्यमाण एव गर्भजन्मव्याधिजरामरणसंसारमहा-
भयात्तारयति त्रायते च तस्मादुच्यते तारम्।

अथ कस्मादुच्यते शुक्रं, यस्मादुच्चार्यमाण एव क्लन्दते क्लामयति च, तस्मादुच्यते
शुक्रम्।

अथ कस्मादुच्यते सूक्ष्मं, यस्मादुच्चार्यमाण एव सूक्ष्मो भूत्वा शरीराण्यधितिष्ठिति
सर्वाणि चाङ्गान्यभिमृशति तस्मादुच्यते सूक्ष्मम्।

अथ कस्मादुच्यते वैद्युतं, यस्मादुच्चार्यमाण एव व्यक्ते महति तमसि द्योतयति
तस्मादुच्यते वैद्युतम्।

अथ कस्मादुच्यते परं ब्रह्म, यस्मात्परमपरं परायणं च बृहद्बृहत्या बृंहयति तस्माद्
उच्यते परं ब्रह्म।

अथ कस्मादुच्यते एकः, यः सर्वान्प्राणान्संभक्ष्य संभक्षणेनाजः संसृजति विसृजति।
तीर्थमेके व्रजन्ति तीर्थमेके दक्षिणाः प्रत्यञ्च उदञ्चः प्राञ्चोऽभिव्रजन्त्येके। तेषां

सर्वेषामिह सद्गतिः। साकं स एको भूतश्चरति प्रजानां तस्मादुच्यत एकः।

अथ कस्मादुच्यते रुद्रः, यस्मादृषिभिर्नान्यैर्भक्तैर्द्रुतमस्य रूपमुपलभ्यते तस्मादुच्यते रुद्रः।

अथ कस्मादुच्यते ईशानः, यः सर्वान्देवानीशते ईशानीभिर्जननीभिश्च परमशक्तिभिः।

अभि त्वा शूर नोनूमो दुग्धा इव धेनवः।

ईशानमस्य जगतः स्वर्दशमीशानमिन्द्रस्तस्थुषः। इति।

तस्मादुच्यत ईशानः।

अथ कस्मादुच्यते भगवान्महेश्वरः। यस्माद्भक्ता ज्ञानेन भजन्त्यनुगृह्णाति च वाचं संसृजति विसृजति च सर्वान् भावान् परित्यज्यात्मज्ञानेन योगैश्वर्येण महति महीयते तस्मादुच्यते भगवान् महेश्वरः। तदेतद्रुद्रचरितम् ॥ 4 ॥

एको ह देवः प्रदिशो नु सर्वाः पूर्वो ह जातः स उ गर्भे अन्तः।

स एव जातः स जनिष्यमाणः प्रत्यङ्जनास्तिष्ठति सर्वतोमुखः॥

एको रुद्रो न द्वितीयाय तस्मै य इमाँल्लोकानीशत ईशानीभिः।

प्रत्यङ्जनास्तिष्ठति संचुकोचान्तकाले संसृज्य विश्वा भुवनानि गोप्ता॥

यो योनिं योनिमधितिष्ठत्येको येनेदं संचरति विचरति सर्वम्।

तमीशानं पुरुषं देवमीड्यं निचाय्येमां शान्तिमत्यन्तमेति॥

क्षमां हित्वा हेतुजालस्य मूलं बुद्ध्या संचितं स्थापयित्वा तु रुद्रे।

रुद्रमेकत्वमाहुः शाश्वतं वै पुराणमिषमूर्जेण पशवोऽनुनामयन्तं मृत्युपाशान्॥

तदेतेनात्मन्नेतेनार्धचतुर्थेन मात्रेण शान्तिं संसृजति पशुपाशविमोक्षणम्। या सा प्रथमा मात्रा ब्रह्मदेवत्या रक्ता वर्णेन यस्तां ध्यायते नित्यं स गच्छेद्ब्रह्म [गच्छेद्ब्रह्मं?] पदम्। या सा द्वितीया मात्रा विष्णुदेवत्या कृष्णा वर्णेन यस्तां ध्यायते नित्यं स गच्छेद् वैष्णवं पदम्। या सा तृतीया मात्रा ईशानदेवत्या कपिला वर्णेन यस्तां ध्यायते नित्यं स गच्छेदैशानं पदम्। या सार्धचतुर्थी मात्रा सर्वदेवत्याऽव्यक्तीभूता खं विचरति शुद्धा स्फटिकसन्निभा वर्णेन यस्तां ध्यायते नित्यं स गच्छेत्पदमनामयम्।

तदेतदुपासीत। मुनयो वाग्वदन्ति न तस्य ग्रहणम्। अयं पन्था विहित उत्तरेण येन देवा यान्ति येन पितरो येन ऋषयः परमपरं परायणं चेति।

बालाग्रमात्रं हृदयस्य मध्ये विश्वं देवं जातरूपं वरेण्यम् ।
 तमात्मस्थं ये नु पश्यन्ति धीरास्तेषां शान्तिर्भवति नेतरेषाम् ॥
 यस्मिन्क्रोधं यां च तृष्णां क्षमां चाक्षमां हित्वा हेतुजालस्य मूलम् ।
 बुद्ध्या संचितं स्थापयित्वा तु रुद्रे रुद्रमेकत्वमाहुः ॥
 रुद्रो हि शाश्वतेन वै पुराणेनेषमूर्जेण तपसा नियन्ता ।

अग्निरिति भस्म वायुरिति भस्म जलमिति भस्म स्थलमिति भस्म व्योमेति भस्म
 सर्वं ह वा इदं भस्म मन एतानि चक्षुषि यस्माद् व्रतमिदं पाशुपतं यद्भस्मनाऽङ्गानि
 संस्पृशेत्तस्माद्ब्रह्म तदेतत्पाशुपतं पशुपाशविमोक्षणाय ॥ 5 ॥

योऽग्नौ रुद्रो योऽप्स्वन्तर्यं रुद्र ओषधीर्वीरुध आविवेश ।
 य इमा विश्वा भुवनानि चकृपे तस्मै रुद्राय नमोऽस्त्वग्नये ॥

यो रुद्रोऽग्नौ यो रुद्रोऽप्स्वन्तयो रुद्र ओषधीर्वीरुध आविवेश । यो रुद्र इमा विश्वा
 भुवनानि चकृपे तस्मै रुद्राय नमोनमः । यो रुद्रोऽप्सु यो रुद्र ओषधीषु यो रुद्रो
 वनस्पतिषु । येन रुद्रेण जगदूर्ध्वं धारितं पृथिवी द्विधा त्रिधा धर्ता धारिता नागा ये
 ऽन्तरिक्षे तस्मै रुद्राय वै नमोनमः ।

मूर्धानमस्य संसेव्याप्यर्थर्वा हृदयं च यत् ।
 मस्तिष्कादूर्ध्वं प्रेरयत्यवमानोऽधिशीर्षतः ॥
 तद्वा अथर्वणः शिरो देवकोशः समुज्जितः ।
 तत्राणोऽभिरक्षति शिरोऽन्तमथो मनः ॥
 नव दिवो देवजनेन गुप्ता नव अन्तरिक्षाणि नव भूम इमाः ।
 यस्मिन्निदं सर्वमोतप्रोतं तस्मादन्यन्न किञ्चनास्ति ॥
 न तस्मात्पूर्वं न परं तदस्ति न भूतं नोत भव्यं यदासीत् ।
 सहस्रपादेकमूर्ध्ना व्याप्तं स एव इदमावरीवर्ति भूतम् ॥
 अक्षरात्संजायते कालः कालाद् व्यापक उच्यते ।

व्यापको हि भगवान् रुद्रो भोगायमानो यदा शेते रुद्रस्तदा संहार्यते प्रजाः ।
 उच्छ्वासिते तमो भवति तमस आपोऽप्स्वङ्गुल्या मथिते मथितं शिशिरे शिशिरं मथ्य-
 मानं फेनं भवति फेनादण्डं भवत्यण्डाद् ब्रह्मा भवति ब्रह्मणो वायुः वायोरोंकारः

ओंकारात्सावित्री सावित्र्या गायत्री गायत्र्या लोका भवन्ति ।

अर्चयन्ति तपः सत्यं मधु क्षरति यद्भुवम् । एतद्धि परमं तपः । आपो ज्योती रसोऽमृतम्
ब्रह्म भूर्भुवः स्वरो नम इति ॥6॥

य इदमथर्वशिरो ब्राह्मणोऽधीते अश्रोत्रियः श्रोत्रियो भवति अनुपनीत उपनीतो
भवति सोऽग्निपूतो भवति स वायुपूतो भवति स सूर्यपूतो भवति स सोमपूतो भवति स
सत्यपूतो भवति स सर्वदेवैर्ज्ञातो भवति स सर्वदेवैरनुध्यातो भवति स सर्वेषु तीर्थेषु
स्नातो भवति तेन सर्वैः क्रतुभिरिष्टं भवति गायत्र्याः षष्टिसहस्राणि जप्तानि भवन्ति
इतिहासपुराणानां रुद्राणां शतसहस्राणि जप्तानि भवन्ति । प्रणवानामयुतं जप्तं भवति ।
स चक्षुषः पङ्क्तिं पुनाति । आ सप्तमात्पुरुषयुगान्पुनातीत्याह भगवान् ।

अथर्वशिरः सकृज्जप्त्वैव शुचिः स पूतः कर्मण्यो भवति । द्वितीयं जप्त्वा गणाधि-
पत्यमवाप्नोति । तृतीयं जप्त्वैतमेवानुप्रविशति । ओं सत्यम् ओं सत्यम् ओं सत्यम् ॥7॥¹

इत्यथर्वशिरउपनिषत् समाप्ता ।

¹ It is important to note that there are seven [!] sections. Eds.

A T H A R V A Ś I R A S

(Atharvaśira Upaniṣad)¹

This Upaniṣad, which calls itself (p. 10, 9, Calcutta ed.) Atharvaśiras (which probably means: "The main point of the Atharvaveda", --cf. *Vedānta* "The final goal of the Veda") and quotes, at 9, 3, the verse Atharvav. 10, 2, 27 (probably misunderstood) for an explanation of this name, extols as the principle of all things and as the highest goal, *paramaparam* (not *param-aparam*.²), *parāyaṇam*) Rudra (Īśāna, Bhagavān Maheśvara,--the name Śiva does not occur). Rudra is the past, the present and the future, he is all-embracing and is the innermost of all objects, he is the visible and the invisible. He who knows him, thereby knows everything (1,12); he is to be proclaimed through silence alone (7, 13). His symbol is the sound Om, and especially the three-and-halfth (imaginary) mora of it (4,10). Rudra dwells in the heart (4,10) and pervades the entire creation (8,10 ff), which consists of nine heavens, nine atmospheric regions and nine earths (9,5). When he coils himself together as a snake, he absorbs the world and releases it again through his breath (9,10ff). He is the unity of the life-organs and the corresponding deities (6,1 ff). The man is his creation (*paśu*) and is bound by the cord (*pāśa*) of earthly existence. The liberation from birth, sorrows, death (5,10) follows when one surrenders anger and lust (*trṣṇā*), the earth as the root of the causal chain (*hetujālasya mūlam*) and all possessions to Rudra (7, 3.8,3)-- The Upaniṣad seems to belong to a sect of the Pāśupatas, as whose vow (*vratam pāśupatam*) the symbolical smearing with ashes is mentioned (8, 8). The further systematisation of the Pāśupatas, however, does not appear in this Upaniṣad. The text of this Upaniṣad is considerably corrupt [!], so that help had to be taken from conjectures.

Om! Once the gods went to heaven. And they asked Rudra: "Who are you?"--And he said: "I am that one [which] existed at first, I exist, and I shall exist. None else is there apart from me. I am that [which] entered the inner from the inner. I am eternal and non-eternal, visible and invisible, Brahman and non-

¹ On the sequence. Now follow five Upaniṣads which look upon the god Śiva as a symbolical personification of the Ātman, viz: *Atharvaśiras*, *Atharvaśikhā*, *Nīlarudra*, *Kālāgnirudra* and *Kaivalya*. We adhere to this sequence which follows from the lists of Colebrooke and Nārayaṇa, although it does not certainly quite correspond to the time of origination, since the *Nīlarudra Upaniṣad*, in so far as it offers only an abstract of the Vāj. Saṃh. 16 and similar passages, is by far the oldest piece. Also to judge from its contents, the *Kaivalya Upaniṣad*, in spite of its late position in the above lists, could have originated in a comparatively old age, an age close to that of the *Śvetāśvatara*, *Muṇḍaka* and *Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣads*.

² But the foregoing pairs of expressions like *hutam ahutam* favour this interpretation rejected by Deussen.--GBP.

Brahman. I am eastern and western, southern and northern, I am below and above (Chând. 7,25,1), I am the quarters and the sub-quarters. I am masculine and neuter and feminine (Atharvav. 10,8,27). I am the Sāvitrī and the Gāyatrī, I am the Triṣṭubh, the Jagatī and the Anuṣṭubh. I am the appearance and the reality. I am the fire Gārhapatyā and Dakṣiṇa and Āhavanīya. I am the cow and the she-buffalo. I am Ṛc, Yajus and Sāman and I am the Atharvāṅgiras. I am the eldest, the noblest and the best (Brh. 6,1,1). I am the water and the fire, I am hidden in the fire-sticks. I am the imperishable and the perishable. I am the lotus flower and I am the Soma-filter. I am the powerful, I am within and without, I am the light [born] in the East' (Atharvav. 4,1,1). I am all, I am the unefcnding.¹ He who knows me, becomes all at the same time. He knows the gods and all the Vedas and the Vedāṅgas. And I am also that, I who with my power satisfy the Brahman by the Brāhmaṇas, the cow with the cows, the Brāthmaṇas with the Brāhmaṇahood, the sacrificial food with the sacrificial food, the life with the life, the truth with the truth, the law with the law".--Then the gods asked Rudra, the gods looked at Rudra, the gods thought over Rudra, the gods praised Rudra [with the following hymn of praise] with raised hands.

2

Om!

Rudra is this exalted one and Brahman, to him the salutation, the salutation !

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---------|---|---|---|
| ” | ” | ” | Viṣṇu, | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | Skanda, | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | Indra, | ” | ” | ” |

Rudra is this exalted one and Agni, to him the salutation, the salutation

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--------|---|---|---|
| ” | ” | ” | Vāyu, | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | Sūrya, | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | Soma, | ” | ” | ” |

Rudra is this exalted one and the 8 seizors, to him the salutation, the salutation!

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|----------------------|---|---|---|
| ” | ” | ” | the 8 super- | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | seizors ² | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | <i>bhūr,</i> | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | <i>bhuvah,</i> | ” | ” | ” |

¹ The text and the sense are quite uncertain here and in the following lines.

² Cf. Brh. Up. 3,2 and the translator's note there.

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--------------------------|---|---|---|
| ” | ” | ” | <i>sva</i> , | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | <i>maha</i> ¹ | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | the earth, | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | the mid-region | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | the heaven | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | the water | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | the fire | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | Kāla, | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | Yama, | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | Mṛtyu, | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | the immortal | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | the ether, | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | the all | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | the gross, | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | the fine, | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | the white, | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | the black, | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | the whole, | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | the true, | ” | ” | ” |
| ” | ” | ” | the universe, | ” | ” | ” |

3

Bhūr is your beginning, *bhuvar* your middle, *sva* your head. You are omniform, Brahman. You are one, twofold, threefold.

You are growth, you are peace, you are prosperity. What is offered in sacrifice and what [is] not offered in sacrifice, given and not given, all and non-all, whole and non-whole, done and undone, the highest of the highest (*parama-pararn*, that is how it is to be split²), the highest goal, you are it.

We have drunk Soma, have become immortal,
Have entered into the light, found out the gods!
What could the hostility harm us now,
What, O immortal, the malice of man! (Rgv. 8,48,3).

Before Soma and Sūrya is the subtle soul. But comprising [implicit, *hitam*] the whole world is that syllable [Om], which swallows what is Prajātpati-like, what is soma-like, the subtle soul, the seizable by its unseizable, the existence by its existence, the Soma-like by its Soma-like, the subtle by its subtle, the wind-like by its wind-like. To it as the greatest swallower, the salutation, the salutation!

In the heart all deities,

¹ Taitt. 1, 5.

² But see footnote 2 under the introduction.— GBP.

In it are the vital breaths,¹
As the one surpassing the three moras,
You too are in the heart.

His head is to the North (Chând. 5,10,1), his feet to the South. He who is to the North, is the sound Om, as the sound Om he is the holy call, as the holy call he is all-pervading, as all-pervading he is infinite, as infinite he is the protecting (*tāram*), as the protecting he is the pure, as the pure he is the subtle, as the subtle he is the lightning-like, as the lightning-like he is the highest Brahman, as the highest Brahman he is the one, as the one he is Rudra, as Rudra he is the ruler, as the ruler he is the exalted Maheśvara.

4

But why is he called the sound Om ?--Because, being uttered he makes the vital breaths go upwards on high, therefore he is called the sound Om.

And why is he called the holy call (*praṇava*) ?--Because being uttered, he makes the Brahman consisting of Ṛc, Yajus, Sāman, Atharvāngiras lean towards the Brāhmaṇas and bends it, therefore he is called the holy call.

But why is he called all-pervading ?--Because, being uttered, he pervades and permeates that quiet one (Kaṭh. 3,13), sewn lengthwise and crosswise (Bṛh. 3, 6), as a lump of sesame-dough with oil, therefore he is called all-pervading.

But why is he called infinite ?--Because, when it is being uttered, no end of it is to be found athwart, upward, and downward, therefore it is called infinite.

But why is he called the protecting ? Because, being uttered, he rescues from the dire fear of conception, birth, illness, old age, death and from the transmigration of the soul and protects, therefore, it is called the protecting.

But why is he called the pure (*śu-klam*)? Because, being uttered, he makes noise (*klandate*) and makes one tired (*klāmayati*), therefore he is called the pure.

But why is he called the subtle ? Because, being uttered, he takes possession of the body in a subtle form and tinges all the limbs, therefore he is called the subtle.

But why is he called lightning-like? Because, being uttered, he illumines it in the great unmanifest darkness, therefore he is called lightning-like.

But why is he called the highest Brahman? Because he is the highest of the

¹ Cf. the verse Brahma Up. 2, above.

highest, the highest goal, the strong and strengthens by the strong [magic power] (*br̥hatyā br̥m̥hayati*), therefore he is called the highest Brahman.

But why is he called the one?--He who, the devourer of all vital powers (*prāṇāḥ*), by the act of devouring them, as being more eternal unites them and again spreads them apart, so that some hasten to their master and some others hasten to their master and yet others [as the natural powers corresponding to the Prāṇas] hasten to the South, the West, the North and the East, who is the meeting place of all here, and has become one by uniting, moves along [as the vital breath] of the creatures,---therefore he is called the one.

But why is he called Rudra?--Because his essence (*rū-pam*) is grasped instantly (*dru-tam*) only by the seers (*r̥ṣi*), not by other devotees, therefore he is called *Ru-dra*.

But why is he called the ruler? Because it is he,
Who rules over all the gods,
With his regal and procreative powers (cf. Śvet. 3,1),--

To you, O here, we cry out,
Like cows, which go for milking,
To the lord of what moves, to the heaven-seer,
To the lord, O Indra, of what stays (Ṛgv. 7,32,22),---
therefore he is called the ruler.

But why is he called the exalted Maheśvara?--Because he permits the devotees (*bhaktān*) in the participation of perception and is gracious towards them; because he withdraws the speech [of the Veda] in himself and again allows it to flow out (Bṛh. 2,4,10); because, giving up all forms, he raises himself and is elevated through the perception of the Ātman and the mastery of the Yoga, therefore he is called the exalted Maheśvara.

This is the knowledge of Rudra.

5

The one god in all the world-spaces,
Born of old and in mother's womb,
He was born, he will be born,
He is in men and omnipresent (Vāj. Saṃh. 32,4. Śvet. 2,16).

One Rudra there is,--[don't worship] him as second!
Who with his regal powers rules over the world;
He dwells in the creatures and gathers them in him at the end,
When he, the guardian, devours all creatures (Śvet. 3,2).

Who, as one, presides over every womb,
Through whom the whole universe spreads out;
Who knows him as ruler, as God, liberal giver, praiseworthy
He enters into that peace for ever. (Śvet. 4,11, cf. Śvet. 5,2. Kaṭh.. 1,17).
Shunning the world, the root of the causal net,
Wisely surrendering to Rudra all acquisition,
[they] acknowledged Rudra as the unity, as the eternal, the senior in refreshment
and energy,¹ the creatures, as the one who cuts their bonds of death.

Thus it happens that, by means of that [sacred sound], when he penetrates into
the soul, [the Īśvara] grants peace, the release of creatures (*paśu*) from their
bonds (*pāśa*) by the three-and halfth mora [of Om].

The first mora [of Om=*a+u+m*] has Brahman as its deity and is red in
colour; he who meditates on it continuously, goes to the abode of Brahman.

The second mora has Viṣṇu as its deity and is black in colour; he who
meditates on it continuously, goes to the abode of Viṣṇu.

The third mora has Īśāna as its deity and is brown in colour; he who
meditates on it continuously, goes to the abode of Īśāna.

But the three-and-halfth mora has all these as its deities, is unmanifest,
goes out into the wide, is pure and resembles a mountain-crystal in colour; he
who meditates on it continuously, goes to the abode of the bliss.

Therefore one should revere this! The silent ones (ascetics) proclaim it
worldlessly, because there is no grasping of it.

That is the prescribed way to the North by which the gods go (Chānd.
5,10,1), and the fathers and the Ṛṣis to the highest of the highest, to the supreme
goal.

Minute like hair's tip, in the midst of heart,
Omnipresent, the God, golden dear,
The wise who sees him as dwelling in himself,
He alone attains peace, and none else.
[Leaving] anger to him, greed and worldly desires,
shunning the world, the root of the causal net
Wisely surrendering to Rudra all acquisition,

[they] acknowledged Rudra as the unity; for Rudra is the controller through

¹ *iṣamūrjena*: the compound *iṣam-ūrja* is formed ungram- matically from the
constituents *iṣam ūrjam*. Similarly below, p. 8,5. We have come across a similar
example [*tamasah paryam*] above, Maitr. Up. 6,24.

eternal, old refreshment-and-energy¹ and austerities. What is called fire is ashes, and what wind, is ashes; and what water, is ashes; and what earth, is ashes; and what ether, is ashes; and the whole universe is ashes, and the mind and these eyes ! Because this is the vow of the Pāsupata, viz. that he covers his limb; with ashes, therefore this is the Pāsupata form of prayer, so that the creation be freed from his bonds.

6

To Rudra, who is in fire, in water,
Who has entered plants and creepers,
Who has become all these creatures,
to this Rudra, salutation, as Agni!

To Rudra, who is in fire, in water,
Who has entered plants and creepers,
Who has become all these creatures,
to this Rudra, salutation, salutation!

Rudra who is in water, Rudra in plants, Rudra in trees, Rudra by whom the world is held on high, by whom is supported the earth in a two-fold or three-fold form as supporter, and the snakes who dwell in the atmosphere, to this Rudra, salutation, salutation !

[Rudra as Prāṇa in the human head:]

When Atharvan sewed together
His head and the heart in him,
He stimulated him over the brain,
As purifier, from the head down.

This head belongs to Atharvan,
A cask stuffed with gods,

This head is guarded by Prāṇa,
Food and Manas in union,²

Nine heavens there are, guarded by divine community,
Nine atmospheres, and nine of these earths;
He who is seven lengthwise and crosswise in all,

¹ *iṣamārjane* : the compound *iṣam-Ūrja* is formed ungrammatically from the constituents *iṣam ūrjam*. Similarly below, p. 8. 5. We have come across a similar example [*tamasah paryam*] above, Maitr. Up. 6. 24.

² Atharva. 10, 2, 26-27, whose readings we have followed. The purifier who, rising to the head, stimulates man, is the Soma. Cf. our explanation of the hymn, *Gesch.d.phil.* I. 269..

From him nothing exists apart.

Nothing is earlier than him, nothing later,
Nothing what had been or was going to be;
With a thousand feet and only one head
He pervades the world and makes it roll.

From the Eternal, time is born,
From time he is called the pervader,
for the pervader is the exalted Rudra. When Rudra lies down in the manner of a serpent's coils, then the creatures are withdrawn within. When he breathes out (Bṛh. 4,5,11), there originates darkness, from darkness the water; when he stirs in the water with a finger, what is stirred becomes cold in the cold and, when it is stirred, it becomes foam; out of the foam originates the (universe-) egg, out of the egg Brahman, out of Brahman the wind, out of the wind the sound Om, out of the sound Om Sāvitrī, out of Sāvitrī Gāyatrī, out of Gāyatrī the worlds (cf. Ṛgv. 1,164,25. Chānd. 3.12).

They praise Tapas and truth when they pour out the sweet drink, who does not forget (liberation). Indeed, this is the highest Tapas, is water, light, essence, the Immortal, Brahman (cf. above, Amṛtabindu-Up., 10, footnote).

Bhūr, bhuvah, svar! Om ! Salutation !

7

(Cf. Mahā Up. 4)

The Brāhmaṇa who studies this Atharvaśiras, one who is not an authority on scriptures becomes an authority on scriptures, an uninitiated becomes initiated; he is purified by fire, purified by wind, purified by Soma, purified by truth; he is known by all the gods, is meditated upon by all the Vedas [which appear here as persons], becomes one who has bathed in all the holy bathing places, and all sacrifices are performed by him. Sixty thousand Gāyatrī stanzas are muttered by him, a hundred thousand [stanzas] of the Itihātsa-Purāṇas and of the Rudra-hymns are muttered by him, ten thousand Praṇavas are muttered by him. He purifies the assembly as far as his sight reaches (*ācakṣuṣah*) he purifies up to the seventh generation (ancestors and descendants): thus has the exalted one promised.

He who mutters the Atharvaśiras once, becomes pure, purified, fit for activity?--he who mutters it a second time, attains supremacy over the host of the supreme god; he who mutters it a third time, enters into a similar existence.

Om! The truth! Om! The truth! Om! The truth!

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Part II

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¹ Full details appear in the Bibliography of sources and resources.



OM Khanda II

Devotional Contributions

We begin this section of our devotional offerings with a contribution from Viśvātmā Viśvabandhu Svāmī Śrī Vivekānandaĵī Mahārāja. Many of the writings presented in our collection of selections quote his immortal words quite extensively. We don't want to eliminate those passages from their respective places. That will ruin the writings of other writers who have preceded us. Let there be repetition. Holy and pious words repeated time and again will only bring more virtue and glory. *Tajjapas tadarthabhāvanam.*

Svami Shri Vivekananda honors OM

Svāmī Vivekānanda urges upon the entire world to adopt Om. Here is his inspiring divine message:

... We see that around the word Om are centered all the different religious ideas in India; all the various religious ideas of the Vedas have gathered themselves round this word Om. What has that to do with America or England, or any other country? Simply this, that the word has been retained at every stage of religious growth in India, and it has been manipulated to mean all the various ideas about God. Monists, dualists, monodualists, separatists, and even atheists took up this Om. Om has become the one symbol for the religious aspiration of the vast majority of human beings. Take, for instance, the English word God. It covers only a limited function, and if you go beyond it, you have to add adjectives, to make it Personal, or Impersonal, or Absolute God. So with the words of God in every other language; their signification is very small. This word Om, however, has around it all the various significances. *As such it should be accepted by everyone.* (emphasis added).¹

We have begun with a very significant quotation from Svami Vivekananda. Now we are reproducing his words gathered together by Mr. John Schlenk of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of New York from the *Collected Works* in 8 vols. We are highly indebted to him for this generous help.

Swami Vivekananda Says OM, OM, OM !

Repeat OM in Prāṇāyāma.

¹ Extracts from the *Complete Works* of Svami Vivekananda. 12th ed. Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1963. V. 1, p. 219.

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The first lesson is just to breathe in a measured way, in and out. That will harmonize the system. When you have practiced this for some time, you will do well to join to it the repetition of some word as "Om," or any other sacred word. In India we use certain symbolical words instead of counting one, two, three, four. That is why I advise you to join the mental repetition of the "Om," or some other sacred word to the Pranayama. Let the word flow in and out with the breath, rhythmically, harmoniously, and you will find the whole body is becoming rhythmical. Then you will learn what rest is. Compared with it, sleep is not rest. Once this rest comes the most tired nerves will be calmed down, and you will find that you have never before really rested.

The three processes for the purification of the nerves, described above, the first and the last are neither difficult nor dangerous. The more you practice the first one the calmer you will be. Just think of "Om," and you can practice even while you are sitting at your work. You will be all the better for it. From Raja-Yoga. 1: 166-68.²

The Gāyatrī Mantra.

There is a Mantra called the Gayatri. It is a very holy verse of the Vedas. "We meditate on the glory of that Being who has produced this universe; may He enlighten our minds." Om is joined to it at the beginning and the end. In one Pranayama repeat three Gayatris. 1:191

Meditate on OM

So the eight petals of the lotus are the eight powers, but the internal stamens and pistils are extreme renunciation, the renunciation of all these powers. Inside of that lotus think of the Golden One, the Almighty, the Intangible, He whose name is Om, the Inexpressible, surrounded with effulgent light. Meditate on that. 1:192.

(Patanjali's Yoga Aphorisms. Commentary on sūtras 27-29.

27. His manifesting word is Om.

Every idea that you have in the mind has a counterpart in a word; the word and the thought are inseparable. The external part of one and the same thing is what we call word, and the internal part is what we call thought. No man can, by analysis, separate thought from word. The idea that language was created by men--certain men sitting together and deciding upon words--has been proved to be wrong. So long as man has existed there have been words and language. What is the connection between an idea and a word? Although we see that there must always be a word with a thought, it is not necessary that the same thought requires the same word. The thought may be the same in twenty different countries, yet the language is different. We must have a word to express each thought, but these words need not necessarily have the same sound.

² All references are to the Complete works....

Sounds will vary in different nations. Our commentator says, "Although the relation between thought and word is perfectly natural, yet it does not mean a rigid connection between one sound and one idea." These sounds vary, yet the relation between the sounds and the thoughts is a natural one. The connection between thoughts and sounds is good only if there be a real connection between the thing signified and the symbol; until then that symbol will never come into general use. A symbol is the manifestation of the thing signified, and if the thing signified has already an existence, and if, by experience, we know that the symbol has expressed that thing many times, then we are sure that there is a real relation between them. Even if the things are not present, there will be thousands who will know them by their symbols. There must be a natural connection between the symbol and the thing signified; then, when that symbol is pronounced, it recalls the thing signified. The commentator says the manifesting word of God is Om. Why does he emphasize this word? There are hundreds of words for God. One thought is connected with a thousand words; the idea "God" is connected with hundreds of words, and each one stands as a symbol for God. Very good. But there must be a generalization among all these words, some substratum, some common ground of all these symbols, and that which is the common symbol will be the best, and will really represent them all. In making a sound we use the larynx and the palate as a sounding board. Is there any material sound of which all other sounds must be manifestations, one which is the most natural sound? Om (Aum) is such a sound, the basis of all sounds. The first letter, A, is the root sound, the key, pronounced without touching any part of the tongue or palate; M represents the last sound in the series, being produced by the closed lips, and the U rolls from the very root to the end of the sounding board of the mouth. Thus, Om represents the whole phenomena of sound-producing. As such, it must be the natural symbol, the matrix of all the various sounds. It denotes the whole range and possibility of all the words that can be made. Apart from these speculations, we see that around this word Om are centered all the different religious ideas in India; all the various religious ideas of the Vedas have gathered themselves round this word Om. What has that to do with America and England, or any other country? Simply this, that the word has been retained at every stage of religious growth in India, and it has been manipulated to mean all the various ideas about God. Monists, dualists, mono-dualists, separatists, and even atheists took up this Om. Om has become the one symbol for the religious aspiration of the vast majority of human beings. Take, for instance, the English word God. It covers only a limited function, and if you go beyond it, you have to add adjectives, to make it Personal, or Impersonal, or Absolute God. So with the words for God in every other language; their signification is very small. This word Om, however, has around it all the various significances. As such it should be accepted by everyone. [Sanskrit]

28. The repetition of this (Om) and meditating on its meaning (is the way). Why should there be repetition? We have not forgotten the theory of Samskaras, that the sum-total of impressions lives in the mind. They become more and more latent but remain there, and as soon as they get the right stimulus, they come out. Molecular vibration never ceases. When this universe is destroyed, all the massive vibrations disappear; the sun, moon, stars, and earth, melt down; but the vibrations remain in the atoms. Each atom performs the same function as the big worlds do. So even when the vibrations of the

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Chitta subside, its molecular vibrations go on, and when they get the impulse, come out again. We can now understand what is meant by repetition. It is the greatest stimulus that can be given to the spiritual Samskaras. "One moment of company with the holy makes a ship to cross this ocean of life." Such is the power of association. So this repetition of Om, and thinking of its meaning, is keeping good company in your own mind. Study, and then meditate on what you have studied. Thus light will come to you, the Self will become manifest. But one must think of Om, and of its meaning too. Avoid evil company, because the scars of old wounds are in you, and evil company is just the thing that is necessary to call them out. In the same way we are told that good company will call out the good impressions that are in us, but which have become latent. There is nothing holier in the world than to keep good company, because the good impressions will then tend to come to the surface.

29. From that is gained (the knowledge of) introspection, and the destruction of obstacles. The first manifestation of the repetition and thinking of Om is that the introspective power will manifest more and more, all the mental and physical obstacles will begin to vanish. What are the obstacles to the Yogi? 1: 217-220.

Sacred OM praised in the Vedas (Realization)

"That which all the Vedas declare, which is proclaimed by all penances, seeking which men lead lives of continence, I will tell you in one word--it is Om'." You will find this word "Om" praised very much in the Vedas, and it is held to be very sacred.

2:167, "Realization" from Jñāna-Yoga, re Kaṭha Upanishad

Way to Blessedness

He whom all the Vedas seek, to see whom men undergo all sorts of asceticism, I will tell you His name: It is Om. This eternal Om is the Brahman, this is the immortal One; he who knows the secret of this--whatever he desires is his. This Self of man, Nachiketas, about which you seek to know, is never born, and never dies.

2: 409, "The Way to Blessedness" from Jñāna-Yoga, re Kaṭha Upanishad

The Mantra: OM: Word and Wisdom (Bhakti-Yoga)

But we are now considering not these Maha-purushas, the great Incarnations, but only the Siddha-Gurus (teachers who have attained the goal); they, as a rule, have to convey the germs of spiritual wisdom to the disciple by means of words (Mantras) to be meditated upon. What are these Mantras? The whole of this universe has, according to Indian philosophy, both name and form (Nama-Rupa) as its conditions of manifestation. In the human microcosm, there cannot be a single wave in the mind-stuff (Chitta-vritti) unconditioned by name and form. If it be true that nature is built throughout on the same plan, this kind of conditioning by name and form must also be the plan of the building of the whole of the cosmos. {Sanskrit}--"As one lump of clay being known, all things of

clay are known", so the knowledge of the microcosm must lead to the knowledge of the macrocosm.

Now form is the outer crust, of which the name or the idea is the inner essence or kernel. The body is the form, and the mind or the Antahkarana is the name, and sound-symbols are universally associated with Nama (name) in all beings having the power of speech. In the individual man the thought-waves rising in the limited Mahat or Chitta (mind-stuff), must manifest themselves, first as words, and then as the more concrete forms.

In the universe, Brahma or Hiranyagarbha or the cosmic Mahat first manifested himself as name, and then as form, i.e. as this universe. All this expressed sensible universe is the form, behind which stands the eternal inexpressible Sphota, the manifester as Logos or Word. This eternal Sphota, the essential eternal material of all ideas or names, is the power through which the Lord creates the universe; nay, the Lord first becomes conditioned as the Sphota, and then evolves Himself out as the yet more concrete sensible universe. This Sphota has one word as its only possible symbol, and this is the {Sanskrit} (Om). And as by no possible means of analysis can we separate the word from the idea, this Om and the eternal Sphota are inseparable; and, therefore, it is out of this holiest of all holy words, the mother of all names and forms, the eternal Om, that the whole universe may be supposed to have been created. But it may be said that, although thought and word are inseparable, yet as there may be various word-symbols for the same thought, it is not necessary that this particular word Om should be the word representative of the thought, out of which the universe has become manifested. To this objection we reply that this Om is the only possible symbol which covers the whole ground, and there is none other like it. The Sphota is the material of all the words, yet it is not any definite word in its fully formed state. That is to say, if all the peculiarities which distinguish one word from another be removed, then what remains will be the Sphota; therefore this Sphota is called the Nada-Brahma, the Sound-Brahman.

Now, as every word-symbol, intended to express the inexpressible Sphota, will so particularize it that it will no longer be the Sphota, that symbol which particularizes it the least and at the same time most approximately expresses its nature, will be the truest symbol thereof; and this is the Om, and the Om only; because the three letters {Sanskrit} (A.U.M.), pronounced in combination as Om, may well be the generalized symbol of all possible sounds. The letter A is the least differentiated of all sounds, therefore Krishna says in the Gita : {Sanskrit}--"I am A among the letters". Again, all articulate sounds are produced in the space within the mouth beginning with the root of the tongue and ending in the lips--the throat sound is A, and M is the last lip sound, and the U exactly represents the rolling forward of the impulse which begins at the root of the tongue till it ends in the lips. If properly pronounced, this Om will represent the whole phenomenon of sound-production, and no other word can do this; and this, therefore, is the fittest symbol of the Sphota, which is the real meaning of the Om. And as the symbol can never be separated from the thing signified, the Om and the Sphota are one. And as the Sphota, being the finer side of the manifested universe, is nearer to God, and is indeed that first manifestation of divine wisdom, this Om is truly symbolic of God. Again, just as the "One only" Brahman, the Akhanda-Sachchid- ananda, the

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undivided Existence-Knowledge-Bliss, can be conceived by imperfect human souls only from particular standpoints and associated with particular qualities, so this universe, His body, has also to be thought of along the line of the thinker's mind.

This direction of the worshipper's mind is guided by its prevailing elements or Tattvas. The result is that the same God will be seen in various manifestations as the possessor of various predominant qualities, and the same universe will appear as full of manifold forms. Even as in the case of the least differentiated and the most universal symbol Om, thought and sound-symbol are seen to be inseparably associated with each other, so also this law of their inseparable association applies to the many differentiated views of God and the universe: each of them therefore must have a particular word-symbol to express it. These word-symbols, evolved out of the deepest spiritual perception of sages, symbolize and express, as nearly as possible, the particular view of God and the universe they stand for. And as the Om represents the Akhanda, the undifferentiated Brahman, the others represent the Khanda or the differentiated views of the same Beings; and they are all helpful to divine meditation and the acquisition of true knowledge. 3: 56-59

Universal OM Temple

Of course this is a very big scheme, a very big plan. I do not know whether it will ever work out. But we must begin the work. But how? Take Madras, for instance. We must have a temple, for with Hindus religion must come first. Then, you may say, all sects will quarrel about it. But we will make it a non-sectarian temple, having only "Om" as the symbol, the greatest symbol of any sect. If there is any sect here which believes that "Om" ought not to be the symbol, it has not right to call itself Hindu. All will have the right to interpret Hinduism, each one according to his own sect ideas, but we must have a common temple. You can have your own images and symbols in other places, but do not quarrel here with those who differ from you. Here should be taught the common grounds of our different sects, and at the same time the different sects should have perfect liberty to come and teach their doctrines, with only one restriction, that is, not to quarrel with other sects. Say what you have to say, the world wants it; but the world has no time to hear what you think about other people; you can keep that to yourselves. 3: 302-303 "The Future of India" from Lectures from Colombo to Almora.

Believe in Yourself

"Om, this is the Brahman; Om, this is the greatest reality; he who knows the secret of this Om, whatever he desires that he gets." Ay, therefore first know the secret of this Om, that you are the Om; know the secret of this Tat tvam asi, and then and then alone whatever you want shall come to you. If you want to be great materially, believe that you are so. I may be a little bubble, and you may be a wave mountain-high, but know that for both of us the infinite ocean is the background, the infinite Brahman is our magazine of power and strength, and we can draw as much as we like, both of us, I the

bubble and you the mountain-high wave. Believe, therefore, in yourselves. The secret of Advaita is: Believe in yourselves first, and then believe in anything else.

3: 426 "The Vedanta" from Lectures from Colombo to Almora

OM, That is Brahman

So in man we find there is the form, behind that the name, and behind that the thought, the thinking being. So this universe must be on exactly the same plan. The question is: What is that name? According to the Hindus that word is Om. The old Egyptians also believed that. The Katha Upanishad says, "That, seeking which a man practices Brahmacharya, I will tell you in short what that is, that is Om. . . . This is Brahman, the Immutable One, and is the highest; knowing this Immutable One, whatever one desires one gets." This Om stands for the name of the whole universe, or God. Standing midway between the external world and God, it represents both. But then we can take the universe piecemeal, according to the different senses, as touch, as colour, as taste, and in various other ways. In each case we can make of this universe millions of universes from different standpoints, each of which will be a complete universe by itself, and each one will have a name, and a form, and a thought behind. These thoughts behind are Pratikas. Each of them has a name. These names of sacred symbols are used in Bhakti-Yoga.

4: 49-50 "The Chief Symbols" from Addresses on Bhakti-Yoga

OM, the Mūla-mantra (the Root Word)

The Hindu boy or girl . . . gets initiation. He gets from his Guru a word. This is called the root word. This word is given to the Guru [by his Guru], and he gives it to his disciples. One such word is OM. All these symbols have a great deal of meaning, and they hold it secret, never write it. They must receive it through the ear--not through writing--from the teacher, and then hold it as God himself. Then they meditate on the word.

4: 224 "Concentration"

Consolation

Come, Lord, come Arjuna's Charioteer, and teach me as Thou once taughtest him, that resignation in Thyself is the highest end and aim of this life, so that with those great ones of old, I may also firmly and resignedly cry, Om Shri Krishnarpanamastu.

4: 355 "A Message of Sympathy to a Friend"

THE SONG OF THE SANNYASIN -- Om Tat Sat

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Wake up the note! the song that had its birth
Far off, where worldly taint could never reach,
In mountain caves and glades of forest deep,
Whose calm no sigh for lust or wealth or fame
Could ever dare to break; where rolled the stream
Of knowledge, truth, and bliss that follows both.
Sing high that note, Sannyasin bold! Say--
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Strike off thy fetters! Bonds that bind thee down,
Of shining gold, or darker, baser ore;
Love, hate--good, bad--and all the dual throng,
Know, slave is slave, caressed or whipped, not free;
For fetters, though of gold, are not less strong to bind;
Then off with them, Sannyasin bold! Say--
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Let darkness go; the will-o'-the-wisp that leads
With blinking light to pile more gloom on gloom.
This thirst for life, for ever quench; it drags
From birth to death, and death to birth, the soul.
He conquers all who conquers self. Know this
And never yield, Sannyasin bold! Say--
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

"Who sows must reap," they say, "and cause must bring
The sure effect; good, good; bad, bad; and none
Escape the law. But who so wears a form
Must wear the chain." Too true; but far beyond
Both name and form is Atman, ever free.
Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say--
"Om Tat Sat, Om! "

They know not truth who dream such vacant dreams
As father, mother, children, wife, and friend.
The sexless Self! whose father He? whose child?
Whose friend, whose foe is He who is but One?
The Self is all in all, none else exists;
And thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say--
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

There is but One--The Free--The Knower--Self!
Without a name, without a form or stain.
In Him is Maya dreaming all this dream.
The witness, He appears as nature, soul.
Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say--

"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Where seekest thou? That freedom, friend, this world
Nor that can give. In books and temples vain
Thy search. Thine only is the hand that holds
The rope that drags thee on. Then cease lament,
Let go thy hold, Sannyasin bold! Say--

"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Say, "Peace to all: From me no danger be
To aught that lives. In those that dwell on high.
In those that lowly creep, I am the Self in all!
All life both here and there, do I renounce,
All heavens and earths and hells, all hopes and fears."
Thus cut thy bonds, Sannyasin bold! Say--

"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Heed then no more how body lives or goes,
Its task is done. Let Karma float it down;
Let one put garlands on, another kick
This frame; say naught. No praise or blame can be
Where praiser praised, and blamer blamed are one.
Thus be thou calm, Sannyasin bold! Say--

"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Truth never comes where lust and fame and greed
Of gain reside. No man who thinks of woman
As his wife can ever perfect be;
Nor he who owns the least of things, nor he
Whom anger chains, can ever pass thro' Maya's gates.
So, give these up, Sannyasin bold! Say--

"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Have thou no home. What home can hold thee, friend?
The sky thy roof, the grass thy bed; and food
What chance may bring, well cooked or ill, judge not.
No food or drink can taint that noble Self
Which knows Itself. Like rolling river free
Thou ever be, Sannyasin bold! Say--

"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Few only know the truth. The rest will hate
And laugh at thee, great one; but pay no heed.
Go thou, the free, from place to place, and help
Them out of darkness, Maya's veil. Without
The fear of pain or search for pleasure, go

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Beyond them both, Sannyasin bold! Say--
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Thus, day by day, till Karma's powers spent
Release the soul for ever. No more is birth,
Nor I, nor thou, nor God, nor man. The "I"
Has All become, the All is "I" and Bliss.
Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say--

"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

4:392-395 "The Song of the Sannyasin"

A Song Glorifying Om

"Once again, I unfold Myself--that 'I';
Of My 'Shakti' the first great change is Om;
The Primal Voice rings through the void;
Infinite Space hears that great vibrant sound.
The group of Primal Causes shakes off sleep,
New life revives atoms interminable;
Cosmic existence heaves and whirls and sways,
Dances and gyrates, moves towards the core,
From distances immeasurably far.

4:515 (from poem, "A Song I Sing to Thee," trans. from Bengali)

OM is for All

Q. Did you give them permission to utter Pranava (Om)?

Swamiji: Yes.

Q. How did you, Maharaj? They say that the Shudras have no right to Pranava, and none has except the Brahmins. Moreover, the Westerners are Mlechchhas, not even Shudras.

Swamiji: How do you know that those whom I have initiated are not Brahmins?

Myself: Where could you get Brahmins outside India, in the lands of the Yavanas and Mlechchhas?

Swamiji: My disciples are all Brahmins! I quite admit the truth of the words that none except the Brahmins has the right to Pranava. But the son of a Brahmin is not necessarily always a Brahmin; though there is every possibility of his being one, he may not become so. Did you not hear that the nephew of Aghore Chakravarti of Baghbazar became a sweeper and actually used to do all the menial services of his adopted caste?

Was he not the son of a Brahmin? The Brahmin caste and the Brahmanya qualities are two distinct things. In India, one is held to be a Brahmin by one's caste, but in the West, one should be known as such by one's Brahmanya qualities.

5:376-377 Conversations and Dialogues

OM Tat Sat

1. Om Tat Sat-that Being--Knowing--Bliss.

(a) The only real Existence, which alone is--everything else exists inasmuch as it reflects that real Existence.

5:432 "The Absolute and the Attainment of Freedom"

Be Dhārmika

"By constant repetition of the syllable Om and by meditating on its meaning, everything can be obtained"; "All sins are washed away by uttering the name of the Lord"; "He gets all, who resigns himself to the Will of God"--yes, these words of the Shastras and the sages are, no doubt, true. But, do you see, thousands of us are, for our whole life, meditating on Om, are getting ecstatic in devotion in the name of the Lord, and are crying, "Thy Will be done, I am fully resigned to Thee!"--and what are they actually getting in return? Absolutely nothing! How do you account for this? The reason lies here, and it must be fully understood. Whose meditation is real and effective? Who can really resign himself to the Will of God? Who can utter with power irresistible, like that of a thunderbolt, the name of the Lord? It is he who has earned Chitta-shuddhi, that is, whose mind has been purified by work, or in other words, he who is the Dharmika.

5: 449 "The East and the West"

OM, the Holiest

"He whom the Vedas declare, He, to reach whom, we serve with prayer and sacrifice, Om is the sacred name of that indescribable One. This word is the holiest of all words. He who knows the secret of this word receives that which he desires." Take refuge in this word. Whoso takes refuge in this word, to him the way opens.

6: 88 "Notes of Class Talks and Lectures"

Prāṇāyāma

Then for half an hour practice Pranayama or the suspending, restraining, and controlling of the breath, mentally repeating the word Om as you inhale and exhale the breath. Words charged with spirit have wonderful power.

6: 89 "Notes of Class Talks and Lectures"

OM Tat Sat

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Above, it is full of me; below, it is full of me; in the middle, it is full of me. I am in all beings, and all beings are in me. Om Tat Sat, I am It. I am existence above mind. I am the one spirit of the universe. I am neither pleasure nor pain.

6: 91 "Notes of Class Talks and Lectures"

Om Tat Sat

Om Namō Bhagavate Ramakrishnaya

6:157 (dedication at beginning of lecture) "Historical Evolution of India"

Dreams Not Realized

My dreams are breaking. Om Tat Sat!

Yours,
Vivekananda

6: 429 Letter to Nivedita, 25 Mar 1900

Disinterestedness

The world is, but not beautiful nor ugly, but as sensations without exciting any emotion. Oh, Joe, the blessedness of it! Everything is good and beautiful; for things are all losing their relative proportions to me--my body among the first. Om That Existence!

6: 433 Letter to Josephine MacLeod 18 Apr 1900

Sabda-Brahman

At the point of creative manifestation, this sum total of causal entities vibrates into activity, as it were, and as being the sonant, material substance of it all, the eternal, primal sound of "Om" continues to come out of itself. And then from the causal totality comes out first the subtle image or Shabda-form of each particular thing and then its gross manifestation. Now that causal Shabda, or word-consciousness, is Brahman, and it is the Veda. This is the purport of Sayana.

6: 497-498 Conversations and Dialogues

Manifestation of the Universe

At the next stage, the particular Shabdas or ideas, that variously existed in former cycles, such as Bhuh, Bhuvah, Svah, cow, man, etc., begin to come out of the "Om". As soon as these ideas appear in Brahman endowed with perfect will, the corresponding concrete things also appear, and gradually the diversified universe becomes manifest.

6: 498 Conversations and Dialogues

Samādhi and Laya

In the process of entering into Samadhi, first the universe appears as one mass of ideas; then the whole thing loses itself in a profound "Om". Then even that melts away, even that seems to be between being and non-being. That is the experience of the eternal Nada. And then the mind becomes lost in the Reality of Brahman, and then it is done! All is peace! The disciple sat mute, thinking that none could express and explain it in the way Swamiji was doing, unless the whole thing were a matter of one's own experience! Swamiji then resumed the subject: Great men like Avatars, in coming back from Samadhi to the realm of "I" and "mine", first experience the unmanifest Nada, which by degrees grows distinct and appears as Om, and then from Omkara, the subtle form of the universe as a mass of ideas becomes experienced, and last, the material universe comes into perception. But ordinary Sadhakas somehow reach beyond Nada through immense practice, and when once they attain to the direct realization of Brahman, they cannot again come back to the lower plane of material perception. They melt away in Brahman, "{Sanskrit}--Like water in milk."

6: 499 Conversations and Dialogues

Tapas

Tapas means literally "to burn". It is a kind of penance to "heat" the higher nature. It is sometimes in the form of a sunrise to sunset vow, such as repeating Om all day incessantly. These actions will produce a certain power that you can convert into any form you wish, spiritual or material. This idea of Tapas penetrates the whole of Hindu religion. The Hindus even say that God made Tapas to create the world. It is a mental instrument with which to do every thing. "Everything in the three worlds can be caught by Tapas." . . .

7: 25-26 Inspired Talks

Realization of Brahman through Dhyāna

So long as enjoyment is sought, bondage remains. Only imperfection can enjoy, because enjoyment is the fulfilling of desire. The human soul enjoys nature. The underlying reality of nature, soul, and God is Brahman; but It (Brahman) is unseen, until we bring It out. It may be brought out by Pramantha or friction, just as we can produce fire by friction. The body is the lower piece of wood, Om is the pointed piece and Dhyana (meditation) is the friction. When this is used, that light which is the knowledge of Brahman will burst forth in the soul.

7: 35 Inspired Talks

Repetition of OM is enough

Japa is repeating the Holy Name; through this the devotee rises to the Infinite. This boat of sacrifice and ceremonies is very frail, we need more than that to know Brahman,

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which alone is freedom. Liberty is nothing more than destruction of ignorance, and that can only go when we know Brahman. It is not necessary to go through all these ceremonials to reach the meaning of the Vedanta. Repeating Om is enough.

7: 37 Inspired Talks

Om Tat Sat is all that can be said about God

Ramanuja divides the universe into Chit, Achit, and Ishvara--man, nature, and God; conscious, subconscious, and superconscious. Shankara, on the contrary, says that Chit the soul, is the same as God. God is truth, is knowledge, is infinity; these are not qualities. Any thought of God is a qualification, and all that can be said of Him is "Om tat sat".

7: 54 Inspired Talks

Om is God Himself

Ishvara is the Atman as seen or grasped by mind. His highest name is Om; so repeat it, meditate on it, and think of all its wonderful nature and attributes. Repeating the Om continually is the only true worship. It is not a word, it is God Himself.

7: 62 Inspired Talks

Take Refuge in God

We only dream this bondage. Wake up and let it go. Take refuge in God, only so can we cross the desert of Maya. "Let go thy hold, Sannyasin bold, say, Om tat sat, Om!"

7: 68 Inspired Talks

God exists eternally

"Om tat sat" is the only thing beyond Māyā, but God exists eternally. As long as the Niagara Falls exist, the rainbow will exist; but the water continually flows away. The falls are the universe, and the rainbow is personal God; and both are eternal. While the universe exists, God must exist. God creates the universe, and the universe creates God ; and both are eternal. Maya is neither existence nor non-existence. Both the Niagara Falls and the rainbow are eternally changeable. . . .

7: 99-100 Inspired Talks

The hymn, "Om Hring Ritam"

Today Swamiji composed the hymn, "Om Hring Ritam " etc., and handing it over to the disciple said, "See if there is any metrical defect in these stanzas." The disciple made a copy of the poem for this purpose.

7: 132-133 Conversations and Dialogues

Vivekananda's vision of the Ramakrishna Temple

The Ramakrishna temple and prayer-hall should be built together in such a way that from a distance it would be taken for a representation of the symbol, "Om". Within the temple there would be a figure of Shri Ramakrishna seated on a swan. On the two sides of the door will be represented the figure of a lion and a lamb licking each other's body in love-expressing the idea that great power and gentleness have become united in love.

7: 205 Conversations and Dialogues

Svāmī Kārtikeya is Om

The god Kartikeya has various names, such as Subrahmaṇya, Kumāra Svāmī, etc. In the South the worship of this god is much in vogue ; they call Kartikeya an incarnation of the sacred formula "Om".³

7: 340 Memoirs of European Travel

Thou Art (a poem)

"Thou art", "Thou art" the Soul of souls
In the rushing stream of life.
"Om tat Sat Om." Thou art my God.
My love, I am thine, I am thine.

7: 452 poem in letter to Prof. John Henry Wright, 4 Sept 1993

The Yoga for the strong

Om Tat Sat! To know the Om is to know the secret of the universe. The object of Jnana-Yoga is the same as that of Bhakti and Raja Yogas, but the method is different. This is the Yoga for the strong, for those who are neither mystical nor devotional, but rational.

8: 3 Discourses on Jnana-Yoga

Abstract unity, the foundation of Jñāna-Yoga

³ Reference may be made to the Praṇava and Śaunaka Upanishads wherein Om leads Gods to victory as the senānī, the Commander in Chief.

Devotional Contributions

To separate ourselves utterly from matter and all belief in its reality is true Jnana. The Jnani must keep ever in his mind the "Om Tat Sat", that is, Om the only real existence. Abstract unity is the foundation of Jnana-Yoga.

8: 5 Discourses on Jnana-Yoga

Oneness with OM

The goal of the universe is to realize oneness with the "Om" or One Existence. The Jnani has to be free from all forms; he is neither a Hindu, a Buddhist, nor a Christian, but he is all three.

8: 11 Discourses on Jnana-Yoga

Second Lesson in Breathing

Second Lesson in Breathing: One method is not for all. This breathing must be done with rhythmic regularity, and the easiest way is by counting; as that is purely mechanical, we repeat the sacred word "Om" a certain number of times instead. The process of Pranayama is as follows: Close the right nostril with the thumb and then slowly inhale through the left nostril, repeating the word "Om" four times. Then firmly close both nostrils by placing the forefinger on the left one and hold the breath in, mentally repeating "Om" eight times. Then, removing the thumb from the right nostril, exhale slowly through that, repeating "Om" four times. As you close the exhalation, draw in the abdomen forcibly to expel all the air from the lungs. Then slowly inhale through the right nostril, keeping the left one closed, repeating "Om" four times. Next close the right nostril with the thumb and hold the breath while repeating "Om" eight times. Then uncloze the left nostril and slowly exhale, repeating "Om" four times, drawing in the abdomen as before. Repeat this whole operation twice at each sitting, that is, making four Pranayamas, two for each nostril. Before taking your seat it is well to begin with prayer. This needs to be practiced a week; then gradually increase the duration of breathing, keeping the same ratio, that is, if you repeat "Om" six times at inhalation, then do the same at exhalation and twelve times during Kumbhaka. These exercises will make us more spiritual, more pure, more holy. Do not be led aside into any byways or seek after power. Love is the only power that stays by us and increases. He who seeks to come to God through Raja-Yoga must be strong mentally, physically, morally, and spiritually. Take every step in that light.

8: 44 Six Lessons on Raja Yoga

Prāṇāyāma.

Pranayama is now to be slightly changed. If the student has the name of his "Ishta" (Chosen Ideal), he should use that instead of "Om" during inhalation and exhalation, and use the word "Hum" (pronounced Hoom) during Kumbhaka.

8: 50 Six Lessons on Raja-Yoga

Om is the greatest

For those who believe in God, a symbolical name, such as Om or other sacred words received from a Guru, will be very helpful. Om is the greatest, meaning the Absolute. Meditating on the meaning of these holy names while repeating them is the chief practice.

8:154 "Four Paths of Yoga"

OM. Hrim.

1. Om! Hrim! Thou art the True, the Imperturbable One, transcending the three Gunas and yet adored for Thy virtues! Inasmuch as I do not worship day and night, with yearning, Thy compassionate lotus feet which destroy all ignorance, therefore, O Thou friend of the lowly, Thou art my only refuge.

8: 172 from "A Hymn to Sri Ramakrishna," trans. from Sanskrit

No One to Blame

Om Namō Bhagavate Sambuddhāya
Om, I salute the Lord, the awakened.

8: 176 from poem, "No One to Blame"

Prāṇāyāma

There is one thing more. Instead of counting by one, two, three, and all such meaningless things, it is better to repeat any word that is holy to you. In our country we have symbolical words, "Om" for instance, which means God. If that be pronounced instead of one, two, three, four, it will serve your purpose very well.

8: 196 "Prāṇāyama"

He exists

Hari Om Tat Sat. He exists; nothing else does. I in Thee and Thou in me. Be Thou Lord my eternal refuge! Peace, Peace, Peace! Ever with love and blessings,

Your brother,

Vivekananda

8: 345 Letter to Mary Hale 26 June 1895



The Sacred Word 'OM'

Svami Abhedānanda⁴

In the twenty-seventh aphorism of the first chapter of the Raja Yoga, we read: "His manifesting word is "OM."⁵ We have read it over and over, and again and again in the New Testament, the first Gospel: 'In the beginning, was the Word and the Word was God'. But it is very difficult to understand the real meaning of the Word; what was the significance of the Word which was in the beginning, and which was God? This idea, however, is not new to the Hindu mind. It existed in India many centuries before the first gospel was written. In the Vedas, we find similar ideas. We read in the *Mahābhārata* as well as in the *Upanishads*: "He who existed by Himself, let first stream forth the eternal word, without beginning or end, and out of which the evolution of the word came into existence." What is the meaning of that 'word'? It was one with the Divine, one with that first Being, and was the cause of the evolution of the universe.

Before we can understand the real meaning of the 'word', we must know the relation between the thought and the word. Every word we utter has some idea behind it, and some thought connected with it. The words may vary, but the idea is the same. As for instance, there are many words which are used to signify a 'cow', or a 'horse'. The cow in Sanskrit would be *gau*, the horse would be *aśva*. Now, each word is the symbol of some idea, or some thought, and the manifestor of a certain thing. When we use a word, we use it for something, or when we think of something, we think it along with the word. Again in using a word, we have a thought behind it. Try to think of a type without using the word 'type'. But all thoughts must be connected with the words, and the words are also the manifested forms of the thoughts. The thoughts exist in the mind, and when they are universally expressed, they take the form of the words. If you try to understand the thoughts of a person, you will have to read the words, or understand the meaning of the words, used by the person.

Therefore, if we realize properly, we will find that the whole world is the consumption or projection of the thoughts of the universal mind, and, consequently, God projects His thought, and the result is a type. He thinks of a form and thinks in the words, and afterwards when that thought is projected in the external world, the shape takes place, and the thing is changed according to the nature of the thought.

The words are manifested thoughts. In other words, the words are like the embodiments of the manifestations of the thoughts, and every object of the phenomenal world is the garment of the thought, and the external objects are the material embodiments of the word. In fact, that word exists in the cosmic mind, and every natural thing is nothing but the expression of the idea which exists in the cosmic

⁴ Abhedananda Svami. *Complete works*. Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1967. V. 3, chap 7, pp. 400-408. Talk delivered on Tuesday, January 29th, 1901.

⁵ *Tasya vācakaḥ praṇavaḥ*. 1. 27

mind. These are like the types which Plato called, and these types are eternal, or the types eternally exists[!]. The Indian grammarian philosophers call their type the *spho a* which is uncreated and eternal. The modern theory of evolution tells us that a protoplasm going through certain changes takes at last the shape of a man and further passes through different stages. Now each stage is a type. There is a tree type, a man type, and thousands and thousands of varieties of the animal type, and at the same time, as a type, they are all the same. We are sitting here; we have many different faces and different figures, but at the same time the type is human and it exists eternally. Whenever the process of evolution reaches the human stage, it will continue in this way; and if this whole universe is dissolved and reduced to its primordial condition, after a certain period, this energy goes through the same process, and will appear through all these types. The type will come out just as the seeds may remain latent or potential during the winter season and after the snow melts away the seeds produce that kind of trees of which the seeds are the type. So the same process is going on in the universe, and there are infinite varieties of such types and each type exists through a certain thought or idea. In the Rig Veda, the oldest scripture of the Hindus, it has been said that God, the Creator, creates the sun, the moon, and all the universe as before, in the beginning of each cycle, with the help of their respective types or causal seeds those exist eternally after the dissolution (*pralaya*) of the universe: "*Sūryācandramasau dhātā yathāpūrvam akalpayat.*" God creates or projects everything by His thought (*saikalpa* or *icchā*) and the Vedas say that everything evolves when He wills or desires. From this it is understood that thought and word are the cause of creation, or of the phenomenal everything.

When a protoplasm takes the type of a man, it does not come by accident, but there is some thought connected with the process of evolution of that protoplasm. It grows under the direction of a certain intelligence, mind and thought; and it will go through many changes and then reach the human form, where it will rest for a certain length of time. There are types of the gods, or of the *devas*, and these types are eternal in the same way. When we understand this that we are types or genera, then we can classify the whole universe. There are the gross materials and the objects of senses, there are the material objects and the minute particles of atoms, there is the stage of energy, and all these can be included under the same of the phenomenal energy which contains the names, or the words and thoughts.

The objects of senses are the projections of the cosmic ideas, i.e. the ideas of the cosmic mind,⁶ and the objects of our thoughts are also the projections of those ideas of the cosmic mind. We see certain things during our waking state, and during our dream state we do not see these things, as in the dream state we see certain things which exist on the psychic plane. During the deep sleep we are conscious of a certain state, and that will come under the classification. All these states, like gross, material, unmanifesting, waking, and deep sleep, can be divided into two classes, individual and

⁶ The cosmic mind (*samashti manas*) is the sum total of all the minds of all individual beings, and the cosmic mind is known in Vedanta as *Īsvara*, *Avyakta*, or *Prājña*.

universal. Each individual has certain experiences during the dream state and also during the deep sleep state, making the sum total of all the experiences of the individual souls during the dream, the deep sleep, and the waking states, every one of these objects is the expression of the exact word and thought or idea that exists in the cosmic mind. That is the source, and through that source different objects have evolved, as has been said before.

In order to understand and to represent the cosmic mind, we made a word which would include all these different stages. Still these things which are connected with a particular individual should be included by the word which would represent the cosmic mind. But is there such a word? Because all these ideas exist in the mind, and we made a word which would include all these things. We utter a word like God, and it includes certain state, but does not include the material objects, the forces, and the experiences of the individuals. In trying to express all these ideas, we must have a word which would be the basic word, or the foundation, of all the words, and the ancient philosophers of India discovered a word which included all the ideas and which is considered to be the common basic word. It can be asked as to why is it the basic word? To this it can be said that because it consists of three basic sounds A--U--M which include all the sounds of the universe. These three sounds are included in that one sound OM. The sound "A" is "U" as in hut. If we examine carefully the process by which that sound is produced, we find that we do not make any motion within the mouth. It is a perfectly free sound; it is the basic sound; and all other sounds are more or less concerned with this basic sound. The second sound is "U" or 'OO' and the last sound is 'M', made by closing the lips. The first sound 'A', i.e. 'U' is made by opening the mouth, and the last sound is 'M', and all the different sounds are nothing but the combination of these three basic sounds A-U-M. In the Vedas it is said: You cannot pronounce any akṣara (letter) and *mantra* (contemplative composition) without the help of the sound of 'A'. There are many sounds, and this OM is the basic sound. In the English word 'go', we have the sound 'guh'. All the sounds must be based on that first sound, the simplest 'UH' sound, and when we get this, we have the foundation of all sounds that can be pronounced or uttered by any organized being, or by any individual or animal who can pronounce or utter anything. Out of these three we can make thousands and thousands of words and sounds. And these three, when combined, become the sound of AUM. First pronounce the word 'A' opening your tongue and then pronounce 'U', and then close the lips and pronounce the sound 'M'.

These sounds 'A U M' include all the different stages. The sound 'A' stands for the gross as well as for the waking state which are individual and universal. When we think of the meaning of the word 'OM', we take it symbolic, and cover every object of the universe with this sound. It was first tuned by the divine Being, before the beginning of the evolution, when there was no vibration of the atoms, and when everything was in one etherial ocean. At that time all the particles of matter were in a state of perfect equilibrium (*sāmyāvasthā*). Then it begins to vibrate and produce a sound like humming. The whole universe is producing that sound, and we cannot hear it, because our ears are too gross. But if your ears are tuned to hear the music of the spheres, you will hear the sound which is produced by the motions of all the different objects of the universe and

the vibrations of the molecules and all the things of the universe. The yogis hear that causal sound. It is like the sound of a bell, or like an unconnected sound. The whole universe, in this way, is singing the praise of the Almighty.

So the sound 'OM' is perfectly formed for the expression or representation of the cosmic mind, because it covers all sounds and all words. All words and sounds have in their background the thoughts or the ideas. Again all thoughts or ideas are included in the universal basic sound 'OM'. So if you are to substitute any other word in the place of the sound of 'OM', you cannot do it satisfactorily, and you will have to take these basic sounds. So if you take them and put them together, you will have to have the sound or word 'OM.'

In the 28th aphorism of the first chapter of Raja Yoga, it is said that if you think of the meaning of this word 'OM', you think of the cosmic mind, and you also understand the whole universe. That is one of the subjects for meditation. When you are going to think of the words that are included in this sound 'OM', you will have to take the three sounds as symbolical of the three stages of the universe. Take the three states, the waking, the dream, and the deep sleep; then take the gross, subtle and unmanifested states and you will see that these are all expressions of the words, and everything that exists in this stage, is but the expression of that one idea. Then take the sum total, and take the ideas and the impressions that exist on the psychic plane, and take all that is the sum total of that which exists on the higher plane, or the state of the unmanifested energy of the unmanifested universe. Then you take the sleep state, and you will find that all these things must be included in the meaning of these three sounds, the gross, the subtle, and the unmanifested. There are also different names given in Sanskrit for these three stages. The unmanifested state is called the 'causal' state.

It may be the same being who experienced certain ideas in the dream state, but still there is a difference in the perception and experience, and this difference can be explained very clearly if we give the different names. We call the being which is conscious of the objects that exist on this plane of consciousness 'A', the same being when dreaming, is called 'B' and when it is sleeping soundly without having any other kind of experience, it could be called 'C'. So in trying to differentiate them, we give them the different names. 'A' may be one who is conscious of the objects which exist on this plane of consciousness. 'B' is another name for the being who would exist in the dream state, and 'C' is the other name for the being who is sleeping soundly without having any other kind of experience.

Now the sum total of all the experiences of all living creatures in the waking state may be called 'A'; in the dream state, we call it 'B', and the sum total of the experiences of the causal state may be called 'C'. These are the principle [?] sounds. Having understood the different stages that are included in that one word 'OM', if we think of the meaning of the sound 'OM', when meditating, then we gradually go from the gross to the subtle and from that to the causal state, and from that to the realm which is beyond all the relativity.

The object of Yoga is to reach the Absolute and to understand that beyond which no mind can go. By understanding the law of causation, we know that the gross is the manifestation of the subtle, and the subtle is the manifestation of the causal. Now what do we mean by the subtle state? Everything that goes through the evolution takes different forms and becomes the object of the senses. If we have the finer perception we may, going into a room, smell an odour that will not be noticed by another. So with our hearing. The Western ears would notice many of the finer notes in music which the Eastern ears are tuned to them [?]. Those who are color-blind do not distinguish different shades of the colour. In fact, all of us are more or less colour-blind. What we can see is very limited, and beyond a certain vibration we do not realize the things. Professor Huxley said that when a rose-bud blooms it produces a sound like a gun shell. If we had ears to hear, we could hear the sound, and if we realize our inability to do so, we find that our perception is in a limited scale. But these finer perceptions must be included though our senses are most imperfect. Some of the western minds depend much upon the senses and cannot find the real thing,⁷ but the Indian mind goes beyond the senses, and realizes the essence of the thing. Most of the scientists try to find the existence of the soul, try to perceive the soul, and to catch it with instruments, but they do not get it, and as they do not get it they deny its existence. The pity is this that they do not think that their senses delude them almost every moment about the soul. The soul is described as a very subtle object because it is not perceived by the senses. There are the subtle things and the subtle forces which are not seen, but the gross manifestations which are but the expressions of those subtle things and forces are easily cognizable. Again the finer objects and the subtle particles of the matter and the force are the expressions of the causal state of the universe, which cannot be cognized in any way by the senses. This universe existed in the beginning of the evolution in the unmanifested causal state, and has been projected on this plane of consciousness in the manifested form, and that is the reason why we perceive with our senses. In fact, this world exists in relation to us and to our senses. If we shut our eyes and stop our ears, nose and sense of touch, the universe is gone beyond our relation. So of these three states, we must remember that the gross is the expression of the subtle, and the subtle is the expression of the causal, and beyond these three states shines the *Ātman*.

Now trying to think of the meaning of 'OM', the Yogis in India try to adopt a certain method, and by that method they merge one state into another. In pronouncing the word 'OM', when they make the first two sounds or words, 'A' and 'U', which are gross and subtle, they try to dissolve the gross into the subtle, and then the subtle into the causal. When the first (the gross) is merged into the second (the subtle) think of what they are going to do and what they ought to do, and the case stands for a certain abstract thought and idea. This world [?] 'OM' is a symbolic word, meaning the gross is merged into the causal, and that which is beyond these three, is the truth, or the reality of the universe.

Now when you have closed your lips, it is no longer 'M', but something higher, and that is the fourth part which is the Absolute. It has been before that after the gross

⁷ The swami here meant to say about the direct realists of the West.

and the subtle, the causal is merged into the Absolute, and so there remains no longer the causal, the subtle, and the gross, but each one is reduced to that absolute ocean of the Divine intelligence and bliss. The nature, or the cosmic mind contains the seed of all the different forces, types, ideas, words, names, and forms, and the Absolute is the (so called) cause and ground of the cosmic mind. The Absolute does not change its nature. It is not transformed from one state to another, and it is not affected by any other change. Supposing that you have a canvas, and upon that canvas you paint something and brush it off and paint again, but the canvas quality remains the same and unchangeable. So these different things we perceive are like the paintings upon the canvas of the Absolute. We can go to that background, or rise above all conditions, if we try to enjoy the paintings. But we see every moment that we cannot do it. Try to keep it in any state all the time, but it is impossible, because everything is in constant change. That which is within time, space, and causation, is subject to the laws of evolution, and, therefore, that must change. So it is a vain hope to expect that this body will remain unchangeable. It will take its own course, otherwise there would not be development of any kind.

So a yogi understanding that there is no permanent peace and happiness in the material manifestation tries to go beyond that state, where there is permanent peace and happiness. Then he comes to know the real peace and happiness are possible in that state which is unchangeable and not anywhere else. In order to reach that unchangeable state, you will have to rise above all conditions. This plane of the phenomenal consciousness is limited and does not go far. So, until we reach the higher state, we cannot understand the absolute Truth. The absolute Truth cannot be brought down to this material plane, and if it could be possible, it would take the name of the conditional, and the moment it becomes conditional, it is subject to all the laws of the phenomenal world, and it is also subject to changes. So peace or happiness that arises from the changeable condition is but temporal and ephemeral. We crave for the continuance of all kinds of happiness, but that craving is seldom satisfied. The time is coming when we will have to leave this plane and go to some other condition. The Yogi, understanding this truth, does not waste his energy by following the phantoms of hope, but makes the best use of his time and energy by trying to go beyond conditions and consequently gain that happiness which is everlasting. The everlasting supreme state exists in the abode of that being which is called the absolute Being of the universe. It is the abode of the transcendental knowledge and bliss. In that supreme state there is no pain, no sorrow, no suffering, no disease or death, and all other states below are subject to all kinds of pain and misery.

If we keep this ideal in our mind and repeat the word 'OM' and understand the different sounds that are included in the universal sound or word 'OM', then we realize that the gross will merge into the subtle, and the subtle into the causal, and that causal again into the transcending Absolute. Then we realize something which cannot be realized by any other method. A yogi who has accomplished this realization is happy, peaceful, and restful, and is above all the conditions of suffering, disease and death. Having realized that state which is described as the state of the eternal bliss or perfection, a Yogi becomes one with the source of 'OM', and becomes 'OM'. Then he becomes the cosmic

mind, nay, he becomes one with the Absolute; and when that is accomplished, the purpose of the human life is served and the ultimate goal is reached.



Joseph Campbell⁸

Honors OM

Moyers:

But how does one worship a metaphor, love a metaphor, die for a metaphor?

Campbell:

That's what people are doing all over the place--dying for metaphors. But when you really realize the sound, "AUM," the sound of the mystery of the word everywhere, then you don't have to go out and die for anything because it's right there all around. Just sit still and see it and experience it and know it. That's a peak experience.

Moyers:

Explain AUM.

Campbell:

"AUM" is a word that represents to our ears that sound of the energy of the universe of which all things are manifestations. You start in the back of the mouth "ahh," and then "oo," you fill the mouth, and "mm" closes the mouth. When you pronounce this properly, all vowel sounds are included in the pronunciation. AUM. Consonants are here regarded simply as interruptions of the essential vowel sound. All words are thus fragments of AUM, just as all images are fragments of the Form of forms. AUM is a symbolic sound that puts you in touch with that resounding being that is the universe. If you heard some of the recordings of Tibetan monks chanting AUM, you would know what the word means, all right. That's AUM of being in the world. To be in touch with that and to get the sense of that is the peak experience of all.

A-U-M. The birth, the coming into being, and the dissolution that cycles back. AUM is called the "four-element-syllable." A-U-M--and what is the fourth element? The silence out of which AUM arises, and back into which it goes, and which underlies it. My life is the A-U-M, but there is a silence under-lying it, too. That is what we would call immortal. This is the mortal and that's the immortal. One must discriminate between the mortal aspect and the immortal aspect of one's own existence. In the experience of my mother and father who are gone, of whom I was born, I have come to understand that there is more than what was our temporal relationship. Of course there were certain moments in that relationship when an emphatic demonstration of what the relationship was would be brought to my realization. I clearly remember some of these. They stand out as moments of epiphany, of revelation, of the radiance.

⁸ Source: Joseph Campbell. *The power of myth with Bill Moyers*. Ed. by Sue Flowers. New York: Doubleday, 1988. pp. 230-231.

Devotional Contributions

Moyers:

The meaning is essentially wordless.

Campbell:

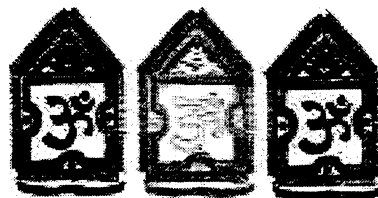
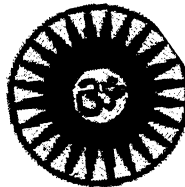
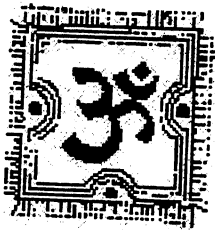
Yes. Words are always qualifications and limitations.

Moyers:

And yet, Joe, all we puny human beings are left with is this miserable language, beautiful though it is, that falls short of trying to describe--

Campbell:

That's right, and that's why it is a peak experience to break past all that, every now and then, and to realize, Oh.....ah....."



Sarvam khalvidam Brahma

The Praṇava -- Om

Svami Chinmayananda

Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, Bombay

Of all the *Mantras* the most powerful and the significant one is the single-syllabled incantation called the *Praṇava*. This is the OM.

The available literature upon the significances of these Vedic *Mantras* is voluminous. *Nowhere in this world can we meet with a more sacred symbol that has got such a vast amount of significance.* (emphasis added).

From Vedic times until the present day the word OM has been taken as a symbol and as an aid to meditation by spiritual aspirants. It is accepted both as one with Brahman and as the medium, the Logos, connecting man and God. The entire history of the syllable is in the revelations of the Vedas and in the declarations of the Upanishads, and this history in the hands of the later philosophers developed into what came to be known as the *Spho a-vāda*, or the philosophy of the word. The perceptible universe is the form, behind which stands the eternal inexpressible *Spho a*, manifested as *Logos*, or Word. This eternal *Spho a*, the essential material basis for all ideas or names, is the power through which God creates the Universe. Īsvara--the Brahman conditioned by Māyā, first manifests Himself as the *Spho a*, the inexpressible word, out of which He evolves as the concrete, sensible world.

There is a verse in the Vedas: "*Prajāpatir vai idam agra āsīt*" (In the beginning was Prajāpati, the Brahman); "*Tasya vāg dvitīyā āsīt*" (With whom was the Word); *Vāg vai Param Brahma* (And the Word was verily the Supreme Brahman). The idea belongs to Hinduism and in the fourth Gospel of the New Testament we read it repeated: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God."⁹

This *spho a* has its symbol in the word 'OM'. Thus, in the *Maitrāyaṇa Upanishad* after it has been said that there is one Brahman without words, and a second, a Word-Brahman, we are told that the word is the syllable 'OM'. The sound of 'OM' is also called '*Praṇava*' meaning that it is something that pervades life, or runs through *prāṇa* or breath.

⁹ A good article but can be made better by better editing.. No diacritical marks. No proper punctuation. No systematic presentation.

The very central theme of the Māṇḍūkya Upanishad is the syllable OM through which the mystery of Brahman is gathered to a point. The text of the Upanishad first treats OM in terms of the Upanishadic doctrine of the three states of waking, dream and sleep, but then passes on to the fourth (*turīya*), thus transporting us beyond the typical Upanishadic sphere into that of the later Classic-Advaita-Vedanta. Speaking of OM, *Taittirīya Upanishad* says: Thou art the sheath of Brahman. That is, OM is the container for the Supreme and, therefore, invoking OM is invoking the Supreme.

In every piece of music there are three aspects, viz. (1) the meaning of the song; (2) the laws of music, and (3) the sound of the song. Similarly, in OM there are three aspects. The first is the mere sound, the mere *mantra* as pronounced by the mouth; the second is the meaning of the syllable, which is to be realized through feeling; and the third is the application of OM to your character, singing it in your acts and so through your life.

OM represents the Self, which is the Supreme Non-dual-Reality. The Self is known in four states, namely, the waking-state, the dream-state, the deep-sleep-state and the fourth state, called the '*Turīya*'. All these states are represented in the three sounds of OM (i.e. A, U and M) and the silence that follows and surrounds the syllable.

The sound A represents the waking state; the sound U represents the dream-state and the sound M represents the deep-sleep-state. The waking-state is super-imposed on the 'A' sound because it is the first of the three states of Consciousness and so the sound 'A', the very first of the letters of the alphabet--in all languages. The dream is but a view within the mind of the impressions that had reflected on the surface of the mental-lake during the waking state. Besides, the dream-state occurs, between the waking and the deep-sleep-state and comes second among the three states of Consciousness. And so, 'U' being next to 'A' in order of sounds, and also it is between 'A' and 'M' it is treated as representing the dream state. On the 'M' sound of 'OM' is super--imposed the deep-sleep-state. The comparison between the last sound of the 'OM' and sleep lies in that it is the closing sound of the syllable, just as deep-sleep is the final stage of the mind in rest. A short pregnant silence is inevitable between two successive O M-s. On this silence is super-imposed the idea of the fourth-state known as *Turīya*. This is the state of Perfect Bliss when the individual Self recognizes its identity with the Supreme.

In OM, the sounds A, U, and M are called *Mātrās* or forms; there is also in AUM the common principle called the *Amātra-OM* that which signifies the thing-in-itself, running through the pervading threefold phenomena of Waking, Dream, and Deep-sleep. The law of memory is that the rememberer and the experiencer must be one and the same individual, or else memory is impossible. So, as we can remember all our experiences in all the three different planes, there must necessarily be a single common factor which was a witness of all the happenings in all the three planes. There must be some Entity within ourselves who is present in the waking world, Who moves and illuminates the dream, Who is a distant observer in the deep-sleep world, and yet Who is

not conditioned by any of these three realms. This entity conceived as the fourth state (*Turīya*), is the Real, the Changeless, the Intelligent Principle.

The syllable OM symbolizes both the spheres: (a) the phenomenal, visible sphere of the '*jagat*' wherein the Manifestations of time and space appear and perish, and (b) the transcendent, timeless sphere of the imperishable Being, which is beyond yet with it. Thus 'A' the "waking state"; 'U', the "Dream"; 'M', the "Deep-sleep", and the silencer, *Turīya*; all the four together comprise the totality of this manifestation of *Ātman-Brahman* as a syllable. Just as the sound M manifests itself, grows, becomes transformed in its vocal quality and finally subsides into the silence that follows, so too the four states, or components, Being. They are transformations of the one experience, which taken together, constitute the totality of its modes, whether regarded from the microcosmic or from the macrocosmic point of view.

The A and U are as essential to the sound as M, or as the Silence against which the sound appears. Moreover, it would be a mistake to say that AUM did not exist while Silence reigned; for it would be still potentially present even in the Silence. The actual manifestation of the syllable, on the other hand, is fleeting and evanescent; whereas the Silence abides. The silence, indeed, is present elsewhere during a local pronunciation of AUM--that is to say (by analogy) transcendently during the creation, manifestation, and dissolution of a universe, and is indeed the first manifestation of Divine Wisdom. This OM is truly symbolic of God.

OM thus represents the entire manifested world and the unmanifest and also that which lies beyond the manifest and the unmanifest--the Brahman, which is the changeless substratum for the changing objects of the world of experiences.

To every *mantra* OM, the *Prāṇava*, is added on. And without OM no sacred-chant has its power. Just as living body has no vitality when the life-giving breath is not flowing through its veins, so too a *mantra* has no life in it without the addition of the *Prāṇava*.

Vedantic students generally practice the repetition of and the meditation on the symbol provided by the *Prāṇava*--this is called *Prāṇava Upāsana*.

It may be asked as to why this particular word Om should be chosen as the word representative of the "thought" out of which the universe has become manifested. The answer may be given in Swami Vivekannanda's own words.

"This OM is the only possible symbol which covers the whole ground and there is none other like it. The *spho a* is the material of all words, yet it is not any definite word in its fully formed state. That is to say, if all the particularities which distinguish one word from another be removed, then what remains will be the *spho a*. Therefore, this *spho a* is called the *Nāda-Brahman*, the Sound Brahman. Now, every word-symbol intended to express the inexpressible *Spho a*, will so particularize it that it will no longer be the *spho a*. That which particularizes it the least and at the same time most

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approximately expresses its nature will be the truest symbol thereof; and this is the OM, and the OM only; because, these three letters A, U, M, pronounced in combination as OM can alone be the generalised symbol of all possible sounds. The letter 'A' is the least differentiated of all sounds. Again, all particular sounds are produced in the space within the mouth--beginning with the root of the tongue and ending at the lips--the throat-sound is 'A' and 'M' is the last lip-sound; and 'U' exactly represents the rolling forward of the impulse which begins at the root of the tongue, continuing till it ends in the lips". (not very clear. to be checked with the original).

If properly pronounced, the OM will represent in itself the whole phenomenon of sound production, and no other word can do this, and this therefore, is the fittest symbol of the *spho a*, which is the real meaning of the OM. And as the symbol can never be separated from the thing signified, the 'OM' and the *Spho a* are one. And as such, the *Spho a*, being the finer side of the manifested universe, is nearer to God.

Swami Chinmayananda¹⁰

¹⁰ Not correct in every sense of the term. Needs careful revision.

Source: *Symbolism in Hinduism*, comp. by R. S. Nathan. Bombay: Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, 1983.

OM IS THE ONE --OM IS THE MANY

Swami Chinmayananda
Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, Bombay

Om iti Brahma. Om itīdam Sarvam

The sacred sound OM is Brahman. All this is the syllable OM.

The mystic syllable OM is the choiceless point of concentration prescribed for the benefit of the student of Vedanta who is constitutionally more intellectual than emotional. In their early attempts at developing a highly concentrated mind and intellect, such students too need the help of a symbol or an idea which has infinite possibilities to entertain them with its inexhaustible contents. The genius in the Vedic Masters gave us OM as an ideal-idol to worship in the inner temple.

Life is a constant flow of experience and these experiences, when observed, are found to fall in these layers, as the experiences of the waking-state, of the dream-state, and of the deep-sleep-state. The life of every one of us is certainly influenced by our experiences in all these different plains of consciousness, and they all have totally a positive influence in moulding our character and personality. This would read slightly strange to the modern young man, because Western philosophy has been so far striving to discover the fundamental in life by an analysis and close study of merely the life available for us in our waking state. It is indeed difficult, if not almost impossible, to come to a right evaluation of life and its meaning by observing only a third of its field.

When the rishis more and more closely observed these three fields of experiences, they discovered that an individual identifying with his physical body comes to live his waking-state of outer gross objects as the 'waker'.

The same entity, totally in oblivion of his body and the outer world, when he exclusively gets identified with his mind-and-intellect, he comes to revel in an outer world of dream and experiences subtle objects of imagination as a 'dreamer'.

When again, the very same entity becomes forgetful of body and its outer world, the mind and intellect and their feelings and thoughts, he comes to experience a world of nothingness, no doubt peaceful and joyful, but conscious of nothing but "nothingness", he becomes the 'deep-sleeper'.

The dreamer's experiences are totally different and sometimes even contrary to the 'waker's life, and the experience of the 'deep-sleeper' is common to all and seems to have no relationship with the waking and dream conditions of experiences. Yet, it is the experience of all of us that we can remember, on our waking, all about our experiences during our last 'waking state', yesternight's 'early dreams' and also the 'peaceful sleep'

that we had afterwards. From these observations the Rishis continued their bold and advent- urous theory.

The 'Law of Memory' is that one cannot oneself remember the experience of another. If one can remember anything at all, they are all actual experiences of the individual himself. That is to say, the Law of Memory enunciates that the rememberer and the experiencer must be one and the same individual or else, memory is impossible. I can never remember any of your past experiences; nor can you remember any of my experiences.

Applying the 'Law of Memory' as a test, we find that the 'waker', the 'dreamer' and the 'deep-sleeper' are strangers among themselves, each living in his own world, and has seemingly no passport to travel beyond its own frontiers. Since we can remember all our experiences in all the three different planes, there must necessarily be a single Common Factor which was a witness of all the happenings in all the three planes.

To make it clear: let us suppose that we have one idle afternoon a friend in our drawing room who starts revealing his a slice of his biography in which he explains his despairing days in Madras, his disastrous failures in Madurai, and of his glorious successes in Delhi. Now, we all know that Madras is not Madurai, nor is Madurai one with Delhi. But our friend is describing his experiences of all the three places from his own memory. Again, the dispairs of Madras are different from the disasters in Madurai, and both these sets of experiences are separate from the glorious successes in Delhi. But our friend is explaining all of them from his own memory. Under such circumstances we instinctively understand that he, our friend, lived his despairing days in Madras, and himself went to Madurai where he spent his days of failures, and then he himself left the Madurai-Madras zone for Delhi to reap his glorious successes.

Similarly, there must be some Entity within ourselves who is present in the 'waking- world', who moves to illumine the 'dreams', who is a distant observer in the 'deep-sleep-world', and yet, all the same, it is not conditioned by any of these three realms. The Entity is, as it were, conceived as the 'fourth' who is the Real, the Changeless, the Intelligent Principle.

The sages of the Vedas, after indicating this much to the students of Vedanta, want them to experience the Pure Subject who, in the waking-world becomes the 'waker', in the dream becomes the 'dreamer' and the sleep becomes the 'sleeper'.

The sound OM is constituted of three syllables, A, U, and M; and while chanting continuously the sound OM in the mind, the Upāsaka is advised to superimpose upon these three sounds the three diffejrent planes of consciousness we have been describing so far, viz., the 'waking', 'dream' and 'deep-sleep'. The process of super-imposition is the same as the principle underlying all idol-worship. We have already discussed this technique by which the Mighty is seen or imagined in the meagre; Śiva-Tatva in the Śiva-liṅga; the Divine Mother of Knowledge in the River Ganges; Śrī Nārāyaṇa in the Śāligtāma; Christ on the Cross!

The practitioner at his meditation thus trains himself consciously to superimpose the waker-in-him on the sound A; and then, as the sound A merges with the sound U, he gains a mental dexterity to forget totally his identity with the waking-state-experiences and to come to live in meditation consciously the entire identity with the 'dreamer' in him; so too, when he comes to the sound M, he is able to black out the entire state of plurality and arrive at a state of semi-conscious experience of all negation. Thereafter, his spiritual growth is assured in proportion to the identity of his pursuit, purity of his life, and his intelligent sense of detachment.

Even this practice of getting oneself fully conscious and the sound A, U, and M each marching into the other and getting telescoped into themselves, is in itself a severe training for the mind at concentration. The conscious superimpositions unfolded, and again folded up as explained above is an equally all-absorbing occupation for the entire intellectual capacity in us so that the true practitioner, if he be sincere and regular, gains in a very short time, an infinite amount of integration both in his mind and in his intellectual equipments.

Thereafter, the sensitivised instruments of the within become subtle in him, to dare seek the Pure Awareness which, in the grosser three planes, illumines the objects and sustains the mirage-personalities of the 'waker', the 'dreamer', and the 'deep-sleeper'. The silence between two successive OM's is the point of concentration which the yogi attempts to merge with, and experience thereby the infinite contents of one split-second-completely divorced from the past, and entirely free from the mental slavery to the future. To live thus dynamically free from within and from without, one second of a human life, is all that is needed to peep over the veils of ignorance and realise for ourselves eternally thereafter The True Nature of the Self, the Godhead.

As we explained above, since OM represents a symbol for the waking, the dream and the deep-sleep states of consciousness, and since our entire life is the sum total of different experiences in all these three planes, OM, the symbol represents 'All This'. As OM is the symbol of the Infinite Reality that is behind the seeming multiplicity and painful plurality, it becomes self-evident that the Rishis were not illogical or deliberately mystical when they declared that OM is '*all this universe*'.

Mud is the reality. All pots of all colours, all shapes, of all sizes, irrespective of their contents or condition are nothing but mud. Gold is the reality behind all ornaments; be they thin or thick, be they intricate or simple, be they for the neck or for the legs; they are nothing but gold. The ocean is the reality, for all the waves, be they mountainous or small, frothy or clear; all the waves are nothing but the very ocean itself. It is in this sense, OM, the idol of Reality, has been explained in the Mantra here as a symbol that represents 'the entire universe' --experienced outside as objects and within as thoughts and ideas.

Swami Chinmayananda

Paul Deussen¹¹

The sole wisdom is that which teaches how to reduce the manas to impotence in the heart, "the other is learned trash." (Brahmab. 5).¹² The place of knowledge of the Veda is taken by meditation on that word which "all the Vedas proclaim to us," (Kaṭha. 2.15) the *praṇava*, i.e. the sacred syllable *Om*. It is the best support (Kaṭha. 2. 17), the bow off which the soul as the arrow flies to Brahman (Muṇḍ. 2. 2. 4), the arrow which is shot from the body as bow in order to pierce the darkness (Maitr. 6. 24), the upper fuel [piece of wood to generate fire] which with the body as the lower fuel [uttarāraṇi and adharāraṇi] is kindled by the fire of the vision of God (Śvet. 1.14), the net with which the fish of *prāṇa* is drawn out, and sacrificed in the fire of *ātman* (Maitr. 6. 26), the ship on which a man voyages over the ether of the heart (Maitr. 6. 28), the chariot which bears him to the world of Brahman (Amṛtab. 2). Its three morae a u m are fire, sun, and wind [or air?] (Maitr. 6. 3), they are the essence of all things (Maitr. 6. 5). He who meditates on them by one mora gains the world of men, by two the *pitṛiyānam*, by three the *devayāna* (Praśna. 5). Beside the three morae the word has a "moraless" part (Muṇḍ. 12), which forms the crown of the syllable *Om* (Maitr. 6. 23), and which later on is described as the third and a half mora (Nādab. 1, Dhyānab. 17, Yogat.7, etc.). It is this half mora which leads to the supreme goal (Yogat. 7); it is represented by point (*bindu*) of the *anusvāra*, the point of strength, which bears the deepest meaning (Tejob. 1), and sounds in the echo (*nāda*), the toneless *m*-syllable (*asvara makāra*) (Amṛtab. 4), which in one passage is described as completely silent, without noise, tone, consonant or vowel (Amṛtab. 24); but in another sounds like the echo of a tin vessel when struck, or a bell (Brahmavidyā. 13); or like the prolonged dripping of oil, or the after tones of the notes of a bell (Dhyānab. 18); or again may be produced in ten different ways, of which the last is recommended, sounding like a peal of thunder (Haṃsa. 4). Compare also on the mention of the echo Atharvaśikhā 1. With increasing exaggeration there are ascribed to the syllable *om* five morae (Amṛtab.30), three morae and three echoes (Pranou [!] Up., *Upan*, p. 863), three morae with a half mora *anusvāra* and an echo (Rāmott. 2), three morae and four half morae (Rāmott. 5), and finally in a different sense twelve component parts (Nādab. 8-11, Kshur. 3, Amṛtab. 23, Nṛsimhott. 2, (cp. Deussen, *Upan*., p. 782 f.). The Upaniṣads are never weary of offering interpretations of the three or three and a half morae in allegorical style as Agni, Vāyu, the Sun and Varuṇa (Nādab. 6-7) as the three worlds, three Vedas, three fires, three gods, three daily periods, three measures, or three *guṇas* (Brahmavidyā 4-7, Yoga 6-7, Atharvaśiras 5, Atharvaśikhā 1, etc.); so that meditation on half mora (the point or the echo) was valued far above all these things.

Essentially it was the unknowableness of the first principle of the universe, the Brahman, thus early entering into consciousness, and the impossibility of expressing it by word, conception or illustration (*neti, neti*), which had compelled the choice of

¹¹ Paul DEUSSEN, *Philosophy of the Upanishads*. Edinburgh: Clark, 1919. pp. 390 ff.

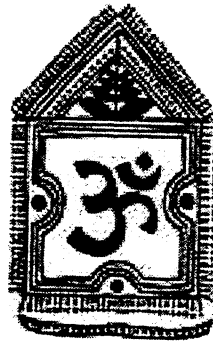
¹² We have tried to locate and reproduce the originals cited by the author (Paul Deussen). They might appear under *Brahmānandāmṛtavacanāni in Pariśeṣalaharī*.

something so entirely meaningless as the syllable *om*; but it was precisely on that account especially fitted to be the symbol of Brahman. The same consideration however led to a further advance beyond even the syllable, first to the half mora than even beyond this :--

Higher than the original syllable
Is the point, the echo higher than this;
The syllable vanishes with the sound,
The highest state is silent. (Dhyānab. 4).



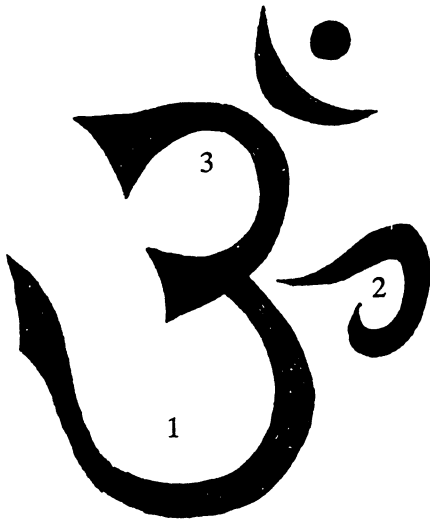
This highest state, which is not expressed by any word or combination of words (Tejob. 7), cannot be meditated on by means of *om*, but only in absolute silence. By the syllable *om* a man may only "enter upon" the yoga (Brahmab. 7). It is the chariot, which is abandoned where the highway ends and the footpath begins (Amṛtabindu. 3). *Om* is never more than the "Brahman word," beyond which lies still the Supreme (Brahmab. 17). "Here the word signifies the sound *om*; ascending by this man attains to nothingness in that which is not a word," like the sap of the flowers in the liquid honey. (Maitr. 6.22). Thus the eighth and highest stage of yoga is reached.



Om : A Unique Interpretation
 Kurt Friedrichs
 President, German Vedanta Society

OM also AUM or praṇava, Skt.; the most comprehensive and venerable symbol of spiritual knowledge in Hinduism. It also appears in Buddhism (particularly in Vajrayāna) as a mantric syllable, but has a different sense than in Hinduism.

OM is a symbol of form as well as sound. This syllable is no magic word and is not even considered to be a word; rather it is a manifestation of spiritual power, a symbol that is to be found throughout the East, which betokens the presence of the absolute within →māyā. The worlds of the physical, mental, and unconscious are represented in the letters of the syllable OM by three curves, the supreme consciousness is represented by the point outside and above the rest; this illuminates and reveals the other three. The form of Om is a concrete manifestation of the visible truth. No concept or object of this universe is independent. All are permutations of the one consciousness and participate in its nature to various degrees; in this way they are connected with one another.



The symbol OM

The Om symbol consists of three curves, a semicircle, and a point and is an enclosed unit. The three curves are connected with one another and grow one out of other. The point with the semicircle stands by itself. It rules the whole. The symbol stands for three states of consciousness--the waking state, the dream state, and the state of deep sleep--as well as the supreme consciousness or self, which observes and permeates these states. The semicircle under the point is not closed; it symbolizes the infinite and its openness indicates that finite thinking cannot grasp the depth and the height of the point.

The material world of wakeful consciousness, the level of external activity and thus the most palpable, is symbolized by the large lower curve (1). The level of the dream state, subject to the stimulus not of external objects but only of mental representations, is symbolized by the second, small curve (2), which is, so to speak, between wakefulness and sleep. The upper curve (3) symbolizes the unconscious, which we call deep sleep, but it is also a connective link, for it is closest to the point that represents

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absolute consciousness. The point is the absolute consciousness that illuminates and governs the three others, it is *turīya*, the fourth. Without *turīya*, there would be no thinking, no symbol, and no universe. The point illuminates the three states. It itself lights by its own light and is only experienced by persons who have gone beyond the three curves and attained the point and merged with it. The point can be interpreted variously: as absolute consciousness, as witnessing consciousness behind body and thought, or as liberation from the world of appearance.

Western commentators have equated OM as *aum* with the three deities (→*Tri-mūrti*); however, this exposition is not sufficiently profound.¹³

Source: The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion: Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Zen. Ed. by various editors. The name of Kurt Friedrichs has been featured on the title page as the compiler or editor. Boston: Shambhala, 1994. pp. 254-55.



¹³ This statement is questionable. It is controversial.

A. M. Esnoul
Honors OM

OM, a contraction of the sounds /a/, /u/, and /m/, is considered in the Hindu tradition to be the most sacred of Sanskrit syllables. In a religious setting that reveres the intrinsic power of sound as a direct manifestation of the divine, a setting in which the hierarchy of scripture is headed by the *śruti* ("heard") texts and in which oral tradition has preserved the religious language unchanged over millennia, *om* is the articulated syllable *par excellence*, the eternally creative divine word. Indeed, the Sanskrit word denoting "syllable" (*akṣara*, literally "the imperishable") commonly serves as an epithet for *om*. Its other epithets include *ekākṣara* ("the one syllable" but also "the sole imperishable thing") and *praṇava* (from *pra-ṇu*, "to utter a droning"); the latter term refers to the practice of initiating any sacred recitation with a nasalized syllable. The syllable *om* itself has been associated with the Sanskrit root *av* ("to drive, impel, animate"; *Uṇadi Sūtra 1.141*). It is represented graphically by a familiar mystical symbol combining the syllable's three components.

Articulated at the beginning and end of recitations and prayers, *om* is a particle of auspicious salutation, expressing acknowledgment of the divine or solemn affirmation, in which latter sense it is compared with *amen* ("verily, this syllable is assent"; *Chāndogya Upaniṣad 1.1.8*). Evidence of its use as an invocation occurs in the *Rgveda*; though it appears in a relatively late section (*1.164.39*), this note dates the practice to at least 1200 BCE.

From the sixth century BCE, the Upaniṣads make direct mention of *om*. One of the oldest Upaniṣads, the *Chāndogya*, discusses the syllable at length in setting forth rules for the chanters of the *Sāmaveda* and states that "one has to know that *om* is the imperishable" (*1.3.4*). By sounding *om*, one intones the Udgitha, the essential canto of the Vedic sacrifice (*1.1.5*).

In the *Ka ha Upaniṣad*, the figure Death defines *om* as the goal propounded by the Vedas, and proclaims that anyone who meditates on the syllable *om* can attain *brahman* (*1.2.15-16*). A later Upaniṣad, the *Taittirīya*, indicates that *om* is both *brahman* and the cosmos (*1.8.1-2*): the sound symbol is identical to what it represents.

The first chapter of the *Māṇḍūkya*, one of the latest of the Vedic Upaniṣads, is devoted to the elucidation of *om*. The sacred syllable is divided into its four phonetic components, representing the four states of mind, or consciousness: /a/ is related to the awakened state, /u/ to the dream state, /m/ to dreamless sleep, and the syllable as a whole to the fourth state, *turīya*, which is beyond words and is itself the One, the

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Ultimate, the *brahman*. "One should know *om* to be God seated in the hearts of all" (1.28).

The sixth chapter of the *Maitrāyaṇīya*, possibly the latest of the Vedic Upaniṣads, is devoted entirely to the discussion of the sacred syllable, referred to as the "primary sound" (6.22). The devotee is enjoined to meditate on the Self as *om* (6.3). When *om* is articulated, the sound "rises upward." The chapter closes with the invocation "Hail om! Hail *brahman*!"

When the *Bhagavadgītā*-- a fragment [vital part] of the *Mahābhārata*, perhaps contemporary with the latest of the Vedic Upaniṣads--proclaims that "the imperishable is *brahman*," it plays on the term *akṣara*, which may be read either as an adjective ("brahman is imperishable") or as a substantive ("brahman is the Imperishable [i.e., *om*)").

Manu (*Manusmṛti* 2.74) echoes the assertion made in the *Chāndogya* regarding the articulation of *om* preceding any sacred recitation, and prescribes that it be repeated not only at the beginning but also at the end of the daily recitation of the Veda, under penalty of losing the merit attached to such an exercise. He adds that Prajāpati, the creator, extracted the milk of three cows (i.e., the three primary Vedas) in order to draw the three phonetic components that make up the syllable.

Through imagery borrowed from archery, the *Munḍaka Upaniṣad* indicates how the articulation of *om* was integrated into the practice of meditation according to Indian thought: the syllable *om* is the bow, the *ātman* (the self) is the arrow, and *brahman* is the target (2.2.3-4). One must bend toward the target without diverting the mind; one must make oneself identical to the arrow. (The same image is found in the *Bhāgavata Purāna*.) The *Yoga Sūtra* of Patañjali mentions that the various yoga systems all insist on the importance of *om* as a symbol of the devotee's attempt to unite with the Absolute, a goal that is itself the prerequisite to any practice of meditation.

In later times *om* stands for the union of the three gods of the Hindu triad, Brahmā (the creative force, or /a/), Viṣṇu (the sustaining force, or /u/), and Śiva (the dissolving force, or /m/).

As the primary sound symbol for an Indian tradition maintained continuously from the age of the Vedas into modern times, the syllable *om* stands charged with an unquestionable religious energy. Its use as a *mantra* for profound meditation reflects the Vedic teaching that the devotee is one with the sacred sound and all it represents. Through its constant repetition in recitations, prayers, and even recently composed sacred texts it acts as a pitch that tunes the worshiper to the heart of the prayer.

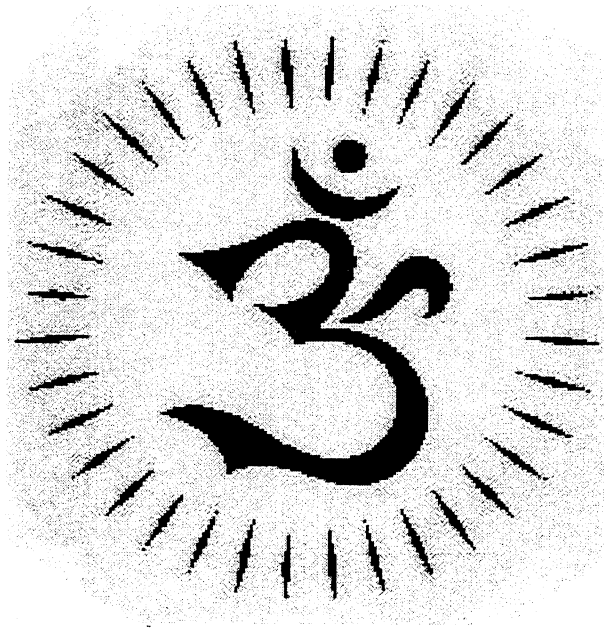
[See also Music, *article on Music and Religion in India*.]

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A. M. ESNOUL

Source:



GEORG FEUERSTEIN¹⁴
Honors OM

Om. The sacred monosyllable *om* is the oldest and most venerated of all Hindu *mantras*, and is also employed in Buddhism. It is also called "root"--or *mūla-mantra* and often precedes other *mantras*. The *om*-sound symbolizes the Divine. The *Maitrāyaṇīya-Upanishad* (VI.22) refers to it as the sound of the soundless Absolute. It is by means of this numinous sound that the *yogin* focuses his attention to the point where he can transcend the finite consciousness in its entirety. The above Upanishad (VI.24) likens the body to a bow, the syllable *om* to an arrow, the focused mind to the arrow's tip, and the ultimate Mystery as the target. This scripture also observes: "Just as a spider climbing up by means of its threads finds open space, so indeed the climbs up by means of *om* and finds autonomy (*svātantrya*). "

The *Māṇḍūkya-Upanishad*, which is entirely dedicated to an analysis of the theology and esotericism of the monosyllable *om*, opens with the following passage:

Om! This (*akshara*) is the whole world. Its further explanation is :
The past, the present, and the future--everything is but the sound *om*.
And whatever else that transcends triple time--that, too, is but the sound *om*.

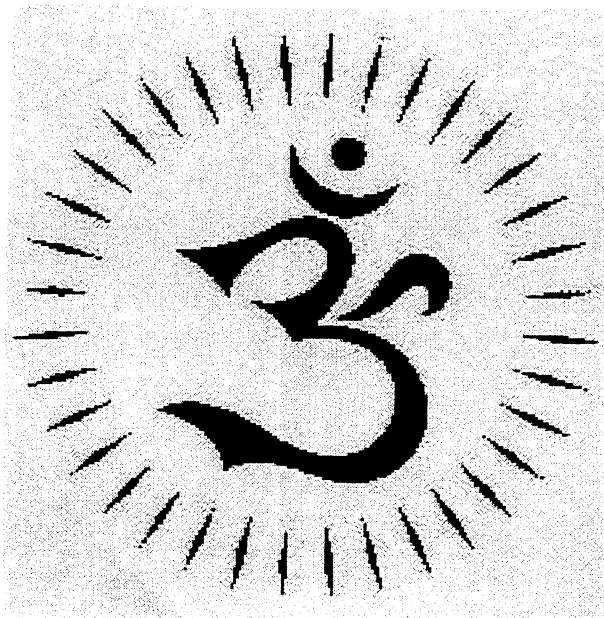


48. The sacred syllable *om*.

¹⁴ Georg Feuerstein, *Encyclopedic dictionary of Yoga*. New York: Paragon House, 1990. pp. 244-245.

Devotional Contributions

This same scripture explains that *om* is composed of four parts or "measures" (*mātrā*), namely *a*, *u*, *m*, and the *anusvāra* represented by a dot above the letter *m*, which signifies a nasal humming. These four parts are compared to the four states of consciousness--waking, dreaming, sleeping, and the "fourth" (*turīya*), which is the transcendental Self beyond the mind. See also *bindu*, *caturtha*, *haṃsa-mantra*, *nāda*, *praṇava*.



Sacred OM from Hawaii

Aum: Often spelled Om. The mystic syllable of Hinduism, placed at the beginning of most sacred writings. As a mantra, it is pronounced aw (as in law), oo (as in zoo), mm. Aum represents the Divine, and is associated with Lord Gaṇeśha, for its initial sound "aa," vibrates within the mūlādhāra, the chakra at the base of the spine upon which this God sits. The second sound of this mantra, "o," vibrates within the throat and chest chakras, the realm of Lord Murugan, or Kumāra, known by the Hawaiian people as the God Ku. The third sound, "mm," vibrates within the cranial chakras, ājñā and sahasrāra, where the Supreme God reigns. The dot above, called anusvāra, represents the Soundless Sound, Paranāda. Aum is explained in the Upanishads as standing for the whole world and its parts, including past, present and future. It is from this primal vibration that all manifestation issues forth. Aum is the primary, or mūla mantra, and often precedes other mantras. It may be safely used for chanting and japa by anyone of any religion. Its three letters represent the three worlds and the powers of creation, preservation and destruction. In common usage in several Indian languages, aum means 'yes', 'verily' or 'hail'.

Literally, Praṇava in Sanskrit means 'humming'. The mantram Aum denotes God as the Primal Sound. This sound can be heard as the sound of one's own nerve system, and meditators and mystics hear it daily, like the sound made by an electrical transformer or a swarm of bees, or a thousand *vīṇās* playing in the distance. It is a strong, inner experience, one that yogis hold with great reverence. The meditator is taught to inwardly transform this sound into the inner light which lights up one's thoughts, and to bask in this blissful consciousness of light. Praṇava is also known as the sound of the nadanadi śakti. Hearing it one draws near to God Consciousness. When we are living in the lower *chakras*, or when the world too strongly dominates our mind, this sound may, for a time, not be heard. But it returns as awareness withdraws, as the mind becomes perfectly quiescent, silent, still. Listen for this sound in your quietest moments and you will learn to recognize it as a daily encounter with the Divine that lives within all men, within all creatures, within all existence.

Poems from Yogaswami on Aum

The whole world has evolved from Om;
 The whole world is sustained by Om;
 The whole world will merge into Om;
 In Om resides my strength-Sivayave.

OM TAT SAT OM

Devotional Contributions

Rise ere the sun each morning and wash feet, face and hands.
Weaving fresh blossoms into garlands, give worship unto God.¹⁵
If we curb the mind from following the senses and venerate the Lord's celestial feet,
Desire can certainly be conquered, before the shock of death shall us assail.
'All is truth' as that word the sage has spoken gradually ripens in your heart,
You will come to have direct perception and with cleared mind will mukti's bliss attain.
There is no doubt about this whatsoever. All things are the action of the Lord.
In the cave of your heart by day and night extol Him, repeating 'Om Tat Sat'.

Those hearts, which ever dwell on Him in homage, are the holy temple
where the Lord abides.
Sitting, lying, walking we will not cease from praise and worship.
Virtue and vice are both imagination, for we are that which neither comes nor goes.
Know this through Grace alone; on intellect do not depend.
Coming to take birth and living in this world is itself a great illusion.
This great ascetics know--not others; so to that impart not importance.
We can live for countless ages! Of nothing need you be afraid;
But, moving as you please, be ever giving praise. Om Tat Sat!

The joy of rearing Śiva in our heart is now reality.
The concept of a separate God henceforth is dead and gone.
Of the vainly roaming mind we will be master, nor will we travel by the senses' path.
We will fully know the Ātmā, as the Truth that nothing can destroy.
We will go the way of tapas and, heeding the guru's word,
the Self itself will come to realize.
Peace, patience and the good work that befits us will always be for us our ornaments.
Liking and disliking have both fled into hiding. In nothing are we lacking!
All is truth! Repeat each day 'Om Tat Sat Om'.

Om shanti



¹⁵ The title of our present publication is "A Garland of Offerings." We have discussed in our Introduction the great significance and real relevance of this word to our presentation.

A. B. Keith Honors OM¹⁶

The origin of the word *Om* is wholly uncertain. It has been traced to a pronominal base *a-* and its formation has been compared with that of *ay-am*, 'this,' on the theory that the whole word *avam* was resolved by the process of *SamparseāRaṇa* into *au-m*, whence came by ordinary euphonic combination *om*. For the development of sense may be cited the fact that *hoc illud* became the French *oui*, *om* having often definitely this meaning. But the evidence in support of this view is quite inadequate, and the most probable explanation is that the word is purely an exclamation, being the nasalized form of *o*, which again is connected with *a*. This view is strongly supported by the fact that the common phrase *om śrāvaya* alternates with both *o śrāvaya* and *ā śrāvaya*, and the nasalizing of sounds when prolonged in pronunciation is a regular part of Vedic usage. A further suggestion of its origin is contained in the earliest name given to the sound, the word *praṇava*. It is probable that this term properly denotes the protracting of the last syllable of the offering verse (*yājyā*), which was nasalized, the vowel being altered to *o*, and that *om* as an independent exclamation was derived from this use. With this would accord the rule of the grammar (Pāṇini, vi, 1. 95), according to which a short or long *a* before *om* does not as usual result in *aum*, but is omitted.

That *om* is not a primitive exclamation is supported by the fact of its comparatively late appearance in the literature. It does not appear at all in the *Rigveda*, which shows that it does not belong to the earliest sacerdotal literature, and it is equally wanting in the *Atharvaveda*, which shows that it was not an expression in popular use. In the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* it does not occur in any *mantra* passage, but it is alluded to once as the *praṇava*, in which passage (iii. 2. 9. 6) it clearly denotes the sound at the end of the offering verse uttered by the *hotṛ*. In the *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā*, on the other hand, we actually find *om* in the phrase *om pratiṣha* (ii. 13), and it is stated (xix. 25) that by means of the *praṇavas* the form of the *śāstras* is made complete. The *Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā* also uses *om* in the phrase *om śrāvaya* (iv. 1. 11) and in a set of exclamations in iv. 9. 21. It is, however, in the *Brāhmaṇas* that we first find the definite use in the asseverative sense; the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (vii. 18), in describing the mode of the recitation of the legend of Śunaḥśepa, which was recited on the day of anointing in the ceremony of the consecration of a king, states that the response to each verse of the *Rigveda* employed in the rite by the *hotṛ* priest is to be an *om*, said by the *adhvaryu*, while the response to each *Gāthā* verse is to be a *tathā*, on the ground that the former response is divine, the second human, and this distinction is preserved in the *sūtras* which deal with the rite. The ordinary use as a solemn 'Yes' is found more freely in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (i. 4. 1. 30, x. 6. 1. 4, xi. 6. 3. 4) and elsewhere. But its use is confined to very formal responses, and normally to responses in the ritual.

¹⁶ Encyclopedia of religion and ethics, ed. by James Hasitngs??

17. E.W. Hopkins, *Religions of India*, 1896, p.458.

Much more important than its use as a particle of asseveration is the development of its use as a mystical symbol embodying in itself the essence of the Vedas and of the universe. The first evidence of this important position of the word is to be found in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (v. 32), in which it is declared that *om* is the world of heaven and the sun, and where it is resolved into the three letters *a*, *u*, and *m*. These in turn are derived from the three *vyāhṛtis*, *Bhūḥ*, *Bhuvah*, and *Svar*, these from the *Rigveda*, *Yajurveda*, and *Sāmaveda*, these from the gods *Agni*, *Vāyu*, and *Āditya*, and these from earth, atmosphere, and air. The passage may be later than the rest of the text, but it is of special value as it opens a set of speculations which come to a head in the *Upaniṣads*. It is noteworthy that it has no parallel in the *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa* or in any other *Brāhmaṇa* text prior to the *Gopatha*.

In the *Upaniṣads* the doctrine of the sacred character of the syllable *is* steadily developed. The *Taittirīya* (i. 8) declares that it is the Brahman, the holy power which constitutes the universe, and derives this conclusion from the fact that in the ritual *om* takes an important place in each part; thus it is employed by the *hotṛ*, the *sāman* singer, the *adhvaryu*, and the *brahman*, and forms an integral part of the ritual of the *agnihotra*, the most regular of all Vedic offerings. The essence of this treatment of the syllable is to make it a symbol of the Brahman and to substitute mediation upon it in place of study of the Vedas--an idea helped by the doctrine that the word represents the essence of all three Vedas and of existence which the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* first sets out. The *Kāhaka Upaniṣad* (ii. 15) declares that all the Vedas proclaim the syllable *om*, and that it is for its sake that men practice holiness. But the full development of the doctrine is first found in the *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa*, which contains two elaborate accounts of *om*; they are followed by some supplementary and doubtless later remarks on it, and constitute the *Praṇava Upaniṣad*. According to the first of these accounts, the Brahman created *Brahmā* as masculine on a lotus leaf. He in turn created *om* with two letters and four morae. The first letter of *om* produced the waters, the second the luminaries; then the first three morae, which no doubt represent the three syllables in *om*, pronounced with prolongation, produced earth, atmosphere, and heaven; fire, wind, and sun; the three Vedas; the three *vyāhṛtis*; the three metres, *gāyatrī*, *triṣṭubh*, and *jagatī*, and so on. So far the account is in fair accord with that of the earlier texts, but the special Atharvan character of it is made clear by the derivation from the *v* sound (taken from the *o*) of water, moon, the *Atharvaveda*, *om* itself, *janat*, which is the *vyāhṛti* of the *āṅgiras*, or dreadful formulae, of the *Atharvaveda*, *anuṣ ubh* metre, etc., while from the letter *m* are derived the *Itihāsa Purāṇa* and other categories of literature, musical instruments, singing and dancing, the *bṛhatī* metre, etc. It is added that with *om* the *brahman* priest is able to make good all defects in the sacrifice, and that the repetition of *om* a thousand times secures all desires. In the second account we learn that in one of their interminable conflicts the *asuras* defeated the gods until the latter followed the leadership of *om*, whence *om* received the reward that no holy text might be recited without it, whether *ṛch*, *yajus*, *sāman*, or *śloka*. In the supplementary remarks other details of the word are given; it is stated to be pronounced differently in the different Vedas, and its four morae, which are here differently explained from the account given

before--which indeed seems to assume five--are connected with the deities Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Īśāna, and Śarva, the two last being forms of Śiva.

The *Upaniṣads* connected with the *Atharvaveda* naturally develop further the views of the *Gopatha*. They devote their attention in large measure to the means of meditation by which the seeker for the Brahman can attain union with the Brahman, and for this purpose set little importance upon knowledge of the scriptures. In the place of such knowledge is set the study of the syllable *om*, which is described in a series of metaphors. Thus it is, in one view, the bow from which the soul as an arrow flies to the Brahman, in another the arrow which is shot from the body as a bow in order to pierce the darkness. It is also the ship on which a man travels over the ether of the heart, and the chariot which bears him to the world of Brahmā. The old analysis into three *morae* occurs in the *Maitrāyaṇī Upaniṣad* (vi. 3), which describes them as fire, sun, and wind, and calls them the essence of all things. The *Praśna Upaniṣad* (v. 5), acting on the same basis, states that he who meditates by one *mora* attains the world of men, by two the way of the fathers (*pitṛyāna*), and by three the way of the gods (*devayāna*). This conception, however, changes, and, while four or five *morae* are recognized in the *Gopatha*, we now hear of a fourth *mora*-less part which forms the crown of the syllable (*Maitrāyaṇī*, vi. 23). In the latest stage of the Atharvan *Upaniṣads* this is definitely called the third and a half *mora*, and is said to lead to the supreme goal, and to be represented by the point (*bindu*) of the *anusvāra*. Its sound is variously described, but normally as some sort of echo, and some versions turn the half *mora* into a fourth or add to a half *mora* an echo. It is, however, made clear that the meditation on *om* is not the highest stage, which can be performed only in absolute silence ; and the syllable is compared with a chariot which is abandoned when the high road ceases and the foot-path begins. *Om* is only, after all a word, and, ascending from it, man attains to nothingness in that which is not a word.

Side by side with the philosophic development of the symbolism of *om* in the *Upaniṣads* its ritual use is elaborated and closely defined by the *Śrauta sūtras*. The variety of its employment does not conceal the essential nature of its uses, which are either the solemn affirmation or agreement, as in the response (*pratigara*) of the *adhvaryu*, or the intimation of the commencement and end of a recitation or an offering verse--a, usage which explains the statement that *om* separates divine and human utterance. The special nature of the word is marked out by the care taken to define its mode of pronunciation and the treatment of final letters before it, when it ends a sentence. The *Prātiśākhya* of the *Rigveda* records its use in approval, while the *Prātiśākhya* of the *Vājasneyī Samhitā* seems to refer to its use as commencing a litany by its assertion that in the Vedas the word *om*, here described by its less usual name *omkāra*, has the same sense as *atha* in the current speech (*bhāṣya*).

In the *sūtras* which deal with the domestic ritual and customary law a different aspect of the use of *om* from that treated in the *Śrauta Sūtras* presents itself. In the latter *om* is merely used as an important part of the recitation of the texts, but as early as the *Baudhāyana Dharma Sūtra* we are told that a man should daily recite the Veda privately,

be it only the syllable *om* or the *vyāhṛti*, and that this constitutes the offering to Brahmā. Similarly, while an ascetic is not allowed to give up the study of the Veda altogether, he is permitted to confine himself to the meditation on *om*, which is the root of the tree of the Veda and its essence, and by this means he becomes united with the Brahman (ii. 10. 23 f.). Still more important is the place taken by *om* in connexion with rites of expiation and purification. Baudhāyana, in setting forth (iv. 1) the advantages of the suppression of the breath, adds that *om* begins and ends the Vedas, and that *om* and the *vyāhṛtis* are the eternal and everlasting Brahman. For him who engages in reciting *om*, the *vyāhṛtis*, and the *gāyatrī* no danger exists anywhere. Sixteen suppressions of the breath, accompanied by recitation of the *vyāhṛtis* and of *om* repeated daily, after a month purify even the slayer of a learned Brahman. The same rules reappear in *Vasiṣṭha* (xxv. and xxvi.), and by being repeated in the code of Manu (xi. 249 f.) complete the holiness of the word *om* as part of the ceremonies of purification. On the other hand, the use of *om* is equally necessary to the magic worker: the *Kaushika Sūtra*, that storehouse of Indian magic, in describing (ix. 8 f.) the preparation of the holy water, insists that the preparation shall be accompanied by the use of the syllable.

In the philosophic literature *om* holds its place as the object of meditation in the effort to realize the Brahman. Thus in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* it is identified with Kṛṣṇa as the universe and the Brahman, and the triad *om tat sat* is declared as comprehending the nature of the Brahman. In the system of the Vedānta as interpreted by Bādarāyaṇa (*Sūtra*, iv. 3. 14 f.) it seems that the use of *om* for purposes of meditation falls under the same disadvantage as all meditation on the Brahman by means of symbols: the result is not the clear vision of the Brahman, but only the reward appropriate for the meditation on the particular symbol in each case, but this doctrine does not harmonize with that of the *Praśna Upaniṣad*, which, as we have seen, declares that meditation on the three *morae* of *om* leads to the *devayāna* and thus, of course, to the Brahman. Nor does it appear that this view of *om* was ever generally accepted, meditation on *om* being regarded as a normal stage in the development of the knowledge of the highest Brahman.

This position of *om* is intensified in the Yoga system as it appears in the *sūtra* of Patañjali (i. 27-29); it is there brought into connexion with Īśvara, God, and, under the name of *praṇava*, declared to express him. The repetition of the word and reflexion on its meaning are enjoined as desirable, and it is stated that the result of this practice is the removal of obstacles and the right knowledge of him who thinks in an inverse way, i.e. of one who does not seek truth in ordinary consciousness. Hence the word has a definite and important place in all subsequent doctrine of Yoga practices.

On the popular side the syllable *om* persists throughout the whole of Indian religion as the proper accompaniment of *mantras*, whether vedic or not. Thus, on the one hand, it is used invariably to accompany the sacred *gāyatrī* which is part of the daily duty of the orthodox Hindu to repeat, and, on the other hand, it plays a great part in the innumerable varieties of Tantric (?) *mantras* which form an important feature of the real religion of India. Its popularity depends no doubt in part on the normal equation of its

elements with the Hindu trinity of Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Brahmā which is already found in the later *Upaniṣads* and is foreshadowed earlier. On the other hand, despite its popular character, it remains very sacrosanct : at the festival of Śiva on 27th February, when even the lowest castes take part in the rites, while women are permitted to make use of the *mantras*, an exception is made of the syllable *om*, doubtless because of its special holiness.¹⁷ As an auspicious symbol, from the 6th cent. A.D. onwards, the initial letter is found in different forms to denote the commencement of a text in MSS and inscriptions.

In the *Purāṇas* besides assertions as to its general sanctity we find the syllable turned to sectarian use. Thus in the *Liṅga Purāṇa* the *liṅga*, which reduces both Viṣṇu and Brahmā to the recognition of their inferiority to Śiva, bears upon it the sacred syllable. On the other hand, it is said that the three letters represent Viṣṇu himself, his wife Śrī, and the worshipper; that the syllable is the three Vedas, the three worlds, the three sacred fires, and the three footsteps of Viṣṇu; and that by meditation upon it devotees attain supreme bliss.

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A. B. KEITH.

It may be noted that Keith does not discuss *Om* in Sikhism. Yet it plays a very prominent role in that monotheistic religion. It commences their *mūla mantra*.



MONIER-WILLIAMS

Honors OM¹⁸

Originally *om*=*ām*, which may be derived from *ā*, BRD, a word of solemn affirmation and respectful assent, sometimes translated by 'yes, verily, so be it' (and in this sense compared with Amen);

it is placed at the commencement of most Hindu works, and as a sacred exclamation may be uttered [but not so as to be heard by ears profane] at the beginning and end of a reading of the Vedas or to previously to any prayer;

it is also regarded as a particle of auspicious salutation [Hail];

om appears first in the Upanishads as a mystic monosyllable, and is there set forth as the object of profound religious meditation, the highest spiritual efficacy being attributed not only to the whole word but also to the three sounds *a*, *u*, *m*, of which it consists;

in later times *om* is the mystic name for the Hindu triad, and represents the union of the three gods, viz. *a* (Vishṇu), *u* (Śiva), *m* (Brahmā);

it may also be typical of the three Vedas;

om is usually called *praṇava*, more rarely *akshara* or *ekākshara*, and only in later times *omkāra*, VS; ŚBr.; ChUp. &c.;

(Buddhists place *om* at the beginning of their *vidyā shaḍaksharī* or mystical formulary in six syllables [*om maṇi padme hūm*];

according to T. *om* may be used in the following senses: *praṇave*, *ārambhe*, *svīkāre*, *anumatau*, *apākṛtau*, *asvīkāre*, *maṅgale*, *śubhe*, *jñeye*, *brahmaṇi*;

with preceding *a* or *ā* the *o* of *om* does not form Vṛddhi (*au*) but *guṇa* (*o*), Pāṇini, vi, 1, 95.

Ref. Monier-Williams in his *Sanskrit Dictionary*.

¹⁸ *Sanskrit dictionary*.....

What is behind symbols?

R S NATHAN¹⁹

All religions have their symbols, often more than one. These may be visual like the Cross, or auricular like OM. They may represent God as Power like the Śivaliṅga, or point out the path to Perfection as in the case of the Dharmacakra or signify the Savior and religious system as the Cross or the Crucifex.

A reverent study of these symbols of the great world religions is as fascinating as it is spiritually rewarding.

OM OR PRAṆAVA

Praṇava or Om is the universally accepted symbol of Hinduism. Literally the word Praṇava means "That by which God is effectively praised". It also means "That which is ever new".

Praṇava has been extolled highly in the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Geeta as also in other scriptures. The Gopatha Brāhmaṇa of the Atharva Veda relates a story according to which God Indra successfully overcame the demons with the help of OM. The story can be interpreted to mean that man can conquer his beastly nature by having repetition of OM.

The Yajurveda exhorts us to try to realise Brahman through repeating and remembering OM. The Kathopanishad declares that OM is Parabrahman Itself. The Muṇḍakopanishad advises the spiritual aspirant to meditate on the unity of the Ātman (the self) with Brahman (God) using OM for Japa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa avers in the Geeta that he is OM among words [!] and that all religious rites are started with the repetition of OM. Not only that, if any one succeeds in chanting OM at the time of his death, simultaneously thinking of God, he will attain the highest Truth. The Yogasūtras of Patañjali declare that Praṇava is the symbol of God and that one can attain Samādhi by its repetition, and meditation on Him

Actually OM comprises of [!] three independent letters A, U, and M, each of which has its own meaning and significance. The letter 'A' represents the beginning (Āditattva), 'U' represents progress (Utkarṣa), and 'M' represents limit or dissolution (Miti). Hence the word OM represents that Power which is responsible for the creation, development and dissolution of this Universe, namely God Himself.

The Significance of the Mystic Symbol "OM"

¹⁹ *Symbolism in Hinduism...* For more in all such references see the Bibliography.

The greatest achievement of man in the field of philosophy is his comprehension of the idea of the Infinite, and his attempts to bring the Infinite down to some sort of understanding at the finite level, or to transcend his finite equipments and thus reach or evolve into the Infinite. All religions of the world agree on this basic principle, and that they are but various attempts as expressing the Infinite in finite terms as is intelligible to the finite equipments with which we perceive and gain all our knowledge and experiences.

The basic expression is the thought, which manifests itself as the word. Hence the importance of the spoken word. The great seers of the past, who had evolved themselves to perfection or near-perfection, and had realized and identified themselves with the Infinite-Brahman as termed in the great and most ancient of all the living religions of today, the SANĀTANA DHARMA (Eternal Religion), wrongly yet popularly known as Hinduism now -- the Mother of Religions--*Jīvanmuktas* who still functioned under the *upādhis* to live out their residual Karma yearned to express their sublime experience so that aspirants of posterity could visualize and concentrate on this Infinite and thus make the progress to the summum bonum of human birth and existence--liberation. For this they had to coin a short, yet all-comprehensive symbol in the shape of the spoken word, thus reduce the Infinite to the finite level of understanding in form and name '*Vikāra* and *Nāmadheya*'. The result is the mystic symbol "OM". *Sādhakānām hitārthāya Brahmani rūpakalpate* [?]²⁰ It is for the convenience of the aspirant that Brahman, the formless has been assigned a form, to facilitate concentration.

Now let us examine, subject to our limitations of knowledge and capacity, how far this mystic symbol 'OM' is all-comprehensive, and what could have been the reason for the great seers for selecting this symbol to represent the Infinite Brahman.

Akṣaram Brahma paramam svabhāvo'dhyātm ucyate. BG. 8.3.

Brahman is Akṣara--inexhaustible, that which cannot be spent, therefore Eternal. The spoken letter in Sanskrit is also called 'akṣara'. Once the letter or word is spoken, the effect is eternal. So they must have decided to have an 'akṣara' to represent 'Akṣara'.

'Om ityekākṣaram Brahma vyāharan mām anusmaran
Yaḥ prayāti tyajan deham sa yāti paramām gatim. BG. 8.13.

Bhagavān Himself tells Arjuna that he who leaves this body chanting the one mystic Akṣara OM reaches the 'Paramām Gatim' the final goal of beatification.

²⁰ This is a popular article. No diacritical marks, no citations of authorities, no references!!! The last portion of the last quote is not clear.

Because the great men who know the Vedas accept this 'akṣara' as representing Brahman and as the Vedas themselves point to the Brahman, the akṣara 'OM' can be said to be the quintessence of the Vedas.

The 'eternity' of the spoken word is emphasized in all the Upanishads, and the first component of the compound letter 'OM' is the first vowel 'akāra'.

'Akṣarāṇām Akāro'smi. BG. 10.33.

Kīrtiḥ Srīr Vāk ca nārīṇām. BG. 10.34.

Among the akṣaras, I am 'Akāra' and I am the spoken word 'Vāk'. This is exactly what is stated in the Christian Bible too.

'In the beginning was the word. The word was with God and the word was God'. This is accepted in principle in all known religions of the world.

In the beginning, before creation (if there was ever such time, as we believe *śṛṣṭi* is *anādi*--here '*anādi*' should mean only unknown to us) before the 'SPANDANA' occurred, when Brahman was unmanifest or to be more correct, the mind was not there to cognize and hence perception was not there--the whole Brahmāṇḍa was enveloped in darkness and there was nothing but space unlimited--AVYAKTA. There was nothing but a booming continuous sound in the Brahmāṇḍa. Mythology has it that this continuous booming sound was being emitted by the Conch (Śaṅkha) that is in one of the hands of HARI which symbolizes the eternal sound. Even today if we retire to the top of a hill in the center of a vast expanse of virgin forest with giant trees all around where even the sun-rays meet with some kind of opposition to peep in, and sit in communion with Nature, this primal sound can well be heard or felt. Pilgrims to Sabarimalai, who go in the traditional and orthodox way through the conventional route, would have had this experience, if they were lucky enough. It can well be presumed that the sages, who constantly communed with Nature under such sylvan atmosphere had coined this mono-syllable 'OM' after this basic sound that enveloped the Brahmāṇḍa from their own experience.

The sages have proved that Man is a miniature Cosmos, that everything that is contained in the Cosmos is contained in the human body--of course, not anatomically. This is called the 'Brahmāṇḍa--Piṇḍāṇḍa theory', in English the theory of 'Macro-cosm and Micro-cosm'. The mono-syllable 'OM' is the result of the harmonious combination of the basic sounds which contain in themselves all the sounds which can be produced by the human system, and it can be seen that the entire vocal mechanism of the human being comes into full play when he pronounces the sound 'OM' according to the Vedic injunctions.

AKĀRA Produced from the very depth of the human system, where the Kuṇḍalinī posite [?] the throat taking the most prominent part ...the expression of the sound.

Devotional Contributions

UKĀRA The second stage where the sound starting from the throat rolls onward, as it were, to the tip of the tongue.

MAKĀRA The sound concentrated at the extremity of the human vocal system, the lips.

Thus it can be seen that in producing the sound 'OM' the entire Piṇḍāṇḍa, the micro- scopic representation of the Macroscopic Brahmāṇḍa, comes into full play, and therefore can correctly be said to represent the all-pervading all-comprehensive Brahman.

The significance of the Mantra (this is also a Mantra coming within the definition "Mananāt trāyate iti Mantraḥ", a redeeming instrument, by reflecting on which we are liberated) "OM" though occurring in various Upanishads and in almost all the Hindu scriptures throughout, is seen to have received special mention in Taittirīya, Chāndogya, and Māṇḍūkya Upanishads, to mention only a few more well known ones. The eighth Anuvāka of the Śikṣāvallī of the Taittirīya Upanishad is almost entirely devoted to the mystic symbol "OM".

OM ITI BRAHMA.

OM ITĪDAM SARVAM

OM ITI ETAD ANUKRTI, etc.

OM ITI SĀMĀNI GĀYANTI, etc. etc.

"OM" according to this Upanishad is the point of concentration for the aspirant who is more intellectual than emotional, for the man in the path of Jñāna Yoga than in the path of Bhakti Yoga. "OM" is the idol for the intellectual worship in the inner temple. While concentrating on the mono-syllable 'OM', its three component parts A, U, and M are to be respectively meditated upon with special reference to the Jāgrat, Svapna, and Suṣupti states, i.e. waking, dreaming, and deep-sleep states, super-imposing the waker in him on the sound A, passing on to the next dreaming state in U, and then on to the deep-sleep state in M, and transcending all these, come to live in the fourth state of super-consciousness called the Turīya state by progressive integration of all things Anātman and by constant practice-pointed meditation. As the sum-total of our experience in the totality of experiences in the Jāgrat, Svapna, and Suṣupti states. 'OM' represents the entire Jagat, the World of Cosmos, and hence pure Awareness. That is how the great Yogis have declared that 'OM' is all the Akhilāṇḍa, "OM ITI BRAHMA"

The opening stanza of the Chāndogya Upanishad eulogises the importance and efficacy of this mystic symbol 'OM'.

"Om iti etad....

In Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad we find--

"Om ityetad akṣaram idam.. [abbreviated by us].

According to Nārada Parivrājaka Upaniṣad, where the Praṇava "OM" is exhaustively dealt with, it is made up of sixteen mātrās as under:- [imp. to note]

AKĀRA, UKĀRA, MAKĀRA, ARDHAMĀTRĀ, NĀDA, BINDU, KALĀ,
KALĀTĪTA, ŚĀNTI, ŚĀNTYATĪTA, UNMANĪ, MANONMANĪ, PURĪ,
MADHYAMĀ, PAŚYANTĪ, AND PARĀ. (to be checked with original).

Out of these, it is said that four mātrās have their 'Lay [??]' in the other mātrās, "Dhyānabindu Upanishad" which exclaims:--

Oमित्येकākṣaram Brahma dhyeyam sarvam mumukṣubhiḥ

and goes on to explain the greatness and all-comprehensive nature of the Praṇava (OM), has named these mātrās and has also stipulated the effect of each one of them on Sid[Siddhi?] level:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 1. Ghoṣiṇī | Results in attaining super-conscious state. |
| 2. Vidyunmālī | Raises to Yakṣaloka, next stage in evolution. |
| 3. Pataṅginī | Enables the Sādhaka to fly in the air. |
| 4. Vāyuveginī | Enables to travel at the speed of the wind. |
| 5. Nāmadheyā | Gives entry into Pitṛloka. |
| 6. Aindrī | Gives entry into Indraloka. |
| 7. Vaiṣṇavī | Gives entry into Viṣṇuloka. |
| 8. Śāṅkarī | Gives entry into Śivaloka. |
| 9. Mahatī and | |
| 10. Dhṛti | To influence the beings of Maharloka. |
| 11. Maunī | Enables the Sādhaka to reach the world of Munis. |
| 12. Brāhmī | Attains to Brahmaloaka. |

When the Praṇava (OM) is identified with Jagat :-

A-kāra is Īśvara

U-kāra is Mūlaprakṛti, and

M-kāra is Māyāśakti.

See "Tasmai Makārāya namaḥ Śivāya"!

So, the combination A+U+M=OM, stands for Brahmā+Viṣṇu+Śiva, or the entire eternal Cosmic principles of Creation, Preservation, and Dissolution (of which the last is a constructive destruction) completing the cycle of evolution and involution.

The mystic interpretation is that the vibration caused by the component sounds of A, U, and M, created the disturbance that led to the creation, preservation, and dissolution respectively.

Devotional Contributions

Now we go to the efficacy of OM-kāra Japa. Having realised the significance of this mystic syllable OM, and how it represents the Supreme Infinite Brahman, the aspirant does Japa with concentration on the "Praṇava", the shortness of which is really conducive to concentration.

"JA" kāro Janmaviccheda ?

"PA" kāro Pāpanāśana"?

explains the efficacy of Japa of any Mantra, of course, associated with 'Manana' , i.e. reflection.

Incidentally, Mantra is the mystic formula. Yantra is the machine (in this case the human body-mind-intellect complex, its three aspects of Sthūla, Sūkṣma, and Kāraṇa Śarīras, and the three different states of consciousness of Jāgrat, Svapna, and Suṣupti-- i.e. waking, dream and deep sleep) and Tantra is the technique of applying the formula on the machine to produce the best results.

To go to the metaphysics of this mystic 'OM', the primary manifestation of activity in the Cosmos was through the principle of sound, whether we take it metaphysically or mythologically; metaphysically when we 'look back' into "śūnyatā", or "Avyakta", and mythologically through the Conch of Hari, Ḍamaru of Śiva, or the tongue of Brahma (not Brahman) each one of which has its symbolic significance in the logical cosmic scheme of things. Everything is made apparent due to certain vibrations which our modern Science has discovered and accepted. Even the basic seven colours are seen by the human eyes due to different vibrations coming within the range or capacity of human vision. Every sound, in fact every thought sets in innumerable vibrations in the cosmic field. The intensity of vibrations produced by the chanting of 'OM' (that is, if properly chanted, students of Sound may here recall the principle of sympathetic resonance) is said to affect or effect the entire microcosm and macrocosm. Mantra has its full efficacy only if chanted in the proper pronunciation and intonation and it is even said that different modes of chanting produce different effects.

"Mantro hīnaḥ svarato varṇato vā
mithyāprayukto na tam artham āha.
Sa vāg vajro yajamānam hinasti
yathendraśatruḥ svarato'parādhāt."

The real "svara" (mode of chanting) can only be learnt directly from the Guru. Mantra Śāstra says that the Praṇava (OM) can be chanted in 170 different ways (Madame Blavatsky has quoted some ancient Indian work that it can be chanted in some 250 different intonations) and that the Siddhi attained by each method is different. The great physicist and sound expert of Philadelphia, the late Mr. John Worrel Keely demonstrated to the world that the harmonious sound emitted from a violin could raise a machine from the ground, but others could not do it, as the feat depended on a certain level of personal spiritual advancement and achievement. Mr. O. C. Ganguli of Calcutta wrote in the "Aryan Path" (issue: January 1937) about the efficacy of svaras on the emotional field. Out of the seven svaras Sa, Ri, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, and Ni, the Ārohaṇa

of Sa and Ri produce wonderment and hatred, Dha raises fear or repulsion, Ga and Ni for pathos, and Ma and Pa for love and delight. The saptasvaras have thus been formulated to produce and maintain all the basic emotions, not only in the human system but even in animal minds.

"Paśur vetti, śiśur vetti, vetti gānarasam phaṇi.

It is explained in the Agamas that

A-kāra kills krodha (meditating on Akāra in all aspects explained)

U-kāra kills dveṣa, and

M-akāra kills fear.

While the compound symbol "OM" in its entirety kills the ego in man.

'Mantra' is the expression of mental power, Icchā Śakti, and has been defined as the language that describes the thought vibrations that originated in and from Nāda Brahman, the original manifestation of Universal Mind in the form of Universal Sound. And 'OM' is the original sound that enveloped the entire Brahmāṇḍa before the beginning (?) of Creation.

Thus we see the significance of 'OM', though this is only a bird's eye view of a gigantic subject that envelopes, penetrates, and permeates the whole of the Brahmāṇḍa. Whatever be the level of explanation offered, logical, scientific, physical, or mythological, or intellectual acrobatics resorted to, in attributing mysticism are sacredness to the symbol; it has to be understood that it is the mind of man which is an integral part of the Universal Mind, and his intensity of faith that give the real value to anything in the world. Says Christian D. Larson: "The mind of man is conscious and sub-conscious, objective and subjective, external and internal. The conscious mind acts, the sub-conscious reacts, the conscious mind produces the impression, while the sub-conscious mind produces expression, the conscious mind determines what is to be done, and the sub-conscious mind supplies the mental material and the necessary power.... The sub-conscious mind is the "Great Within"--the inner mental world from which all things proceed that appear in the being of man". Every man is not deluded to see the "Ghost in the post", neither does the same man see it under all identical circumstances. Any symbol that helps man to concentrate his mind-intellect equipment on the Supreme Reality, and thus make his progress in the path of evolution, is sacred, and the sages and seers only say that OM (AUM)--this mystic symbol has been tried and found most efficacious, and has been coined and found taking all the various aspects of the Supreme Reality (accepted that the Supreme Reality has neither aspects nor parts--but this is Vyāvahārika--as cognizable to our meagre and limited equipments) in all its plurality of manifestations as known to them, visualized experienced, and lived by them, into consideration.

HARI AUM TAT SAT !



Andre Padoux

Honors

OM¹

There is another term in the Veda, referring both to an aspect of the Absolute, or to the sacred word as the imperishable basis of speech or creation, a term that subsequently (while nonetheless retaining its grammatical sense of "syllable") came to refer to the primal, imperishable principle, more especially when symbolized by the monosyllabic mantra *om*, and that is *akṣara*. It is well worth discussing here, if only briefly, as much for its relation, as early as the *Ṛg Veda*, to the speculations about the powers of the Word, as for the prominence of the speculations about *om* as early as the Brāhmaṇas: this was a prominence that was retained henceforward. It is also worth discussing due to the role that will be played, in Tantric lore, by the *bījamantras* and the phonemes; and finally, because of the connecting link that existed from the outset between *akṣara*, *pada*, and the fourfold partition of the Word.²

¹ This is from the publication regarding which E. M. Esnoul said, in his very short article on OM, contributed to the *Encyclopedia of Religions...* "In the absence of monographic studies on the subject the reader do well to consult...."

Our present publication, even at its very best, is only a collection of selections. However, whatever we have selected, collected, and presented here, whether big or small, is complete in itself and makes a wholesome whole reading. It was originally intended by its author to be readable by itself. It was a kind of independent writing. Even if extracted, it made full sense. This book by Andre Padoux is an exception. The focus of the author has been the study of the Word in Tantric texts. The title itself is very clear. It says exactly what it means. OM has been discussed only incidentally, here and there. We were guided by the Index in our selection of the passages extracted and presented here. We have tried to present those passages which were indicated in the Index. However, the Index points out some pages where there is hardly anything on OM which would make a whole sense if extracted and presented. On the other hand there are certain pages which do contain some information on OM, yet they are not shown in the Index. The reader is advised to read the whole book by Padoux to get a full picture of what Padoux intends to say. Short extracts have been avoided by us, since they would not have brought any glory to OM, our main theme..

² About the term *akṣara*, cf. L. Renou, "Rituel et grammaire", *J. As.* (1941-42): 150-52; *Ibid.*, *E.V.P.* 1.9-10; J. A. B. Van Buitenen, "Notes on Akṣara," *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute* 17, 3; and also, "Akṣara," *JAOS* 79 (1959): 176-87. One may also refer, for more recent meanings of the term, to P. M. Modi, *Akṣara, a Forgotten Chapter in the History of Indian Philosophy* (Baroda, 1932).

Akṣara, according to the traditional etymology--*na kṣarati* or *na kṣīyate*--is that which does not flow out or perish, hence the imperishable, the indestructible, the eternal³; it is also the "syllable".⁴ Indeed, *akṣara* appears as early as the *Ṛg Veda*, as related to speech, and to the sacred, original, all-powerful Word, that which is at the beginning of the world: "When the first dawns were gleaming, the great [thing], the Word (*akṣaram*) came into being in the footsteps of the Cow.⁵ It strengthens further the vows of the gods [since indeed] great [must be] the singular asuric power of [these] gods" (3.55.1). Similarly in hymn 1.164.41-42: "The Cow-Buffalo bellowed, creating lakes, one foot, two feet, four feet, eight feet, nine feet in size, a thousand syllables in the supreme space. From her flow down the oceans, by her exist the four regions of the world: from her [place] flows the imperishable [Word], who nourishes the whole universe." The cow or cosmic buffalo, mother and nourisher of the universe, is the sacred Word, the thousand-syllabled word, and also the imperishable syllable, the *akṣara* which, as the smallest division of the word, is taken as its basic element ("die Ursilbe," Geldner),⁶ that to which it can be reduced and, it may be assumed, from which it emerges. It is, at the same time, for priests and poets of *brāhman*, which is a measured word, the element by which it is measured, hence its twofold significance: as a basic element of the Word, and as a measure of the sacred Word. Is it not said, in the same hymn of the *Ṛg Veda*, in the two stanzas preceding that we just quoted: "To him who does not know the syllable, which is the abode of all the gods in the supreme space, of what avail will be the hymn?" (1.164.39); and in stanza 24: "With the syllable are constructed the seven voices," i.e., the Vedic meters. As to hymn 6.16.35-36, it shows how both the *akṣara* and the

³ "Das Unvergängliche": Geldner, *ad RV* 1.164.42 (vol. 1, p. 253).

⁴ Cf. Geldner, *ibid.* (vol. I, p. 399): "*akṣaram* eigentlich das Element der Sprache, Laut, Silbe, hier für die sakrale Rede, die eine Erfindung jener ersten Ṛṣi's ist.

⁵ *padé góh*: the footprints, the track of the Cow, which is also that of the Word, followed by the sages (*RV* 10.71.3), which is secret, mysterious, and leads to the transcendental, the latter being the hidden Word. Cf. L. Renou, *E.V.P.* 4, p. 51: "The Great Word is born in the abode of the Cow," or in modern rendering: "The great syllable is born in the realm of the transcendental language." Cf. also Renou, *Etudes sur le vocabulaire du Ṛgveda*, pp. 21-22 (s.v. *pada*), and *E. V. P.* I, pp. 9-10.

There is a variant of the term *akṣara*, which is *ákṣarā*, which is both cow and word: *RV* 1.34.4; cf. Geldner's note, *op. cit.* (vol. 1, p. 41), who remarks that Sāyana sometimes ascribes to *ákṣarā* the meaning of word, at others, that of cow.

The Word, *vāc*, is also assimilated with a cow in *RV* 8.100.10. One should bear in mind that the Word is cow: *dhenúr vāg*. We have already seen, *supra* p. 9, the same assimilation with regard to *virāj*.

The reason for the Vedic identification word-cow may possibly lie both in that the term *gauḥ*, cow, is given as related to *GĀ*, to sing, and in the fact that the hymns assimilate prayers with cows; this assimilation arose due to the fact that through the utterance of the sacrificial Word the utterer would obtain a cow as *dakṣiṇā*. For this, see B. Oguibene, *Essais sur la culture védique et indo-européenne* (Pisa: Giardini, 1986), in particular p. 129.

⁶ "Die Silbe is das Element der Rede (*vāc*), die Ursilbe, vielleicht schon die Silbe *OM*" (note, *ad. RV* 1.164.39, vol. 1, p. 234).

sacrificial fire are born from the cosmic and ritual order (*rta*).⁷ All this clearly shows why priests and poets could sense power in the sacrificial, poetical, and creative word, foundation of the universal order (even though it also appears as born thereof) or helping to maintain it; one can understand why the syllabic element, which measures the Word and that to which it can be reduced, may be considered as the phonetic or metric seed of the cosmos.

Indeed, the Brāhmaṇas, and subsequently the Upaniṣads, leave no uncertainty as to the transcendence of this *akṣara*. The latter, to be more precise, will come to be identified with the syllable *om*, which will appear clearly, as early as the Vedic Upaniṣads, as the main symbol, the phonic expression par excellence of the *brahman*, and then as the basic mantra, the primordial sound, to which all mantras as well as any form of speech can be reduced, as the very source of the Word.⁸

One may wonder why the syllable *om* has been given such an exalted position. It was used, so it seems, as early as the *Yajur Veda*, where it is not yet divinized.⁹ (The *Yajur Veda* contains other syllables used for ritualistic purposes: *him*, *hum*, *svāhā*, *vaṣat*, *vet*, but which will not have a comparable destiny.) The *praṇava*--as *om* will be called--is originally nothing but the interjection *o*, lengthened by the *pluti* up to three morae and ending with the nasal sound *m* (marked *m̃*). It is used in the Vedic ritual by the *hotṛ*, who utters it loudly at the end of the *anuvākya*, but it came soon to be regarded as an utterance of vital importance, as the syllable par excellence.¹⁰ In some texts it is described as a kind of assent; thus *AitBr.* (7.18) ascribes to *om* the same meaning, in the language of the gods, as to what, in the language of humans, is expressed by *tathā*: "All right, yes"; and similarly in the *ChUp.* (1.1.8), which however goes on to say: "For whenever one assents to anything, this indeed is fulfillment. He becomes a fulfiller of the desires who, with this knowledge, becomes aware that the syllable [*om̃*] is the *udgītha*": at this stage, the deification of the syllable *om* has been achieved.

⁷ Cf. *TaitBr.* 2.8.8.5, quoted *supra* p. 11, n. 20: "The word is the firstborn syllable of the Order, the mother of the Veda, the navel of immortality."

⁸ For the Tantric conception of *om* as found in some Śaiva scriptures, cf. chap. 7, pp. 402ff.

⁹ We may mention, by the way, Winternitz's opinion about this type of speculation: "There is," he writes in this connection, "yet another kind of 'prayers,' as we cannot help calling them, with which we meet already in the *Yajurveda*, and with which also, at later periods, much mischief was done . . ." (*History of Indian Literature*, vol. 1, p. 185).

¹⁰ J. A. B. van Buitenen (*JAOS*, vol. 79), thinks that the prominent position of *om* may be due to how certain ritual recitations are performed. Cf. also L. Silburn, *Instant et cause*, p. 92: "It is likely that the syllable *om*, the instigator, was also, as early as the Brāhmaṇas, the continuous humming sound it will become at a later date in the Upaniṣads. Though imperceptible, it would underlay the whole ceremony and would thus appear like *brahman* as the upholder of the sacrifice" (J. G.'s translation).

At the beginning of the *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa*¹¹ (1.1), Prajāpati conquers the universe by means of the three Vedas, then, afraid lest the gods steal it from him by means of the same threefold science, he decides to take the sap or essence (*rasa*) away from it by means of the triple utterance: *bhūr bhuvah svar*,¹² thereby creating the earth, the intermediate space, and the sky: "Somehow it happened that of one syllable (*?kasyai 'va'kṣarasya*) he could not take the essence: of *om*, just of *om*. This [syllable] became this speech, and this [speech], namely *om*, breath is the essence thereof." The text now brings together *om* with the *gāyatrī*; next (1.2) we are told that it is fire, wind, and sun, and that speech is earth, intermediate space, and sky: *om* therefore sums up the whole universe. Further on (1.10),¹³ the immortal, celestial Cow, who sends forth her thousand streams in all directions unto all this world (*RV* 1.164), is this "true syllable" that is *om*: "In it the waters are firmly set, in the waters the earth, in the earth these worlds. As leaves might be stuck together with a pin, so these worlds are stuck together by this syllable." Then again, this Brāhmaṇa (1.23)¹⁴ places at the beginning (*agre*) the space or "ether" (*ākāśa*), which is Word (*sa ya ākāśo vāg eva sā*). Prajāpati presses this Word; of its being pressed, the essence streamed forth. That became the worlds; these, being then also pressed, became the gods Agni, Vāyu, and the Sun, which, pressed, became the three Vedas, which became *bhūr bhuvah svar*, and those finally became the *akṣara* which is *om*.¹⁵

There is a very similar passage in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*: "Prajāpati brooded over the worlds. From the worlds issued forth the threefold Veda; he brooded over it. Therefrom arose the syllables (*akṣarāṇi*): *bhūr, bhuvah, svar*. He brooded over them; therefrom arose the name *om* (*omkāra*). As leaves are held together by a spike, so all the worlds merge into the sound *om*. The sound *om* is the whole universe."¹⁶ In its previous section (2.22) the same Upaniṣad--dealing with the seven musical modes (*gāna*) and noting how the phonemes making up words should be pronounced (as is well known, pronouncing Vedic mantras with absolute accuracy is a prerequisite to their efficacy)--further says that the innermost nature (*ātman*) of all vowels (*svara*) is Indra, while that of the spirants (*uṣman*) is Prajāpati and of the consonants (*sparśa*) Mṛtyu; the Upaniṣad

¹¹ Cf. *The Jaiminīya or Talavakāra Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa*, text and translation by Hanns Oertel (*JAOS* 16 [1894]: 79ff.).

¹² These are the *vyāhṛti*, the three "utterances" par excellence, which are chanted in the course of the Vedic ritual. For the interrelation between the cosmos and the *vyāhṛti*, cf. also *TaitUp.* 1.5-6.

¹³ *JaiUpBr.* p. 89.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

¹⁵ The *JaiUpBr.* explains that *akṣara* can be the essence by interpreting it as that which flowed out (*akṣarat*), and also that which does not become exhausted (*na kṣīyate*), and states that the true name of *om* is *akṣaya* while *akṣara* is a term used to keep it secret. And it further states that the *akṣara* should be chanted neither "o" or "om", but *om*, for in this way only does this sound merge with the essence. Why does it place such emphasis on the *anusvāra*? At the time of the *JaiUpBr.* speculations about the *bindu* (which later on will be considered as the concentrated energy, and therefore the very essence of the mantras as well as of the universe), as far as we know, had not yet come into existence.

¹⁶ *ChUp.* 2. 23.3-4.

goes on to say that vowels should be pronounced strong and sonant, with the thought: "To Indra let me give strength,"¹⁷ and so forth. This is interesting if we refer to the later speculations: each of the three groups of phonemes is correlated with a deity, while that of the consonants is not associated with a potent and creative god but with death, and occupies a markedly lower position. Does this not look like an embryo of the Tantric speculations about the phonemes?¹⁸

Coming back to *om*, it is worth noting that the Upaniṣad itself opens with lines in praise of the *akṣara* (1.1.1-10), identified in this case with the most important portion of the *sāman*, the *udgītha*, which is itself "the foremost of all essences, the supreme essence, the most excellent one." There is no mention of *om* in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, which, however, contains an elaboration on *akṣara*, no longer appearing as a syllable, but as the absolute, the imperishable, the unconditioned, the foundation and basis of everything.¹⁹ In some other early Upaniṣads, on the other hand, *om* is exalted above all. Thus in *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 1.8 (the first section of which is mainly devoted to a phonetic teaching or a teaching relating to the ritual words): "*om* is *brahman*", and so forth. The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* also deals primarily with *om*; it begins: "Hari is *om*. This syllable is this whole. The past, the present, the future--everything is just the phoneme *om*";²⁰ or again, *Praśna* 5.6 or *Katha* 2.15-16: "The word which all the Vedas rehearse, that is said [to be equal to] all the austerities, desiring which men live the life of brahmanical studentship, that Word to thee I briefly declare: that is *om*! That syllable truly is *brahman*, that syllable indeed is the Supreme. Knowing that syllable, indeed, whatsoever one desires, is his."²¹ Also in the *Maitrī Upaniṣad*, which, it is true, is of later date: "*om* is the greatness of *brahman*" (4.4); "*om* has three morae. By means of these is woven the whole world, warp and woof" (6.3), and so forth. All those texts clearly show the unrivaled value attributed to *om*--the fact that it was taken as symbolizing

¹⁷ Cf. above, p. 8, n. 10, cit. *RV.*, 8. 14. 11: the performance of a laudatory hymn increases Indra's potency.

¹⁸ A still more marked prefiguration of Tantric elaborations is the passage in *AitĀr.* 3.2.5, which associates the three groups of phonemes with the three portions of the cosmos: consonants being the "form" (*rūpa*) of the earth, that is to say that of which it is made, spirants the "form" of the intermediate space, and vowels that of the sky; here again a progression can be observed: consonants are associated with the lowest and vowels with the highest. Similarly phonemes are also correlated with fire, wind, and sun: *prthivyā rūpaṃ sparśā antarīkṣasyoṣmāno divaḥ svarāḥ / agne rūpaṃ sparśā vayoḥ uṣmāṇaḥ ādityasya svarāḥ /*

This distribution might simply be the consequence of the phonetic nature of the various phonemes such as defined by the Prātiśākhya, phonetic findings being thereafter taken up by myth: this mixing up of phonetics and myth later appears very clearly in the speculations of Abhinavagupta on the subject (cf. chap. 5).

¹⁹ *BĀUp.* 3.8.7-11: "Verily, O Gārgī, at the command of that Imperishable, the sun and the moon stand apart. Verily, O Gārgī, at the command of that Imperishable, sky and earth stand apart," and so forth.

²⁰ *MāṇḍUp.* 1.1.

²¹ *KathUp.* 2.15-16.

adequately, and therefore as being, the Absolute. It should also be noted, on the evidence of the quotation from the *Katha Upaniṣad*, that it is not necessary to wait until Tantrism to find texts asserting that there is nothing which cannot be achieved by an adept through the sole means of a mantra, through the sole knowledge (that is to say, of course, through a gnosis, a comprehensive intuition) of an apparently meaningless [!] syllable, yet standing as a symbol of the divine.

It may be worth noting that this extolling of *om*, as containing the very essence of the Vedas, shows how in Indian thought, as early as Vedic times, the condensed, the concentrated, has always been given primacy over the extended, the diluted. There is nothing more powerful than *om*, for within this one syllable (which should always be uttered at the beginning of any Vedic text) is encapsulated the whole of the Veda. The monosyllabic, the indivisible (*akṣara*)--and later the dot or drop, *bindu*--being dimensionless and extensionless, is therefore beyond all extension, and thereby illimitable.

Upaniṣadic as well as Vedic speculations about *om* sometimes have one more feature which will appear afterwards in Hinduism and is elaborated upon extensively in Tantric texts: the breaking up of *om* into its constituent phonemes, to which are ascribed theological or cosmic meanings. *Om* is thus considered as breakable into its three morae (*mātrā*), or into its three phonemes (*a, u, m*), which are viewed as a replica (*pratidinidhī*) of the threefold Veda and of the three worlds as well. It may also be considered as made up of four elements (*a + u + m + om*)--- about this type of division into 3 + 1, cf. *infra* p. 21, n. 49), or of three and one-half elements.²² As the phoneme *a*, in such cases, stands at the head of the *praṇava*, the Āraṇyakas sometimes claim, on the strength thereof, that it is its essence. It may then appear as forming the totality of the Word,²³ a condition which we shall find again later (chap. 5) with extensive elaborations when dealing with the phonematic emanation.

²² Thus in two Atharvanic Upaniṣads, the *Atharvaśikhā* and the *Atharvaśiras*, to *a, u* and *m* is added an "elided *m*" (*luptamakāra*), correlated with the fourth Veda, the Puruṣa, *virāj*, and so forth.

One finds *om* split according to the *mātrā*, with its extolling, in one of the *Atharva Veda*'s latest Brahmanas, the *Gopatha*, which contains one Upaniṣad: the *Praṇava Upaniṣad*, devoted to *om* (*GoBr.* 1.1.16-20). In this Upaniṣad *brahman* creates the god Brahmā, to whom *om* is revealed as comprised of two letters, or four morae, through which he perceives the whole universe, because of the interrelation between those elements of *om* and the different parts of the cosmos, of the sacrifice, and so forth (Cf. Bloomfield, *The Atharva Veda*, p. 108).

²³ Thus *AitĀ.* 2.3.6: *akāro vai sarvā vāk saiṣā sparśoṣmabhir vyajamānā bhavī nānārūpā bhavati*: "Truly, the vowel *A* is the whole Word. The latter becomes manifold and varied when specified by the consonants and the fricatives."

For those early divisions of *om*, see Charles Malamoud, *Le Svādhyāya, récitation personnelle du Veda. Taittirīya Āraṇyaka. Livre II* (Paris: Institut de Civilisation Indienne, 1977, pp. 85-87), from which I take the above quotation.

This division of *om̐* is found neither in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* nor in the *Chāndogya*. The latter, however, after asserting the identity of *om̐* and the *udgītha*, correlates the three syllables of this word with the three Vedas, three divinities, the three worlds, and the three vital functions (ibid., 1.3.6-7).²⁴ And so do other Upaniṣads with regard to *om̐*. Thus *Praśna Upaniṣad* 5.1.5: "Verily, O Satyakāma, that which is the syllable *om̐* is both the lower and higher *brahman*... If he meditates on one element (namely *a*), having been instructed by that alone, he comes swiftly into the earth... Now if he is united in mind with two elements (*a + u*), he is led by the Yajus formulas to the intermediate world . . . He who meditates on the highest Person (Puruṣa) with the three elements of the syllable *om̐* is united with brilliance in the sun," and so forth. In the *Maitrī Upaniṣad* (6.3--6) the threefold division of *om̐* is compared with that of the *udgītha* and is correlated with the three genders; with fire, air, and sun; Brahmā, Rudra, and Viṣṇu; the three breaths, and so forth. In the *MāṇḍUp.*, *a*, *u*, and *m̐* are equated with the three states (*vaiśvānara*, *taijasa*, and *prājña*) through which passes the individual soul when moving from its ordinary condition to the fusion in its own essence, *brahman*. Here, therefore, it is no longer a question of vital breaths and cosmic divisions, but of levels of consciousness. Furthermore, the Upaniṣad states that *brahman* has four quarters (or *pāda*). Similarly there are four states of the soul or modalities of consciousness (the three previous ones and the "fourth" one, *caturtha* or *turīya*), and therefore *om̐* is also divided into four quarters by adding *om̐* itself to *a*, *u*, and *m̐*, as it is considered to be at the same time made up of its three constituents and transcending them.²⁵ But why do we have such a fourfold division of *om̐* (which indeed is not an actual division into four, since in fact there are only three distinct elements, which the fourth one encapsulates and transcends)? Precisely because of the fourfold division of *brahman*, established on the authority of an even older tradition. *ChUp.* 3.18.2 had already made the assertion that *brahman* has four quarters, the first of which is the Word, and correlated those four quarters with fire, air, sun, and the intermediate regions. Thus it accepted both a tripartition (1.3.6-7) and a quadripartition of the universe (and indeed other divisions also, notably a fivefold and a sixteen-fold).²⁶ Similarly, *BĀUp.* 5.14, indulging in the

²⁴ For the speculations, and the macro-microcosmic correspondences concerning the *udgītha*, cf. for instance *JaiUpBr.* 1.57ff. (Oertel, ed., *JAOS* 16, p. 135ff.).

²⁵ "Now this *ātman*, with regard to the syllable, is the *om̐kāra*; the elements are the fourths of *om̐*, with regard to the syllabic elements, and the fourths are the elements, namely the letter *a*, the letter *u*, and the letter *m̐*.

"*Vaiśvānara*, the waking state, is the letter *a*; it is the first mora, so called because it is primacy (*ādīmatvāt*) and attainment (*āpter*). He that knows it for such attains indeed all his desires and becomes first.

"The second instant, *taijasa*, the dream state, is the letter *u*, so called because of its exaltation (*utkarṣāt*) and ambivalence (*ubhayatvāt*). He that knows it for such exalts indeed the continuity of his knowledge; he becomes balanced . . .

"The third instant, *prājña*, the deep sleep state, is the letter *m̐*. It is so called because of its being erection and absorption.

"And the fourth state, without any constituents, with which there can be no dealing, bringing diversity to an end, possessed of the blissful nonduality, is the *om̐kāra*, the Self. He that knows it for such enters the Self" (*MāṇḍUp.* 8-12).

same sort of speculations about the *gāyatrī*--an eminent mantra that the *Yajur Veda* and the *Brāhmaṇas* had earlier described as *tejas*, or effulgence (*TaiS.* 6.4.7); as power (*KausBr.* 7.10); and as giving life to the other Vedic meters and taking them to the gods (*ŚBr.* 1.3.4.6), therefore in terms similar to those used elsewhere in relation to *vāc* or *akṣara*--this Upaniṣad also distinguishes in the *gāyatrī* four *pādas*, of which the first three correspond to the three worlds, the three Vedas, and the three "breaths," while the fourth one (*catūrtha*, also *turīya*) is resplendent, shines beyond the worlds, and is the support, the foundation of the *gāyatrī* itself and of the universe.²⁷

However, the fourfold partition of *brahman*, of the Word or the universe occurs even earlier than the Upaniṣad. The *Ṛg Veda* mentions on one occasion (4.40.6) the existence of a fourth *brahman* through which Atri was supposed to have discovered the hidden sun, and so it may be assumed that there are three further ones.²⁸ But the cosmic fourfold partition had yet a stronger support in the *Ṛg Veda's* hymn to the *Puruṣa* (10.90), according to which the primordial Giant divided into four: "All beings are a quarter of him: the Immortal, in heaven, the [remaining] three quarters" (although in this case what remains transcendent is three quarters of the *Puruṣa*, and not the fourth one). Moreover, this hymn lays down those correlations, which are so important in the history of Indian thought, between human beings, the cosmos, and the sacrifice. Last, but not least, was the famous stanza 45 of hymn 1.164: *catvāri vāk pārimitā padāni, . . .* "The Word is measured in four quarters which are known to those brahmans endowed with

The following passage in a much later Upaniṣad, the *Brahmabindu*, might be interpreted in a similar way: "Let him meditate in yoga with the help of the vowel; (next) let him contemplate the voiceless supreme; through silent contemplation one attains being and not non-being": *svareṇa sāmḍhayed yogam asvaram bhāvayet param asvareṇa hi bhāvena bhāvo nābhāva iṣyate*. It should be noted that here again one seems to shift (presumably with the help of the resonance, the *anusvāra*) from the word to the silence that lies beyond it.

²⁶ Such a practice--adding to an already accepted division of a whole one more division, which both encapsulates and transcends the former ones--occurs elsewhere too and seems to correspond to an inclination of Indian thought. This we shall see again in the course of this work, when dealing with the four stages of the Word and the energies of Śiva (3 + 1), with the *kalās* (15 + 1 or 16 + 1), with the four modalities of consciousness (4 + 1), and with the *tattvas* as well (36 + 1).

²⁷ *Pada* means foot as well as quarter or abode, and also (as in the case of the three steps--*pādas*--of Viṣṇu, which cover the whole universe: *RV* 1. 154.1) trace of the gods or of the Cow, and therefore of speech--hence "word." For this term, cf. L. Renou (*Etudes sur le vocabulaire du Ṛgveda*, lère série, pp. 21-22), who observes that only occasionally does *pada* actually mean "foot."

²⁸ While not intending to make a somewhat unsafe comparison, one may note that the *PT* (*śloka* 9) mentions a "third *brahman*" which is, according to Abhinavagupta (and Jayaratha, commentator of the *TĀ*), the universe as resting within the energy united with Śiva. So a fourth *brahman* could be accepted, which would be pure transcendence (as far, of course, as one can refer to transcendence in the case of a system such as the *Trika*. Cf. chap. 5, p. 235, n. 25.).

intelligence. Three remain concealed and motionless; human beings speak the fourth quarter of the Word," a stanza which was later to be discussed extensively and variously interpreted, and which was to be used, notably, to vindicate the theory of the four stages of the Word. Here again only one quarter is manifest. There was also stanza 10 of hymn 8.100, where from the speaking Word, the celestial Cow, springs forth a fourfold stream,²⁹ which is milk and food; and of which the poet asks where has gone the best part; a part that might be precisely the hidden and transcendent quarter of the Word. Those speculations about the interrelations between cosmos and Word continue elsewhere, as for instance in the *MaitrS.* (1.11.5) or in the *KāthS.* (14.5) of the *Yajur Veda*, where the four quarters of the Word are divided among heaven, the intermediate space, the earth and animals, and human beings and gods; or in the *JaiUpBr.* (1.40), where they are divided among mind, sight, hearing, and empirical speech, and where it is also stated that all that is on this side of *brahman* is Word, the rest being *brahman* itself (which means that everything does indeed stem from the Word, while nonetheless a part remains transcendental and beyond words).

One sees thus how firmly established, by Vedic times, is this fourfold partition of the Word and its ritualistic, human, and cosmic correspondences, and how abundant are speculations about the symbolic meaning of certain words or syllables and about their interrelations and the creative power of the Word.³⁰ The frequent recurrence of all those interconnections--which are indeed greatly diversified and by no means comprising a consistent system--is one of the usual features of the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads, those Upaniṣads whose very name seems to evoke the correlations that are at the root of their teaching. These correspondences are of special interest to us, for one of the characteristics of Tantrism lies precisely in the constant establishment of correspondences between humans, rites, and the cosmos, and in the cosmic as well as human aspect of energy. Now those correspondences, as may be seen, are not peculiar to Tantrism, but on the contrary very ancient: "For all deities are seated in humans as cows in a cow-stall. Therefore one who knows human beings thinks: 'this is *brahman*,' " said the *Atharva Veda* (11.8.32); the powers that give life to the cosmos are identical with those that make human beings alive. This cosmic and human energy will be symbolized in Tantrism especially by the *kuṇḍalinī*, which will appear as life-force, breath, and

²⁹ It is clear that any cow, whether European or Indian, contemporary or Vedic, has four udders as well as four legs or feet (*pada*). If the Word is a cow, it will have naturally four *padas* and the milk will necessarily flow in a fourfold stream.

³⁰ Such speculations are in no way limited to *om* and the *udgītha*. Some of them, as we have seen, deal with the *gāyatrī* and the three *vyāhṛti*. Also with other syllables of the liturgical chant, such as, for instance, the *stobhas*, *haiḥ*, *hai*, *atha*, and so forth in the *ChUp.* (1.13.13). Again in *PañcBr.* 20.143, with *a*, *ka*, *ha*, and *ibid.* 147, where Prajāpati creates various parts of the universe through the utterance of the sounds *a*, then *kṣa*, then *ra*--which makes *akṣara*, the primeval syllable.

For Vedic mantras and the shift from *stobha* to Tantric *bījamantra*, cf. Frits Staal, "Vedic Mantras" in H. P. Alper, ed., *Understanding Mantras* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988), pp. 48ff.

speech at the same time. The term used from the earliest times to denote the life-force stands also for the vital breath, *prāṇa*. It is also used to refer not only to a particular breath, but also to the five "breaths" taken as a whole, which are usually acknowledged (and mentioned as early as the *Atharva Veda*), and which obviously are not respiratory breaths but vital "winds" (*vāyu*). Furthermore, *prāṇa* is the breath of the cosmic Giant (*RV* 10.90.13) and therefore an aspect of the energy that animates the cosmos.³¹ Whether Vedic thought intended to explain the body with the help of the cosmos or the cosmos with the help of the body,³² the correspondence between microcosm and macrocosm is in any case undisputable. Undisputable as well is the association of breath and Word. As early as the *Ṛg Veda vāc* was compared with the wind: "I blow like the wind" (*RV* 10.125.8). In the *Atharva Veda* there is a hymn (11. 4) extolling the breath (*prāṇa*)--"who has been lord of all, in whom all stands firm." The hymn describes the wind which "with thunder roars at the herbs" as the human breath, and also as the *virāj*, this Vedic meter which, as we have seen, is a form of the Word and a creative energy.³³ The *ŚB* (1.3.5.15), observing that the sacrificer cannot recite the formulas without breathing, states that the reason for the sacrificer's breathing is that the *gāyatrī* itself is breath; the association of breath and speech is obviously, like the inseparability of breath and life, a fact of elementary observation, even though it is perhaps not from such observations that the correlations and mythic developments of Vedism originate.³⁴ The same is found in the Upaniṣads. In *BĀUp.* 1.3.19ff., "breath" is the essence of the limbs (*aṅgānām rasah*), "and also it is Bṛhaspati: The *bṛhatī* is speech. He is her lord and is therefore Bṛhaspati" (20). "It is also Brahmanaspati; *brahman* indeed is speech. He is her lord and is therefore Brahmanaspati" (21). It is also the *sāman* and the *udgītha*: "It was indeed with speech and breath that he sang the *udgītha*" (24). The *ChUp.* (1.1.5-6) also asserts: "The *ṛc* is speech; the *sāman* is breath; the *udgītha* is this syllable *om*. This verily is a pair, namely; speech and breath, and also the *ṛc* and the *sāman*. This pair is joined together in this syllable *om*." It is this union³⁵ of speech and breath that explains why *om* can fulfill all desires. Now, we shall see further on that in Tantrism any practice

³¹ In this connection one should refer to the works of J. Filliozat: *La doctrine classique de la médecine indienne* (2nd ed.; Paris, E.F.E.O., 1975); "Taoisme et Yoga," *J. As.* (1969): 41-87, and above all "La force organique et la force cosmique dans la philosophie médicale de l'Inde et dans le Véda," *Revue Philosophique* (1933).

³² For the former way, cf. Filliozat, op. cit.; for a consideration of both explanations, cf. P. Mus, *Barabudur*, especially pp. 440-447.

³³ As seen above (*supra*, p. 16), according to the *JaiUpBr.* (1.1), breath is the essence (*rasa*) of *om* (this could, however, also simply refer to the presence of the *anusvāra* in *om*).

³⁴ Hauer (*Der Yoga*, p. 26) ascribes the origin of yogic *prāṇāyāma* to breathing exercises, to which Vedic poets would have been submitted. Whatever the origin of the methods of breath control in yoga, some early considerations about breath and speech may indeed have come about due to the major role of breath in chanting.

³⁵ *Mithuna*: this is a sexual union. Similarly in *ŚBr.* 1.4.12: *vāc [!] ca vai prāṇāśca mithunam*. Later, the *bindu* in *OM* will be supposed to be a symbol of the union of Śiva and Śakti, and thereby will to some extent account for the potency, the fruitfulness of mantras (cf. chap. 3, p. 112).

designed to empower the mantra will consist in associating the sound-energy of the mantra with the human and cosmic energy of *prāṇa*, which is life force and, to some extent, breathing:³⁶ those are indeed very ancient notions.

As might be expected, the later Upaniṣads, so far as they touch upon this subject, are even more explicit. Thus the *Praśna Upaniṣad*, which is devoted to the five "breaths" and expounds upon their role within human beings and the cosmos, devotes a section (the fifth) to the meditation upon *om*. Although it does not explicitly link this meditation with the breaths, the fact that four sections are devoted to breath and one appended section is devoted to *om* may not be entirely fortuitous. Much more typical on those questions is the *Maitrī Upaniṣad*, and we would like to conclude therewith this short survey from ancient texts related to speech and breath. The *Maitrī* is held as the most recent among the earlier Upaniṣads. Some of its sections (those to which we shall now refer, the sixth and seventh *prapāthakas*) are probably much later than the other Vedic Upaniṣads and were presumably composed at a time when yoga was being systematized and perhaps even included some Tantric elements. It is precisely because some passages in the *Maitrī* seem to announce some of the speculations found in Tantras that it will be briefly examined here.

The sixth *prapāthaka* contains some considerations about *om* (6.3-5), the *vyāhṛtis* (6.6), and the *gāyatrī* (6.7), which we have already mentioned and which are not unexpected. On the other hand, sections 18 to 20 describe as means of union with *brahman* some processes--breath control (*prāṇāyāma*), withdrawal of the senses (*pratyāhāra*), meditation (*dhyāna, samādhi*), and so forth--which are yogic and form "a six-limbed yoga" (*ṣaḍaṅga ity ucyate yogaḥ*).³⁷ Moreover, section 21 tells us that the artery leading upwards, called *susumṇā*, conveys the breath and pierces through the palate, and that through this artery--by joining together the breath, the syllable *om*, and

³⁶ Cf. chap. 7, p. 399ff. Breath is also regarded, as early as Vedic times, as having a ritualistic significance, which will emerge again later. The *KauṣUp.* (2.5) describes the inner *agnihotra*, which consists of offering breath as an oblation in speech (when one is speaking) and speech in breath (when one falls silent, for "as long as a person is breathing, he is not able to speak; then he is sacrificing speech in breath"); that is to say that it considers both functions as ongoing oblations. In this, of course, the body is assimilated to the sacrificial altar, and the adept's life itself becomes a sacrifice.

This tendency appears earlier than the *Kauṣītaki*: for example, in *BĀUp.* 1.5.23, *ChUp.* 5.19-24, *Śbr.* 11.3.1, and so forth. Eventually the inner sacrifice will even come to be held as superior to the outer, because it is mental (*mānasa*), and mental action, being unexpressed (*avyakta*), belongs to a higher level than that of external action, which is manifest (*vyakta*). This is asserted especially in a later Upaniṣad devoted to the inner *agnihotra*, the *Prāṇāgnihotra Upaniṣad* (edited and translated by J. Varenne, together with the *Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad*, vol. 2, pp. 95ff.; cf. also *ibid.*, pp. 53ff. for the mental sacrifice). This will be stressed even moreso in Tantrism, where the interiorization of rites, ensuring and expressing the correspondences between human beings and the cosmos, is a prominent feature; cf. chap. 2, p. 38ff.

³⁷ For this yoga, cf. A-Z. Cerba, "The *ṣaḍaṅgayoga*," *History of Religions* (1963) 1.27ff.

manas--is released the upgoing "breath" (which of course is not a breathing process but a form of the vital energy); when this process comes to an end, the breath stands still, complete oneness with the unlimited is achieved. The description given by the Trika texts of the *uccāra* of the mantras³⁸ will go into further details but will not differ essentially from this. Similarly section 22 describes various sounds heard "within the heart," when the ears are closed with the thumbs:³⁹ this sound was already mentioned in the *ChUp.* and the *BĀUp.*, but here the enumeration is strongly reminiscent of the various types of *nādas* listed in the Tantras or the yogic Upaniṣads, such as the *Haṃsa Upaniṣad* (section 16), rather than of those of the two Vedic Upaniṣads.

The seven *prapāthakas*, finally, end with a section dealing with *om* and breath (section 11) which, not unexpectedly, is somewhat similar both to some speculations--which we just examined--found in Vedic Upaniṣads and to Tantric descriptions of the origin of the Word. According to this section the innermost or essential nature of the ether (*nabhas*) pervading the inner space of the heart (*kha*)⁴⁰ is the effulgence or supreme fiery energy (*param tejas*). The energy has a threefold manifestation: in fire, sun and breath (therefore it is clear that "breath"--*prāṇa*--is both luminous and vital, human and cosmic: it is an energy). The essential nature of this ether is the *akṣara om*, which enables this luminous energy to emerge from the heart, to appear and breathe (therefore the syllable *om* is that which brings forth the vital energy, and wherein, so it seems, vital energy and breath commingle).⁴¹

OM will afford us the opportunity to ascertain what has been said of the mantra as a means to gain access to the primordial Word, since it will take us along the whole path leading from the world of empirical utterance to the transcendental origin of the Word.⁴² With the *netra* mantra, we shall see a bodily and mental practice of tantric *mantrayoga*, whereas with *SAUḤ* and the *piṇḍanātha* we shall emphasize the metaphysical (linked, however, with a mental practice) aspect of these formulas.⁴³ I shall add that these

³⁸ For the *uccāra* of the *bījamantra SAUḤ*, cf. for instance chap. 7, p. 421.

³⁹ Cf. chap. 3, pp. 99-100, n. 41 and 119-122, n. 100.

⁴⁰ *Kha* means a hole, a cavity, a cave, the central hole in the hub of a wheel, and also void, hence space, sky. This is also the void at the center of the heart (*hṛd*) which is itself a secret place, a cave, as well as the abode of the supreme *brahman*, a place full of peace and light. Hence the equivalence between *kha* and *hṛdaya* (which occurs repeatedly in the Trika).

⁴¹ We leave page 28 here and go to page 109. We don't find much there relevant to our main theme. We have selected and extracted only those parts, portions, passages or pages of Padoux's work which directly relate to *Om*, as being guided by his index. However, the Index too is not fully reliable. There is a good deal of information on *OM* on page 28, but it is not mentioned in the Index.

⁴² We are resuming our selection process from p. 402 (top) of the book.

⁴³ It would have been interesting to see also the *śrīvidyā*, since it would have allowed us to look at an important Kula-related tradition, hardly touched upon in this book, though its doctrines and practices are of interest. But studying how this *vidyā* can be empowered would have been too long for this chapter. I gave a brief outline of the *japa* of the

particular mantras are given as mere examples. Admittedly they are characteristic: they reflect a number of common conceptions and usages. But they do not stand as an absolute norm, as practices and notions to be met with unchanged under all circumstances. Here as elsewhere in India an overall unity in principles is expressed through a great diversity of practices and rules.

OM

It is only natural to begin with the *prāṇava OM* not only because we have considered it already (*supra*, chap. 1, 3 and 6) but also and primarily owing to the prominent place this hallowed syllable has always occupied since Vedic times, and which it still retains in the Tantric texts studied in the present book. This lends to the metaphysico-linguistic speculations on *OM* a somewhat paradigmatic character. The division of its *uccāra*, for instance, is also found with other *bījamantras* (*HRĪM*, and so forth).

OM is often given as the original mantra (*mūlamantra*), the primordial seed (*ādibīja*),⁴⁴ as the mantra which more than any other symbolizes or embodies the supreme, transcendental, and attributeless (*niṣkala*) reality. Its being designated as *prāṇava* (from

śrīvidyā according to the *YH* in a study published in the first volume of the *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honor of R. A. Stein* (Brussels, 1981). There is a description of the so-called six *arthas* (that is, of interpretations and practices) of the *śrīvidyā* in the second *patala* of the *YH*: see my forthcoming translation of this text and its commentary by Amṛtānanda.

⁴⁴ According to the *LT* 52.20 (p. 219), it is because of their fusion with the fullness of the supreme "I-ness" (*pūrṇāhantasamāveśāt*) due to the presence of this primordial seed (*ādibījasamanvayāt*), that the totality of mantras (*mantragaṇaḥ*) becomes identified with Śrī, Viṣṇu's supreme energy.

The *prāṇava* is that which expresses the Lord, says the *YSū* 1.27: *tasya vācakaḥ prāṇavaḥ*. And, referring both to the cosmic level and to the philosophy of knowledge, verses 9 and 10 of Bhartṛhari's *VP* (*Brahmakāṇḍa*) read:

"True knowledge, that known as "perfection," to that a single word gives access; it is wholly contained in the *prāṇava*, which does not go against any opinion. From it [i.e. from the *prāṇava*, the creator of the worlds, proceed various sciences together with their main and secondary annexes, through which the knowledge of [Brahman] and of the rites is achieved."

satyā viśuddhis tatroktā vidyaivaikapadāgamagā [!] / [There are some errors in transcription and transliteration. There are no proper diacritical marks. Yet we hesitate to correct. That is not our main function.]

yuktā prāṇavarūpeṇa sarvavādāvirodhinī //

*vīdhātus tasya lokānām aṅgopāṅganibandhanāḥ /
vidyābhedāḥ pratāyante jñānasamskārahetavaḥ //*

praṇu, to sound, to reverberate, to make a humming sound, derived from the root *NU*, to praise or command, but also to sound or shout) is explained by Kṣemarāja in the *Uddyota* of the *SvT*: *prakarṣeṇa nuyate [!] param tattvam*, "that by which is eminently praised or expressed the supreme reality." "The *praṇava*," the *NT* says, "is the vital breath of animate beings present in all living creatures;"⁴⁵ and the *SvT*: "All that which, consisting of speech, [is extant] in this world, comes to be [only because it abides] in Śiva's knowledge [that is, his consciousness], and such knowledge abides therein [i.e., in the *praṇava*]."⁴⁶ We have seen above (p. 347) that the *ṣaḍadhvan*, according to the *SvT*, may be looked at as consisting of eleven subdivisions of *OM*. Similarly we shall see later (p. 410), according to the same text, the whole universe correlated with its fivefold division.

The mantra *OM* appears thus as a symbol of the supreme reality and as expressing (or corresponding to) the totality of the cosmos. Its meditative utterance, with its attendant practices of mental creation, is therefore for the adept a means to become identified with the stages of the process of cosmic resorption; thereby it is a way and a means to gain access to that reality, wherein the cosmos abides--an especially eminent means, since *OM* is primarily the supreme reality, Brahman, or for our texts, the transcendental supreme Śiva.⁴⁷

The yogic meditative utterance (*uccāra*) of *OM* is described in several chapters of the *SvT* and in chapter 22 of the *NT*, both of them commented upon by Kṣemarāja.⁴⁸ While largely in agreement, these two descriptions differ on particular points (with variants even from chapter to chapter in the *SvT*; this can be explained by the fact that the *uccāra* of the mantra is regarded in those texts as an element in rites (above all, of various *dikṣās*) which differ from each other. Abhinava, I believe, does not describe it. The same *uccāra* of *OM* is found in the Āgamas also and in the ritual handbooks of dualistic Śaivism, for instance in the *SP*.⁴⁹ In all these cases, where (except for *NT*, 22) the ritual

⁴⁵ *NT* 22.14: *praṇavaḥ praṇināṃ prāṇo jīvanam sampratiṣṭhitam/* (vol. 2, p.309). Kṣemarāja's commentary on this passage (ibid., pp. 310-12) elaborates on the Tantra's assertions, attributing to *om* all the characteristic features of the primordial energy of the Word, the source and basis of all that is in existence. "The *praṇava*," it says, "is that energy which gives life to creatures; it is the universal vivifying power; it is the generic *spanda*, the synthetic awareness, the 'unstruck' sound; it is none other than the initial move *abhyupagama*) [toward manifestation], the cause of all knowledge, action and objectivity," and so forth.

⁴⁶ *yat kṃcid vāṇmayam loke śivajñāne pratiṣṭhitam / śivajñānam ca tatrastham...* (vol. 3, p. 107).

⁴⁷ In the texts of the Śrīvidyā, the *bija* of the Goddess, *HRĪM*, plays a similar part, with the same divisions into *kalā* from *bindu* to *unmanā* Cf. A. Padoux, "Un *japa* tantrique," quoted above, n. 62.

⁴⁸ Kṣemarāja quotes *SvT*, 7 and alludes to the *uccāra* and to the phonic stage of *unmanā* in his *Vimarśinī ad ŚS* 3.5 (pp. 80-83).

⁴⁹ Cf. *SP*3, pp. 380ff., where the *uccāra* is that of *HAUṂ* (or of *H/HA + OM*). Aghoraśivācārya's commentary on this passage refers to *SvT*, 4. On this point see charts

described is usually that of *dīkṣā* (where the initiate must rise through the various levels of the universe, back to their divine origin), the human and cosmic aspects of this process cannot be separated: the stage of the phonic energy described as lying in tiers in the adept's body and which he experiences, are also cosmic planes. The movement leading back to the highest plane, the "transmental" (*unmanā*), is both human and cosmic. We have seen this phonic evolution in chapter 3, as following the movement of emanation, and then the movement of resorption in chapter 6: it is the same anthropocosmic return to the origin of the Word that is again found here.

So the adept must first utter the three, theoretically⁵⁰ constituent, phonemes of *OM*: *A*, *U*, and *MA*, all three supported and "pervaded" (*VYĀP*) by the energy of the ascendant breath, *haṃsa* (typified by the phoneme *ha anacka* ?),⁵¹ an energy which flows, with *A*, from the heart *cakra* (*hṛd*--where the *kāraṇadevatā* is *Brahmā*), rises to the throat *cakra* (*kantha*--*Viṣṇu*) with *U*, and reaches the palate *cakra* (*tālu*--*Rudra*) with *MA*.⁵² Next comes *bindu*, the nasal sound following the phoneme *MA*. As it continues and becomes more subtle, the *bindu* moves further upward through the two stages of *ardhacandra* and *nirodhinī*.⁵³ With *bindu*, the utterance is conceived of as located in the *ājñācakra*, between the eyebrows (*bhrūmadhya*); it corresponds to *Īśvara*. For the *NT* these stages from *A* to *bindu* make up the "gross" portion of the *uccāra*, as is underscored by the fact that these utterances are correlated with the "gross" elements, from earth to water. *Ardhacandra* and *nirodhinī*, located at the forehead level (*lalāta*), are not uttered in a *cakra* and do not correspond to any *kāraṇadevatā*, perhaps because they are held merely as moments of the phonic vibration as it proceeds from *bindu* to *nāda*. The latter, also situated at the forehead level, corresponds with *Sadāśiva*.⁵⁴ It ends with *nādānta*, the "end of the *nāda*," which arises when the ascending thrust of the *uccāra* is entirely absorbed in the energy: this is the stage of *śakti*. The yogin, as it seems, here reaches the cosmic level of the *śakti tattva*, located between those of *Sadāśiva* and of *Śiva*. As *śakti* cannot, however, be separated from *Śiva*, the stage reached by the adept from *śakti* onward is that of *Śiva*. The moments of the utterance are then: (1) *śakti*, which is, as it were, the very phonic energy, the actual energy aspect of the Word;⁵⁵ (2) *vyāpinī*; the same energy as all-pervading, is that level of the Word immanent to the universe which generates all of its aspects; it is also called "great void," *mahāśūnya*; (3) in *samanā*, thereafter, the energy is also void (*śūnya*), though not indifferent to the manifestation,

12-14 of *SP3*, which give, together with the location of the subtle body's centers, the chart of the *uccāra* of *OM*, according to three different texts, including the *SvT*.

⁵⁰ In theory, since *OM* is always pronounced as *om*.

⁵¹ *hakāraḥ prāṇaśaktyātmā: SvT* 4.263 (vol. 2, p. 167).

⁵² *SvT* 4.263-64 (ibid.).

⁵³ It is not necessary to repeat here what we said above, in chapter 3, on the symbolic values attached to these three stages of *uccāra*.

⁵⁴ According to chart 12 of the *SP3*, *ardhacandra* and *nirodhinī*, located, like *nāda*, at the forehead level, correspond also to *Sadāśiva*.

⁵⁵ *NT* 22.22 (vol. 2, p. 313) calls it *kuṇḍalinī*, thus underlining the link between the *uccāra* and the arousal of the *kuṇḍalinī*.

whose substratum it somehow constitutes (*sarvabhāvābhāvabhāsabhittikalpam*). However high the stage reached by the yogin, he is still regarded as not freed from the "endless net of bondage" (*pāśajālam anantakam*) wherein he is naturally caught.⁵⁶ Total liberation will occur only when, having relinquished all thought of bondage and perceiving his own essence, he becomes one with (or permeated by) the Self (*ātmavyāpti*).⁵⁷ Then he moves up to the ultimate stage of the undivided Self (*niṣkalam ātmatattvam*, according to *NT* 22.22), that of the "transmental" phonic energy, *unmanā*. This is the stage of absolute consciousness, of complete pervasion by and inherence in Śiva (*Śivavyāpti*): the transcendental void (*śūnyātiśūnya*), beyond all appearing: *nirābhāsaṃ paraṃ tattvaṃ anuttamam*, as the *NT* puts it. The ascending movement of the *uccāra* stops here, since the phonic energy of the mantra now dissolves in its transcendental, changeless source, beyond time and all possible utterance. As for the yogin, "attaining this *unmanā* energy, the pure light inseparable from the cosmic totality [in Kṣemarāja's words], he becomes completely fused with the supreme Bhairava, the undivided mass of consciousness and bliss"⁵⁸

It should be noted that the *SvT* (4.344-55, vol. 2, pp. 220ff.) gives the durations of the utterance, in moras (*mātrā*), of the different stages of the *uccāra*. They range from one mora for *A* to 1/64 of a mora for *vyāpinī*. Such instantaneous flashes of time cannot possibly correspond to actual utterances. They are indeed regarded as beyond the level of empirically pronounceable speech. Their briefness is probably meant to suggest the *uccāra*'s growing degrees of subtleness.⁵⁹ This unreal aspect of the *uccāra* appears also in the way it is located in the body of the adept. It is deemed to extend there from the heart *cakra* to the *brahmarandhra*, and then beyond, up to the *dvādaśānta*. The *SvT* (4.342-48) mentions the number of finger's breadths (*aṅgula*) between these centers, the whole span of which measures the bodily extension of this utterance. Now, while these particulars emphasize the corporeal aspect of this yogic operation, here again the dimensions given are inconsistent with human anatomy: the human body in this case is not the physical, concrete, body of the adept, but an imaginal or phantasmal one.

That this *uccāra* takes place in the body is due to its being in the nature of Kuṇḍalinīyoga, that is, of an operation at once corporeal and phonic (since one follows the fading out of a phonic--at least in theory--utterance), mental, spiritual as well as metaphysical, since the stages of the *uccāra* carry the adept from the level of empirical speech and of thought-constructs to the supreme stage of the transcendent Śiva. To each

⁵⁶ *SvT* 4.432 (vol. 2, p. 271). *NT* 22.48 includes the half-stanza: *samanāntaṃ varārohe pāśajālam anantakam*, and Kṣemarāja, in his commentary (ibid., p. 328), notes that the *kāraṇadevatās*, from Brahmā to Śiva reach up to *samanā*.

⁵⁷ *pāśāvalokanaṃ tyaktvā svarūpālokanaṃ hi yat/ ātmavyāptir bhaved eṣa* (*SvT*, 4.434, p. 272).

⁵⁸ *yugapad aśeṣaviśvābheda prakāśātmonmanāsaktyāśrayena śivaṃ vrajec chivānandaghana parabhairavasamāpattiṃ śrayet* (*SvT* 4.261, comm., vol. 1, p. 166).

⁵⁹ The same is found in the *YH* 1.29-34, where the *uccāra* of the *kalās* of *HRĪM* ranges from half a mora for *bindu* (as here) to 1/256 of a mora for *samanā* (*unmanā* "having no definite form cannot be uttered"), which makes it even more unfit for actual utterance.

of these stages, always correlated with a particular spot in the subtle body, correspond also deities, elements, and cosmic divisions. The human being in all its aspects, the universe, and the Godhead, all are involved: we have already encountered this "cosmotheandricism," though not expounded in such a thorough and striking way as here. The following chart brings together the elements of this *uccāra* according to the *SvT*:

UCCĀRA OF OM

| | <i>devatā</i> | <i>tattva</i> | <i>cakra</i> , areas in the body | <i>aṅgula</i> | duration (morae) |
|--------------------------|---------------|--|--|---------------|---------------------|
| <i>unmanā</i> | Paramaśiva | | <i>dvādaśānta</i> | | no duration |
| <i>samanā</i> | Śiva | <i>śiva</i> | | | ? |
| <i>vyāpinī</i> | / Śakti | | <i>śikhā</i> | 12? | 1/64 |
| <i>śakti</i> | Śakti | <i>śakti</i> | <i>brahmarandhra</i> | 1 | 1/32 |
| <i>nādānta</i> | | | | | ? |
| <i>nāda</i> | Sadāśiva | <i>sadāśiva</i> | from the fore- head to the top of the head | 11 | 1/16 |
| <i>nirodhinī</i> | | | | | 1/8 |
| <i>ardhacandra</i> | | | forehead region | | 1/4 |
| <i>bindu</i> | Īśvara | <i>īśvara</i> <i>śuddhavidyā (ājñā)</i> | eyebrows | 2 | 1/2 |
| <i>MA</i> | Rudra | <i>māyā</i> | palate | 4 | 3 |
| <i>U</i> | Viṣṇu | 6 <i>tattva</i> (<i>puruṣa</i> to <i>kalā</i>) | throat | 8 | 2 |
| <i>A</i> (<i>H</i>) | Brahmā | 24 <i>tattva</i> (earth to <i>prakṛti</i>) | heart | 4 | 1 |

All of these correspondences are scattered through several portions of the *SvT*, which, depending upon the particular aspect of *dīkṣā* dealt with, underlines some specific point. They are given more systematically in *NT*, chapter 22. This text, dealing with the symbolism of the *netra* mantra, or *mṛtyujit*, *OM-JUM-SAH*, discusses (śl. 14-18, and 25-50) the *uccāra* of *OM*, and describes it as containing within itself the whole universe. Kṣemarāja's commentary gives further details, but no full clarification.

"The *praṇava*," says Kṣemarāja in an initial and interesting elaboration (*NT*, vol. 2, pp. 310-12), "is the vivifying breath of all living creatures" (cf. above, p. 403, n. 64). It is the primary universal vibration (*sāmānyaspanda*), which is an act of consciousness arising at the level of nonmanifest (*anāhata*) sound, and the first move toward that whence everything originates. Thus it is the animating background of the cosmos. Here we again meet the ancient notions (cf. *supra*, chapter 1, p. 14) equating *OM* with *brahman*. Dwelling in all beings, it animates their vital breath (*prāṇa*), wherein it divides up into its constituent parts. Originally abiding at the level of the supreme Word (*parāvāc*), it is both the origin of the cosmos and that which draws it together and takes it back to its source through the successive stages of the *ṣaḍadhvan*:⁶⁰ this is the twofold--creative and resorbing--movement of the Word, a recurrent theme throughout this study.

In śl. 19 through 50 of chapter 22, the *NT* enumerates the sequence of the six *adhvans*, next that of the *kāraṇadevatās*, and then gives the eleven stages of the *uccāra*, from *A* to *samanā*, which, still caught up in the chains of limitation (*pāśajāla*), belong to the universe that has to be transcended (śl. 21-22, and comm., pp. 313-14). Then one comes to the level of the Self (*ātmatattva*), which is *niṣkala* and pure energy, and which further extends to Śiva as associated with the appearing of the world (*sābhāsa*)--this is perhaps the level of Sadāśiva. There is still one more stage beyond that: the supreme reality beyond all appearing (*nirābhāsaṃ paraṃ tattvam* śl. 23). This ultimate transcendental stage seems to be that which is designated as "the seventh" (*saptamam*), thereby lying beyond the six *kāraṇadevatās*. It arises when these stages are transcended, at the level where they are reabsorbed and rest in their primal unsurpassable receptacle: *ṣattiyāgāt saptamam proktaṃ layam ālayam anuttamam* [!] (śl. 23, p. 315).

Reviewing (śl. 25-50) these twelve moments of the *uccāra*, from *A* to *unmanā*, the *NT* gives the distribution of the sixty-five *kalās*, those limiting energies or "parts" of the universe, between the *kalās*⁶¹ of *OM*, from *A* to *samanā* (situated on the level of energy, *śakti*). Beyond that, with *unmanā* is the plane of Śiva who, in his plenitude, is however regarded as threefold: the pure *ātman*, inseparable from the energy, pure consciousness

⁶⁰ We have seen above, chapter 6, p. 347, that the *mantrādhvan* may consist of the eleven *kalās* of the *uccāra* of *OM* from *A* to *samanā*.

⁶¹ The *kalās*, in this case, are the divisions of the phonic energy of the mantra *OM*, not the cosmic divisions or portions of Śiva.

(*cinmātra*), transparent and spotless (*śl.* 51-52); the transcendental energy united with Śiva, *unmanā* (*śl.* 52); and finally Śiva himself, *nirābhāsa*, that is, utterly transcendent.

This system is lacking in clarity and coherence. The correspondences between the stages of the *uccāra* of *OM* and the divisions of the cosmos, while enumerated in details, do not form a well structured scheme. *Śl.* 25 through 47 give, for instance, the distribution of the sixty-eight *kalās* between the stages of the *uccāra*, which are also correlated with the six *kāraṇadevatās* and with Śiva's aspects and functions. These *ślokas* also ventilate the stages of *OM* in the adept's body. But they do not say clearly how are distributed, in the subtle body, the four *kalās*, *A*, *U*, *MA*, and *bindu* (to which is added *nāda*), and the rest of the *kalās* (*ardhacandra* and *nirodhiṇī* on the one hand, those of *nādānta* to *samanā* on the other). Admittedly, the general pattern of the system as well as its role in the soteriological function of *OM* are clear, but there is no coherence in details.⁶² We see here what we have seen previously with the *ṣaḍadhvan*: classifications that are correlated but not entirely consistent, this being probably due, in both cases, to an (inadequate) bringing together of earlier systems.⁶³



⁶² There is a discussion of this distribution (and its inconsistencies), with a chart of the correspondences between *uccāra*, gods, elements, and so forth, in H. Brunner's study on the *NT*, p. 193.

⁶³ The sixth *patala* of the *SvT*, entitled *Pañcapraṇavādhikāra*, considers a fivefold *japa* of *OM*. This *japa*, also associated with *haṃsa*, is made up of various divisions into five, leading to a sixth, transcendental, stage. The system is quite close to that examined here. They coincide to a large extent. It is therefore not necessary to discuss it here.

For the *pañcapraṇava*, cf. *TĀ* 8.328 and *SvT* 10.1133, where it appears as five Rudras. Cf. also *YH-Dī*, p. 80. In the *Kubjikāmata*, the term indicates five *bījas*: *AIṀ*, *ŚRĪṀ*, *HRĪṀ*, *PHREṀ*, and *KṢAUM*.

There is a very characteristic, very complex, example of Kuṇḍalinīyoga associated with the *uccāra* of a mantra in the *japa* prescribed in the third *patala* of the *YH*: cf. above, p. 402, n. 62.

R D RANADE⁶⁴

Honors OM

7. Meditation by means of Om, the way to Realisation

The actual means of meditation which a Spiritual Teacher imparts to his disciples is described unanimously in the Upanishads as being the symbol Om. It is also to be noticed that Om is described as not merely the supreme means of meditation, but the goal to be reached by the meditation itself. The Om occupies in Indian philosophy the same position which the Logos occupies in Christology. The Upanishads repeat from time to time the efficacy of meditation by means of the supreme symbol. "The word which the Vedas declare and which is the subject of all austerities, desiring which men lead the life of religious studentship, that word, I tell thee, is briefly Om; that word is the Supreme Brahman; that word is the Supreme Symbol; that word is the Supreme Support." (ref S. 8. a). In these terms does the Kathopanishad identify the means of meditation with the goal to be reached by it; the symbol in short stands for both the means and the end of spiritual life. The Chāndogya Upanishad declares that all speech is interwoven on this symbol Om, in the same manner as the leaves of a tree are woven together on a stalk. (S. 8. b). The Muṇḍakopaniṣad tells us by the help of a very happy simile that "we should take into our hand the bow of the Upanishads, and put upon it the arrow of the soul, sharpened by devotion. We should next stretch it with concentrated attention, and penetrate the mark which is the Supreme Brahman. The mystic symbol is the bow; the arrow is the soul; and Brahman is the mark to be pierced. We should penetrate it ?? undistracted attention, so that the arrow may become one with the mark" (S. 9). We are told here how devotion is necessary for the whetting of the point of the arrow, how concentrated attention and undistracted effort are necessary for making the arrow of the Soul pierce the target of Brahman, how, finally, the arrow has to become absorbed in the target that it ceases to exist as a separate entity. If unitive life is to be expressed by any metaphor--and all verbal expressions, it must be remembered, fall short of the experience of reality, --the metaphor of the arrow and the target invented by the Muṇḍakopaniṣad must be considered a very happy one, as most fittingly characterising the communion of the lower and the higher selves so as to involve the utter destruction of the separate individuality of the lower self. Further, the Om has not merely an individual, but a cosmic efficacy as well. It not merely serves to help the meditation of individual person, but the Sun himself, we are told, travels the universe singing the symbol Om (S. 10). Finally the moral efficacy of meditation by means of Om is brought out in the Praśnopaniṣad where Satyakāma inquires of the teacher as to what happens to a man by his continuing to meditate by means of that symbol till the hour of

⁶⁴ *Constructive survey of Upanishadic philosophy*, by R. D. Ranade. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968. pp. 244f.

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his death, and the answer is given that "just as a snake is relieved of its slough, similarly is the man who meditates on Om relieved of his sins, and , by the power of his chants, is lifted to the highest world where he beholds the Person who informs the ??? ***** body, and who stands supreme above any living complex whatsoever" (S. 11).

8. The Māṇḍūkya exaltation of Om

The Māṇḍūkya Upanishad supplies us with a unique exaltation of Om and its spiritual significance. We are told there that Om consists not merely of the three morae A U M which it might easily be seen to contain, but that it also contains a fourth mora-less part. The reason for this four-fold division of Om lies manifestly in the author's intention of bringing into correspondence with the parts of Om the states of consciousness on the one hand, and the kinds of soul on the other. The Om is supposed to represent in miniature the various states of consciousness, as well as the various kinds of soul. Thus, on the one hand, it stands for the state of wakefulness, the state of dream, and the state of deep-sleep, as well as the supreme self-conscious state which is called the Turīya. On the other hand, it stands for the different kinds of soul, namely the Vaiśvānara, the Taijasa, the Prāñña, as well as the fourth, namely the Ātman. The mora-less part of Om has correspondence with the fourth dimension of psychology, namely the Turīya as well as with the fourth dimension of metaphysics, namely the Ātman. The Vaiśvānara is the enjoyer of gross things, as the Taijasa is the enjoyer of the subtle. The Prāñña is described as the equivalent of what philosophy calls God, "the Lord of all, the all-knowing, the inner controller of all, the origin and end of all beings." Contrasted with these stands the Ātman, which is the Māṇḍūkya equivalent of what philosophy calls the Absolute. It is described as "neither inwardly nor outwardly cognitive, nor yet on both sides together. It is not a cognitive-mass, and is neither knower nor not-knower. It is invisible, impracticable, incomprehensible, indescribable, unthinkable and unpointable. Its essence is the knowledge of its own self. It negates the whole expanse of the universe, and is tranquil and blissful and without a second" (S. 12). The spiritual significance of the psycho-metaphysical correspondence of the parts of Om lies in the great help that is supposed to be given by meditation on it in initiating the Ātman in the Turīya state of consciousness after a negation of the other kinds of Soul in the other states of consciousness. Nowhere else as in the Māṇḍūkya Upanishad do we find such an exaltation of Om, and the great value for spiritual life of meditation by means of that symbol.

9. Practice of Yoga

The aim of the Upanishads is a practical one, and we find scattered throughout the Upanishads certain hints for the practical realisation of the Godhead by means of Yoga. In the Śvetāśvaropaniṣad we are told that our body should be regarded as the lower stick and meditation on Praṇava as the upper one, and that by rubbing together these two sticks, we have to churn out of the fire of God that is hidden in us (S. 13. a). The reference to the body and the Praṇava as the lower and the upper sticks in the process of spiritual churning which we meet with in this passage of the

Śvetāśvataropaniṣad is a remarkable one as it enables us to interpret correctly another passage from the Kaṭhopanishad, where a reference to the sticks is to be met with again, and where we are told that just as the earthly fire is ensconced within the two churning sticks like a faetus in the womb of a pregnant woman, and just as this fire is to be worshipped with offerings day after day by people who keep awake for that purpose, similarly in between the two sticks in the practice of Yoga, --namely, as we can *now* interpret the expression by reference to the Śvetāśvatara, the body and the Praṇava,--between these sticks is ensconced the spiritual fire, which we have to worship day after day by keeping ourselves awake, and giving it the offerings of the psychological tendencies in us (S. 13. b). This passage in the Kaṭhopanishad can also be interpreted in another way, as we find a little later on in the same Upanishad that the two sticks in the process of Yoga may also be regarded as the upper breath and the lower breath, the Prāṇa and Apāna, and that in between the two is seated the beautiful God whom all our senses worship (S. 14. a). Instead of regarding the two Araṇis as the body and the Praṇava as in the Śvetāśvataropaniṣad, we might as well take them to mean the upper and the lower breaths, in between which is seated the beautiful Ātman; and a reference from the Muṇḍakopaniṣad is also not wanting, where we are told that the mind for its purification is dependent upon the Prāṇas, and that it is only when the mind is purified after an initial control of the Prāṇas that the Ātman reveals himself. (S. 14. b).



Svami Satprakashananda

Says OM⁶⁵

Om, most comprehensive verbal symbol

[Note: Since our present work is an anthology, a compilation, a collection of selected writings, it contains extracts from the published works of those sections, parts, or even paragraphs that pertain to our OM. A short relevant quotation may encourage the reader to go to the original and get fully detailed information, backward and foreword. Following this basic principle, we quote Svami Satprakashananda from his book--*The Universe, God, and God-realization from the Viewpoint of Vedanta* (The Vedanta Society of St. Louis, 1977), 139 ff..

The monosyllabic word *Om* as the symbol of *Vāk*.

Being the matrix of all names and forms *para vāk* (lit. superword, the word of words) is the potent seed of the manifold. As the immediate source of the creation it is called *Nāda-Brahman* or *Śabda-Brahman*, that is Sound-Brahman, indicative of its first movement or vibratory motion towards the manifestation of the universe. Its most appropriate verbal symbol as such is the mystic word *Om*. As explained by Swami Vivekananda:

All this expressed sensible universe is the form, behind which stands the eternal inexpressible *Sphoṭa*, the manifest as *Logos* or *Word*. This eternal *Sphoṭa*, the essential eternal material of all ideas or names, is the power through which the Lord creates the universe; nay, the Lord first becomes conditioned as the *Sphoṭa*, and then evolves Himself out as the yet more concrete sensible universe. This *Sphoṭa* has one word as its only possible symbol, and this is the *Om*. And as by no possible means of analysis can we separate the word from the idea, this *Om* and the eternal *Sphoṭa* are inseparable; and, therefore, it is out of this holiest of all holy words, the mother of all names and forms, the eternal *Om*, that the whole universe may be supposed to have been created.

23 Extracts from : *The Universe, God, and God-realization* by Swami Satprakashananda (Section: The Creation from the word), p. 141.]

But it may be said that, although thought and word are inseparable, yet as there may be various word-symbols for the same thought, it is not necessary that this particular word Om should be the word representative of the thought, out of which the universe has become manifested. To this objection we reply that this Om is the only possible symbol which covers the whole ground, and there is none other like it. The Sphoṭa is the material of all the words, yet it is not any definite word in its fully formed state. That is to say, if all the peculiarities which distinguish one word from another be removed, then what remains will be the Sphoṭa; therefore this Sphoṭa is called the Nāda-Brahman, the Sound-Brahman.

Now, as every word-symbol, intended to express the inexpressible Sphoṭa, will so particularize it that it will no longer be the Sphoṭa, that symbol which particularizes it the least and at the same time most approximately expresses its nature, will be the truest symbol thereof; and this is the Om, and the Om only; because the three letters A.U.M., pronounced in combination as Om, may well be the generalized symbol of all possible sounds....If properly pronounced, this Om will represent the whole phenomenon of sound-production, and no other word can do this; and this, therefore, is the fittest symbol of the Sphoṭa, which is the real meaning of the Om. And as the symbol can never be separated from the thing signified, the Om and the Sphoṭa are one.⁶⁶

It may be mentioned here that the significance of the verbal symbol *Om* is not restricted to Nāda Brahman or Śabda Brahman. It has a still wider and deeper import: being intermediary between the Supreme Being and His manifestation. Om represents Him in all His aspects. It signifies Saguṇa Brahman associated with every phase of existence, the causal, the subtle, and the gross, and also points to Nirguṇa Brahman beyond the distinction. The very sound O-m ---prolonged and tapering like the peal of a distant bell--represents a movement from the grossest to the subtlest, from the finite to the Infinite, the all--pervading Self beyond all limitations. Consequently, this is the most comprehensive of all the verbal symbols. It signifies supreme Consciousness that is all-embracing. As such Om is the embodiment of spiritual consciousness in concentrated form and is regarded as its potent seed. It develops mystical awareness of the inmost Self through repeated utterance with devout contemplation on its meaning.

It is to be noted that as a symbol of thought or idea every word is a form of inner consciousness and has the power to evoke the same. In Yoga as well as Vedanta Om is commended as the most potent and purifying name of God. (For detailed account of the symbol Om see the author's book *Methods of knowledge*, Chap. 12, particularly secs 9, 10).

"Knower of Brahman attains the Highest"

⁶⁶ *Bhakti-yoga*, CW III, pp. 57-58.

In the practice of 'nididhyāsana' preceded by śravaṇa and manana, the mind is invariably directed to Nirguṇa Brahman and no symbol of any kind is used.⁶⁷ But meditation, as denoted by dhyāna or upāsana, is generally practised on Saguṇa Brahman, and rarely on Nirguṇa Brahman, and in either case some symbol of the object of meditation is used to hold the mind. As is well known, it is less difficult to concentrate the mind on a concrete object than on an abstract entity. The second grade seekers of Liberation, 'madhyama adhikāris (the mediocres)' as they are called, are instructed to practice meditation on Nirguṇa Brahman with the help of the verbal symbol Om (aum) to support the mind. The Upanishads have prescribed other symbols also for the meditation on Brahman such as the mind, the sky, the sun⁶⁸ and the words like 'tat', 'sat'. Yet from the earliest times the syllable Om, which is called 'praṇava', has been regarded by the Vedic seers as the greatest verbal symbol of both Saguṇa and Nirguṇa Brahman. As observed by Śankara:

Although such words as Brahman, Ātman, and the like signify Brahman, yet on the authority of the Śruti, Om stands as the nearest designation of Brahman. Therefore, it the supreme means to the realization of Brahman.; and it is so in two ways: (1) as an image [visual symbol] and (2) as a name [audible symbol]. As an image: just as the image of Viṣṇu or any other deity is regarded as identical with deity, so is Om to be regarded as Brahman.⁶⁹

9. The significance and efficacy of the symbol Om (aum)

The Vedantic texts resound with the eulogy of praṇava. As declared by the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*:

"The goal which all the Vedas proclaim, which all austerities aim at, seeking which men live the life of continence, I [the king of death] will tell you that briefly. It is OM.

This syllable [Om] is indeed [conditioned] Brahman. This syllable is the Supreme [Unconditioned Brahman]. By knowing this one attains all that one desires.⁷⁰

This is the best support [means of attaining Saguṇa Brahman]. This is the highest support [means of attaining Nirguṇa Brahman]. By knowing this support one is adored in the world of Brahma [as the knower of Brahman].⁷¹

⁶⁷ *Methods of knowledge* by Swami Satprakashananda. (London: pp. 291 ff.)

⁶⁸ Ch, U. III, 18.1; 19.1.

⁶⁹ Br. U. V:1.1, com.; Cf. Pr. U. V. 2, com.

⁷⁰ Yo yad icchati tasya tat.

⁷¹ Kaṭha U. I. 2. 15-17.

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The *Praśna Upaniṣad* recommends Om for meditation on Nirguṇa and Saguṇa Brahman:

The sage Pippalāda was asked: "O venerable sir, if someone among men should devoutly meditate in the syllable Om until death, which world verily would he win thereby?"

He replied: "Satyakaāma, this syllable Om is the Unconditioned Brahman and also the Conditioned Brahman. Therefore, he who knows it attains by this very means either of the two".⁷²

The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* thus points to the all-comprehensiveness of Om:

"The syllable Om is all this [the whole universe]. A clear explanation of this follows. All that is past, present, or future is, indeed, Om. And what else exists beyond the three divisions of time is also verily Om (I.).

The Chāndogya Upaniṣad refers to Om as the matrix of all articulate sounds and as symbolic of the whole existence covered by human speech.

Just as every leaf is held together by its mid-rib, so is all speech held together by Om. Verily Om is all this. Verily, Om is all this.

The syllable Om constituted of the three letters--a (pronounced as in 'all'), u (pronounced as in 'put'), and m (pronounced as 'ma' in (maul)--each with a meaning, is the most comprehensive of all verbal symbols. Specifically, it signifies the English word, Sanskrit *Vāk*, Greek *Logos*, from which the whole cosmic order started. But its connotation is far beyond this. As declared by the Vedas:

'Verily, in the beginning Prajāpati [the creator, lit. the Lord of creatures] alone existed here (Prajāpatir vai idam agra āsīt eka eva)⁷³

Prajāpati alone was this universe. He had vāk, too, as his own, as a second to him (Prajāpatir vai idam eka āsīt. Tasya vāg eva svam āsīt vāg dvitiya).⁷⁴

Vāk is Brahman (Vāgvai Brahman).⁷⁵

Vāk is coextensive with Brahman (yāvad Brahma tiṣṭhati tāvatī vāk).⁷⁶

⁷² V: 1, 2.

⁷³ Sat. Br. VII: 5.2.6.

⁷⁴ (Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa XX. 14.2. See John Muir's Original Sanskrit Texts, Vol. V. London, Truebner, 1884 pp. 391-2.

⁷⁵ Rg. V.I.3.21.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* X. 114.8.

'All was made by vāk and likewise all that was made was vāk.⁷⁷

The same Vedic truth seems to be restated by St. John in the New Testament:

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 'The same was in the beginning with God.'

'All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.'

It is known from the Śruti and the Smṛti that the world originates from the Word [śabda, that is vāk]', says Śaṅkara.⁷⁸ 'The Word [vāk] is the mother of the Vedas (Vedānām mātā)', declares the Veda.⁷⁹

What is the Word? It is the creative idea of God, the Idea of ideas, which is inseparable from God. As observed by Swami Vivekananda, "The external aspect of the thought of God is the Word, and as God thought and willed before He created, creation came out of the Word".⁸⁰

Om is the name of the Word. As the creative idea of the Lord the Word is the seed-force that evolves as the universe. Since a word and the thought conveyed by it are inseparable, so Om is inseparable from the Word, the cosmic ideation, God's thought of creation, the matrix of all ideas. It is the first manifestation of His omniscience. As a vehicle of thought, each word is a form of consciousness. Thus, Om is the embodiment of cosmic consciousness that appears as the diversified universe through names and forms. It is to be noted that in the non-dualistic view the manifold is essentially Pure Consciousness diversified by names and forms, the Supreme Being is both efficient and material cause of the universe.

Being intermediary between God and the World, Praṇava, as the syllable Om is called, stands for both. It is symbolic of the all-embracing Consciousness, the Supreme Self. It represents Brahman immanent (Saguṇa) and Brahman transcendent (Nirguṇa) as well. In fact, it is the potent seed of the knowledge of both. Being spiritual consciousness in the most concentrated form, it germinates and grows when sown in the right soil and nurtured by meditation. It is well-known that a word has the capacity to call forth the idea it embodies. Praṇava is regarded as a sacred seed-word (bīja-mantra). There are other sacred seed-words, but none is fully representative of the Supreme Being as this.

⁷⁷ Sat. Br. VIII: 1.2.9. Quoted by Max Mueller in *Three Lectures on Vedanta Philosophy*, p. 78, from Albrecht Weber's *Indische Studien*, Vol. X, p. 479 (18 vols. 1849-98.)

⁷⁸ Vide BS I: 3:28. com.

⁷⁹ Taitt. Br. II. 8. 8. 5.

⁸⁰ CW I. p. 72.

Om is the basic sound, of which all other sounds are but diversified or particularized forms. The utterance of Om, usually called Omkāra, covers the whole process of articulation, as we shall see later. It is like the long-drawn peal of gong which starts voluminously and tapers to a point (bindu), that is, reaches the subtlest, the all-pervading entity, the infinite, the eternal. The sound embraces all levels of existence from grossest to the finest (subtlest?) It signifies the correlation between the microcosm and the macrocosm in all aspects. Its three letters or morae (mātrās)--a, u, m--represent respectively the gross, subtle, and the causal aspects of the individual and the cosmic being. The culminating point (bindu) represents Pure Being underlying the three aspects, which is the partless, the fourth (the turiya), the transcendental nondual Self, where is the cessation of all phenomena, which has no limit, which is all bliss.⁸¹

No verbal symbol but this mystic syllable conveys such profound significance of the Supreme Being, Indeed, Om is the most comprehensive and most potent name of God. Any other name of God preceded by Om attains these qualities. As observed by Svami Vivekananda:

There are hundreds of words for God. One thought is connected with a thousand words; the idea "God" is connected with hundreds of words, and each one stands as a symbol for God. Very good. But there must be a generalization among all these words, some substratum, some common ground of all these symbols, and that which is the common symbol will be the best, and will really represent them all. In making a sound we use the larynx and the palate as a sounding board. Is there any material sound of which all other sounds must be manifestations, one which is the most natural sound? Om (Aum) is such a sound, the basis of all sounds. The first letter, A, is the root sound, the key,⁸² pronounced without touching any part of the tongue or palate; M represents the last sound in the series, being produced by the closed lips, and the U rolls from the very root to the end of the sounding board of the mouth. Thus, Om represents the whole phenomena of sound-producing. As such, it must be the natural symbol, the matrix of all the various sounds. It denotes the whole range and possibility of all the words that can be made. Apart from these speculations, we see that around this word Om are centered all the different religious ideas in India; all the various religious ideas of the Vedas have gathered themselves round this word Om. What has that to do with America and England, or any other country? Simply this, that the word has been retained at every stage of religious growth in India, and it has been manipulated to mean all the various ideas about God. Monists, dualists, monodualists, separatists, and even atheists took up this Om. Om has become the one symbol for the religious aspiration of the vast majority of human beings. Take, for instance, the English word God. It covers only a limited function, and if you go beyond it, you have to add adjectives, to make it Personal, or

⁸¹ Vide Mā. U. XII.

⁸² 'A (O)' is the first letter of the Sanskrit alphabet. It is the least differentiated of all sounds. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, "I am "A (O)" among letters'. (BG X: 33)

Impersonal, or Absolute God. So with the words for God in every other language; their signification is very small. This word Om, however, has around it all the various significances.⁸³

10. *Practice of meditation with the symbol Om*

The efficacy of Praṇava is a proven fact. It is accepted as the highest symbol of the Divinity by all Vedic schools.⁸⁴ Some non-Vedic schools also use it. From time immemorial Praṇava has been fruitfully used in India and some adjacent countries by an unbroken line of spiritual aspirants for meditation on Nirguṇa as well as Saguṇa Brahman. As we have noted above, the Śruti has instructed the second grade spiritual aspirants, 'madhyama adhikārins (mediocres)' as they are called, to practise meditation on Nirguṇa Brahman by means of the symbol Om, and has prescribed different methods for the same. These are all intended for the realization of the identity of the individual soul with the Supreme Being, which is the direct way to Liberation. Praṇava proves to be the intermediary or the link between the two, the individual self and the Supreme Being, in all of them. It stands for both ātman (the self) and Brahman. It is used as the auditory and also the visual symbol (in Sanskrit characters, of course).

The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* thus instructs the seekers of Brahman: 'Meditate thus on the Self with the help of Om. May your way to reach the other shore beyond darkness be free from obstacles.'⁸⁵

The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* has explained how by means of the symbol Om (aum) a seeker of Liberation can meditate on the correlation between the individual and the cosmic self as the experiencers of waking, dream, and dreamless sleep, and attain the one transcendental Self, the fourth (the Turīya), beyond the three states, which is 'Pure Awareness, where is cessation of the manifold, which is nondual, calm, and blissful.'⁸⁶

The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* has illustrated by an analogy how the self being meditated upon as Brahman by means of Praṇava assuredly attains Brahman. Just as a sharp arrow fitted by a bow, being fully drawn and intently aimed, hits the target, without fail, even so the self with the mind purified and completely withdrawn from sense-objects through the practice of meditation by means of the symbol Om, being focused on Brahman. So it is said:

'Taking hold of the bow, the great weapon, well-known in the Upaniṣads, fix to it the arrow sharpened by meditation; then drawing it with the mind absorbed in the thought of Brahman, hit that mark the Immutable, O my good friend. Om is the bow, the self (ātman) is the arrow. Brahman is said to be the mark. It is to

⁸³ CW I, pp. 218, 219.

⁸⁴ Vide YS I:27

⁸⁵ II.2.6.

⁸⁶ Mā. U. VII.

beamed at with unerring attention. Then the self (ātman) becomes one with Brahman as the arrow with the target.⁸⁷

The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* has given another simile. Just as in the sacrificial fire the upper piece of the fire-wood being rubbed repeatedly on the lower piece brings out the latent fire, even so a person by constant meditation with the help of the symbol Om can realize the luminous Self hidden like fire, so to speak, in the body.

'By making the body the lower piece of wood, and Om the upper piece, and by the continuous practice of meditation, as the process of rubbing, one should see the luminous Self hidden like the fire in the wood.'⁸⁸

A qualified spiritual aspirant can meditate on the individual self as Brahman with the help of the symbol Om. This type of meditation is called '*aham-graha upāsana* (lit. meditation on I-consciousness)'. The mind is focused on the individual self, the egoconsciousness, which is essentially Brahman-Consciousness and is realized as such through intense meditation by means of the symbol Om. 'Brahman is ever familiar to us as the ego-consciousness' says Śankara. (VC, 409). The basis of this ego-consciousness, as we have stated above, is the immutable self (the *kūṭastha*), which is identical with Brahman (the Supreme Self) as Pure-Consciousness divested of all limiting adjuncts. Knowing this, the seeker meditates on the self as Brahman and on Brahman as the self.⁸⁹

Praṇava (Om) serves as the medium of unity between the individual self and the Supreme Self. As the symbol of both it signifies Pure Consciousness underlying them and manifests their essential oneness beyond all distinctions.⁹⁰ Truly speaking, this monosyllabic word is the embodiment, nay, the potent seed of spiritual consciousness in the highest sense. Being the symbol of a thought or an idea, each word is a phase of inner consciousness and has the capacity to evoke the same. As the seeker continuously repeats the sacred word (Om) and intently contemplates on its deep significance, his mind gets purified and apprehends the self as Pure Consciousness and its unity with Brahman-Consciousness. With the complete absorption of the mind in Brahman, as the result of ardent practice of meditation with the symbol Om, the self becomes unified with Brahman and all but merges therein. This leads to immediate perception of Nirguṇa Brahman in *nirvikalpa samādhi*. The individual self does not lose itself in Nondual Brahman as long as the mind endures.

Besides the methods of meditation indicated above there are other methods prescribed for the seekers of the mediocre type. For example, the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* has recommended meditation on Brahman in the space within the heart, where He

⁸⁷ Mu. U. II.2.3.4.

⁸⁸ Śvet. U. I.14.

⁸⁹ Vide BS IV: 1-3.

⁹⁰ Vide Mā. U.; Pr. U. V.

dwells as the internal ruler⁹¹. The repetition of the symbol Om will be helpful in this case also.

11. *Gradation of spiritual disciplines to suit different types of individuals with the same ultimate Goal in view.*

For the seekers of Liberation below the mediocre type, that is, for inferior or dull aspirants (adhama or manda adhikaris) who are not capable of fixing the mind on Nirguṇa Brahman, Vedanta recommends the practice of meditation on Saguṇa Brahman with the help of the syllable Om, which can be used both as auditory and visual symbol. Failing in that, a spiritual aspirant has to worship, and meditate on, some special aspect of Saguṇa Brahman, such as Viṣṇu, Śiva, or Śakti, as his Chosen Deity with a symbolic name and a form. It is to be remembered that each and every aspect represents the Divinity as a whole, just as each photograph of a house, from whatever angle, represents the whole house. Or, the aspirant may choose any of the Divine Incarnations like Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, and others as the special object of adoration. It is worthy of note that in practising meditation on Brahman with a symbolic form (pratīka) the symbol is to be viewed as Brahman, and not *vice versa*⁹²

By steadfast and fervent worship of Saguṇa Brahman in any aspect and intent meditation on Him as the innermost Self of all, the aspirant can realize Him through His grace. As a matter of fact this is the method that suits the majority of spiritual aspirants. Following the same method an ardent seeker can even have immediate perception of Nirguṇa Brahman in nirvikalpa samādhi⁹³. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has clearly indicated to his disciple Uddhava how intense meditation on Personal God with form (of Viṣṇu, for instance) leads to the realization of the formless, attributeless, Impersonal Brahman:

'The man of self-control should withdraw the organs from the sense-objects with the help of the mind, and with the intellect as guide direct the mind to my entire form. Then he should concentrate that mind--distributed all over My body--on one part, and think of the smiling countenance alone and nothing else. Drawing the mind which is concentrated on that, one should fix it on the Supreme Cause. Then having that too, one should rest on Me [as Nirguṇa Brahman] and think of nothing whatsoever [the meditator then becomes united with the object of meditation]. With one's mind thus absorbed, one sees Me alone in oneself and sees oneself united to Me, the Self of all--the light united with light. A yogi⁹⁴ who thus concentrates his mind through intense meditation

⁹¹ VIII: 1.1-3.

⁹² *Vide* BS IV:1-5.

⁹³ *Vide* BS III: 2.24-30.

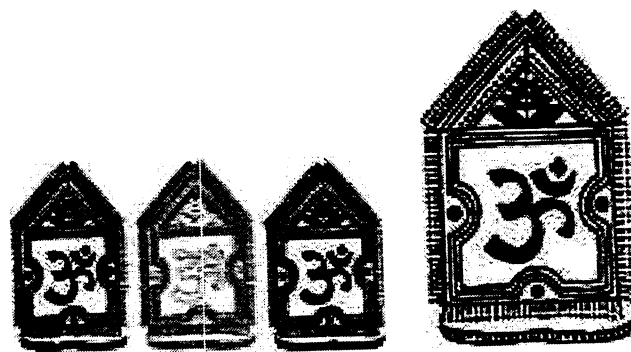
⁹⁴ Śrī Kṛṣṇa has used the term 'yogi' in the wide sense of a spiritual aspirant given to meditation and not in the restricted sense of a follower of the Yoga of Patañjali.

Devotional Contributions

will soon extinguish the delusion about objects, finite knowledge, and action [that is , the entire realm of relativity, the apparent manifold].⁹⁵

To prepare the devotee's mind for the practice of meditation on the form of the Deity various modes of worship--physical, verbal, and mental--have been prescribed. The repetition (preferably inaudible) of the symbol Om, or any other sacred word or formula, is considered very efficacious in this respect. According to the sage Patañjali, the repetition of the symbol Om and contemplation of its meaning are conducive to the comprehension of the innermost self and the elimination of all obstacles to its realization. ⁹⁶Those who have not faith or devotion adequate for the worship of the Divinity are instructed to practice karma-yoga; that is to perform their duties, domestic, social, or humanitarian, dispassionately, caring for inner purification rather than secular gain, here or hereafter. Even this cannot be practised until the aspirant's mind discerns the futility of the temporal values and turns to the spiritual ideal.

Most men and women hanker after possessions and pleasures. They have to outgrow the inveterate worldly desires through legitimate experience before they can be interested in eternal varieties. To get the most out of this life they are asked to fulfill their desires to the best of their ability, keeping firm on the path of virtue. The search for wealth, enjoyment, power, fame, or intellectual growth by unfair means is altogether forbidden. But nobody is to be rejected. Even for moral upliftment Vedanta provides a graduated course according to man's development. Its principle is to raise a person from where he is.



⁹⁵ SB XI: 14.42-6.

⁹⁶ *Vide* YS I:28, 29.

Svāmī Rāma Tīrtha Says OM, OM, OM

Puran Singh ⁹⁷

The lectures that he (Swami Rama Tirtha) delivered and the talks that he gave in America during this period have been collected and published under the title "In Woods of God-Realisation." They were taken down just as he talked by a lady stenotypist Mrs. P. Whitman, a great admiring disciple of the Swami, and on account of his sudden death, they were published just as they were taken down without being revised. They fill three large royal octavo size volumes of about 500 pages each.

Mrs. Pauline Whitman may be called Mr. Goodwyn of Svami Rama Tirtha. While Mr. G recorded and preserved for posterity the spiritual talks and lectures of Svami Vivekananda, Mrs. Whitman performed the same holy service in relation to S R . But for the most valuable service rendered by these two devotees of Veda and Vedanta the world would have remained much poorer in India's Vedic and Vedantic lore. Kamalānandā was the name given by Svami Rama Tirtha to this noble lady.

Svami Puran Singh, (titled as a professor) a great devotee of Svami Rama Tirtha has recorded an extraordinary, inexplicable, enormous power of OM.

"The following letter sent to me (Mr. Puran Singh after his death by Mrs. Wellman of Los Angeles, California, faithfully records how highly infectious were not only the joy but the ideas of Swami Rama. I met this devoted lady, Mrs. Wellman, at Dehra Dun, India, when she was on a visit to this country and we together made a pilgrimage to the Tehri Hills and toured the Punjab plains.

"Says Mrs. Wellman in her letter:

"...It was just the beginning of the year 1903 when I first met this great soul. He was lecturing in San Francisco. I went to hear him *reluctantly*. But with his chant of Om, my mind was lifted, my very being vibrated with a joy I never felt before. A loving blissful peace illumined me.

"And I never missed another opportunity to feed upon the bread of life he so freely gave. He also made an appeal to Americans to help his people by going to India and living as *one* of them in their families. Quite a number said they would go. But not one of them went. One day I said to him, "Swami Rama, for what you have done for me, what can I do for your people in exchange?" He said, "You can do a great deal if you will but go to India." "I will go," I replied. But friends dissuaded and even derided me. Some said I was crazy to think of going, especially as I had not sufficient money to return. But Rama said, "If you *really* know Vedanta, you would not fear, for you would find God in India the same as in America." So did God, the Divine Intelligent

⁹⁷ *Story of Swami Rama*, pp. 137 ff.

Devotional Contributions

Principle of life, *prove* His self-sustaining power, through the tender, loving care of my beloved Hindu brothers and sisters, yea, my children. Yet five months elapsed before I fulfilled my promise to our Blessed Rama and set sail for his native country--alone--alone, not knowing a person in that far off country yet with Faith, "leaning on the sustaining arm of the Infinite" as taught by Rama....î

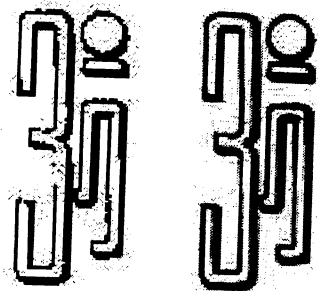
This is the *camatkāra* of Om to which we offer our *śata śata namskāra*! There will flow plenty of *puraskāra*. All this will generate better *saṃskāra*.

In his "Foreword" to the *Story of Rama* (Ludhiana, 1974) by Puran Singh, R. S. Narayana Swami (a worthy disciple of a worthier Guru) writes:

"Svāmī Rāma was essentially an apostle of the life of the spirit, whose daily food was the *smaran* of the name of the God--Om. [*Tajjapas tadarthabhāvanam*] ... he was one who had lost himself in the Lord. His repetition of this spiritual Mantram sounded like a river of song flowing in him....*Smaran* is essentially a sign of inspiration; it is God's favour."

* * * * *

"The Path to God in your own self lies through renunciation. Renounce all desires and live repeating OM." Svami Ramatirtha.



Satya Prakash Singh

Honors OM

*Aligarh Muslim University*⁹⁸

As is the case with the coin, so is with the word Om. Moreover, while the idea of coin is only a distant possibility in the original text and is introduced by Śaṅkara only as a speculative surmise, the word *Om* is practically brought in by the Upaniṣad itself. *Om*, according to it, is the Ātman because of the parallelism that obtains between the former's letters and the latter's so-called feet. The letter *a* is taken to stand for the waking state of the Ātman which is known as *Vaiśvānara*. The letter *u* is taken to represent the Ātman's state of dream, in which capacity it is known as *Taijasa*. The letter *m* is taken to represent its state of sound sleep and, as such, it is called *Prājña*. The fourth "unheard sound" is taken to signify the Ātman in its transcendent state, in which capacity it is known as the non-dual *Śiva*.⁹⁹ Now, just as in the case of the coin, if the first quarter is merged in the second one, we get the half of the coin, if the first and the second quarters are merged in the third one, we get the three-fourths of it and if the three-fourths are merged in the fourth quarter, we get the whole of it, even so in the case of the word *Om*, if the sound *a* is merged in *u* and both in *m* and finally all the three in the fourth "unheard sound", we have the fullness of the word. This is what happens in the case of the Ātman. If the waking consciousness is merged in the dream consciousness, both in the consciousness of sound sleep, and finally all the three in the transcendent consciousness, we attain to the fullness of the Ātman.

Thus, though symbolizing well the organicism and dynamism of the Ātman, the four-footed animal almost fails to bring out the peculiar relationship of the part and the whole in it. In order to make up for this deficiency, the idea of coin and the word *Om* have been introduced in this context.

If animal serves as a symbol of the Ātman particularly due to the number of its feet, bird does the same by virtue of its capability to fly in the sky and return to its nest. The self also seems to do the same. Study of the phenomenon of dream is the most convenient way to the understanding of it. Though the individual remains bodily fixed in his bed in the state of dream, he, by his dreaming self, can move anywhere. However, when he is awake, he finds his self wholly there in his body. All this happens automatically. Understandably, it might have been on account of such a movement that the self would have been noted by man in the beginning. This

⁹⁸ *Upanishadic symbolism* (Delhi: MCLD, 1981), 96-97, 180-87, 381-85. Check with index.

⁹⁹ *Māṇḍūkya*. 1:8-12.

characteristic of the self can be represented by the bird which, while in its nest, remains entirely concealed but, when outside the nest, flies to and fro, disappearing in the atmosphere or in deep sky almost untraceably, and still returning to its nest at the appropriate moment. This behaviour of the bird is so closely analogous to the human psychology that man has chosen it quite often to represent the movement of the self.

As regards the Upanishads, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* (IV.3.19) describes the states of dream and sound sleep on the analogy of bird as follows:

Just as having flown around in the sky, a falcon or any other strongly winged bird, when tired, folds its wings and is borne down to its nest, even so this (dream) self speeds to that end where it does not have any desires, and sees no dream.

* * * * *

III. OM

Om is another symbolic word used for Brahman in the Upanishads. It occurs as such once in each, the *Praśna*, the *Taittirīya* and the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and thrice in the *Ka ha*. The *Ka ha* takes *Om* as monosyllabic and symbolic of Brahman. It attaches so much importance to this syllable as to regard it as the epitome of all the Vedas, as effective as all the penances practised together, besides the goal of *brahmacarya* and sure means to attaining the *brahmaloka*.¹⁰⁰ The *Praśna* regards *Om* as symbolic of both, the Supreme and the lower Brahman. It considers *Om* to consist of three *mātrās*. Śaṅkara takes the *mātrās* in the sense of the letters *a*, *u* and *m* while Rāmānanda and some commentators interpret them as implying the three measures of time taken in the pronunciation of the three types of vowels, the short, the long and the protracted. Thus according to Śaṅkara's interpretation, the letter *a* symbolizes Brahman in its phase of the human world, the letters *a* and *u* symbolize it in its phase of the *somaloka* while the complete syllable *Om* represents it in its higher phase which is *brahmaloka*. According to the alternative explanation, if the word *Om* is treated as of one measure, it symbolizes Brahman in its phase of the human world, if as of two measures, it symbolizes Brahman in its phase of *somaloka* and if as of three measures, it symbolizes Brahman in its phase of *brahmaloka*. *Brahmaloka* is just another name of the Supreme *puruṣa* or Being. Attainment of this *puruṣa* through the symbolic meditation is so transformative of the consciousness as to transport the individual from the shadowy earth to the pure brilliance of the sun. It is so purgatory of the moral fabric as the removal of the slough from the snake is of the latter's body.¹⁰¹

Thus, according to the above account, if the theory of letter is accepted, *Om* has come to symbolize Brahman due probably to the triplicity of the letters involved in it, each one of which is chosen to represent one of the three forms of the reality, that is

¹⁰⁰ *Kaṭha*. 1.2.15-17.

¹⁰¹ *Praśna*. 5.2-5.

the human, the divine and transcendent. On the other hand, if the theory of measure is admitted, the reason for symbolization would be variability in the time which the word takes in its pronunciation. The word can be pronounced as *O1m*, *O2m* or *O3m*. Each one of these pronunciations would be complete in itself. This is true of the reality also. Being closest to us, the human world in itself may be taken to constitute the totality of the reality. That would be the shortest cut to knowledge, the most convenient way to the understanding of the reality, in the same way as is the pronunciation of the word as *O1m*. If we stretch our imagination further, we can regard the reality to comprise the divine as well as the human. That would be analogous to the pronunciation of *Om* as *O2m*. But, if one dares to go beyond this limit also, one would find the reality as consisting not only of the human and the divine but also of the transcendent which is limitless. It would be equivalent to the pronunciation of *Om* as *O3 ... m* which may extend to the infinity. Thus the infinite possibility in the stretch of the pronunciation of the word, along with its monosyllabic brevity, is probably the reason for its choice as a symbol of Brahman which is finite as well as infinite, immanent as well as transcendent.

In this conception, it is important to note what the *Praśna* observes about the method of pronouncing the word. According to it, if the word is pronounced in such a way that either the three letters are extremely compressed with one another or they are loosely joined together, it leads to mortality.¹⁰² But, on the contrary, if the mode of pronunciation is fully balanced, one attains the state where one gets redeemed of all fear whatever.¹⁰³ The fearlessness arises from harmonization of the states of consciousness. Since the three letters *a*, *u* and *m* represent the human, the divine and the transcendent worlds on the macrocosmic side and the three states of consciousness, i. e., the waking, the dream and the sound sleep on the microcosmic side, their inordinately compressed or loose pronunciation is naturally bound to create confusion or gulf among the three grades of the reality on the one hand and the three states of consciousness on the other. Both these consequences are detrimental to the spiritual development of the individual. The Supreme can be attained only if the three states of consciousness are perfectly harmonized and there is also a balanced inclusion of all the three grades in the totality of the reality. *Om*, when pronounced in a balanced manner, symbolizes the balanced state of consciousness as well as the all-inclusive Reality. This also confirms that it is by virtue of its special sound that *Om* is chosen as a symbol of Brahman.

Another significant instance of symbolization of Brahman by *Om* is to be met with in the *Taittiriya*. "Om is Brahman", observes the Upaniṣad. In order to support this sym- bolic equation, it further observes:

¹⁰² We have already discussed in the Sanskrit portion why OM cannot be represented by a u m in a disjointed incoherent way. It is only an analytical form. OM as a whole is the synthetic form [MLN].

¹⁰³ *Tisro mātrā... Praśna. ibid. v.6*

Om is all this. *Om*, indeed, is compliance. On uttering "*Om* recite" they recite. With *Om* they sing the *sāmans*. With *Om śom* they recite the chants....¹⁰⁴

This supporting observation may be treated as the rationale given by the sage for the meditation on Brahman in the form *Om*. If so, we may take the rationale as the reason behind the symbolization of Brahman by *Om*. It lies in the principle of compliance in the religious act. The compliance is engendered by conviction in the reality of the object of faith. Besides the religious conviction, positivity of the reality of the world is probably the most mighty experience which man generally cherishes. *Om* is expressive of both these facts in the best possible manner. When Brahman began to be regarded as the reality of the world on the one hand and the supreme object of religious conviction on the other, it naturally came to be symbolized by *Om*.

Upanisadic sages were very much impressed by the positivity of the being of Brahman. In the *Taittirīya* itself it is said that if one takes Brahman in the negative sense, one is bound to negate the reality of one's own self. But if, on the contrary, one regards Brahman as the positive reality, one proves the positivity of one's own self.¹⁰⁵ This is why the Upaniṣad gives "reality" the foremost place in its definition of Brahman.¹⁰⁶ The *Bṛhad āraṇyaka* asserts that reality alone is Brahman.¹⁰⁷ As such, it did not require any straining on the imagination to represent the reality by the word which is most expressive of assent, compliance and positivity of things. That Brahman is not only positively real but is the positivity of the reality itself is made out categorically by the *Ka ha*. According to it, since Brahman is available neither to speech nor to mind, how else it can be available except as mere existence; but when admitted as such once, it assumes the form of reality automatically.¹⁰⁸ What else can symbolize this Being better than *Om* which is the most comprehensive expression of assent, compliance and positivity of things?

Brahman, however, is not mere the positivity of the reality which is only an abstraction. An abstraction may be satisfying in itself, but only at the outset. As soon as it crosses the stage of inception, it needs substantiation. The latter, if available, supports the life of the abstraction. Lacking in it, the abstraction is destined to die out. It is with some such idea in view that the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* conceives of Brahman as ether and symbolizes it by the word *Om*. Though there is a sharp difference of opinion regarding the nature of ether, which the son of Kauravyāyaṇī takes as the abode of air while the Upaniṣad regards as something primordial, *Om* is unanimously held as a symbol of Brahman.¹⁰⁹ The Upaniṣad does not contradict the alternative view of Brahman. This

¹⁰⁴ *Om iti Brahma....Taittirīya. 1.8.1.*

¹⁰⁵ *Asanneva sa bhavati, asad Brahmeti veda cet. Asti Brahmeti ced ved, santam enam tato viduriti. ibid. 2.6*

¹⁰⁶ *Satyam jñānam anantam Brahma. ibid. 2.1.*

¹⁰⁷ *Satyam hyeva Brahma. 5.4.1.*

¹⁰⁸ *Naiva vācā na manasā...2.3.12-13.*

¹⁰⁹ *Om kham Brahma....5.1.1.*

suggests that the view has been introduced here with approval. Hence both the views together have been taken by Śaṅkara to refer to Brahman in its two phases, the higher and the lower. Thus *Om* is regarded as a symbol of Brahman in both these phases. This, however, is only a confirmation of what has already been found in the *Praśna*.

As regards the seer's own ground for the choice of the symbol, it is stated in the sequel that the knowers of Brahman regard *Om* as the Veda itself through which the supreme object of knowledge is known. Since the Veda is the source of knowledge of Brahman and *Om* is equivalent to the Veda, the former is used as a symbol of Brahman on account of the relationship of the source of knowledge and the object of knowledge. Admittedly, though the Veda and *Om* both hold the same relationship 'with Brahman, it is *Om* which has been preferred for the symbolic function. The balance tilts in favour of the word on account of its brevity. When two things are equivalent, it is relatively the smaller one which is usually preferred to act as the symbol.

As regards the equivalence of *Om* to the Veda, it seems to have been established by way of symbolic abridgement. This is suggested by a passage in the *Chāndogya* which reads as follows :

The Creator brooded on the worlds ; from them, thus brooded on, the three Vedas streamed forth. He brooded on them; from them, thus brooded on, the syllables *bhūs*, *bhuvas* and *svas* streamed forth. He brooded on them ; from them, thus brooded on, streamed forth the syllable *Om*. This is why just as all the leaves are held together by the stalk, even so the entire speech is held together by the syllable *Om*. Verily the syllable *Om* is all this, yea, the syllable *Om* is all this."¹¹⁰

As is obvious from the above passage, the worlds were the real object originally present before the Creator. Since he had full comprehension of the worlds, his knowledge became the true representative of them. The knowledge, indeed, was the Veda. The worlds were three and the Vedas also were three. Thus the actual reality came to be represented by the knowledge of it. But the Vedas themselves were found unwieldy. Hence arose the necessity of their abridgment. This was done by summing up each one of them in the form of a word. The *Ṛgveda* came to be represented by *bhūs*, the *Yajurveda* by *bhuvas* and the *Sāmaveda* by *svas*. This abridgement would have brought convenience to the understanding of the phenomenon of knowledge and the world. But the triplicity would have been a point of considerable hitch at the same time. This also was eliminated eventually by reducing these words each in the form of a letter : *bhūs* into *a*, *bhuvas* into *u*, *svas* into *m*, and by combining the letters into one monosyllabic word which is *OM*.

This sequence of the words is borne out by the literary evidence also. While the words *bhūs*, *bhuvas* and *svas* occur already in the *Ṛgveda*, *Om* appears only subsequently. This being admitted, there emerge two possibilities regarding the origin

¹¹⁰ *Prajāpatr lokān....2.23.2-3.*

of the word. In the first place, as is obvious from the foregoing discussion, the word might have been adopted as a symbol of Brahman on account of its meaning as 'compliance.' In the second place, it is equally possible that the word was formed by combining the letters *a*, *u*, and *m* which represented *bhūs*, *bhuvas* and *svas* respectively. It need not be stated that the last three terms are symbolic of the three worlds, the physical, the atmospheric and the heavenly in the same order. Why these letters might have been chosen to represent the three words and through them the three worlds at all, is a moot point. Is it not likely that the choice was guided by the location of each of these letters in the vocal organ ? Being guttural, *a* represents the inmost end of the vocal organ. Similarly, *u* may be taken to stand for the middle part of it. Finally, being labial, *m* is representative of the outermost end of it. Thus the three letters represent the whole span of the vocal organ and thereby the whole of speech. Since speech is regarded as equivalent to the Reality, the combination of the three letters might have been regarded as symbolic of it which essentially is Brahman.

On account of these equivalencies, *Om* is regarded as the most intimate symbol of Brahman. Śaṅkara gives pre-eminence to it even in comparison to such words as Ātman and Brahman themselves. He also refers to the twofold representative capability of the word, the literal and the symbolic.¹¹¹

IV. NĀMAN

Another word used in the Upaniṣads. as a symbol of Brahman is *nāman*, name. According to Sanatkumāra:

Whosoever meditates on Brahman as name, he can move voluntarily so far as name can go.¹¹²

The sage takes name as symbolic of the entire literature, comprising the Vedas, the histories, the Purāṇas and the rest available at that time.

V. VĀK

vāk, speech, is another significant symbol of this order. According to Sanatkumāra :

Whosoever meditates on speech as Brahman, he can move voluntarily so far as speech can go.¹¹³

Here speech is made a symbol of Brahman in supersession of name, The reason behind the supersession is that while name signifies the words used in the exposition of knowledge, speech is the means of the knowledge of whatever is there in this world

¹¹¹ *Yadyapi Brahmātmādiśabdāḥ....Śaṅkara's commentary on Bṛhad. 5.1.1*

¹¹² *Sa yo nāma Brahmetyupāste....Chāndogya. 7.1.5.*

¹¹³ *Sa yo vācam....Chāndogya. 7.2.1.*

and in the other world, whether in concrete or abstract form. It, as it were, is the mother of names and thus more comprehensive and primeval. In this respect, it compares well with Brahman itself. Indeed, it is regarded in the *Aitareya Āraṇyaka* to be as comprehensive and diverse as Brahman itself.

III. UDGĪTHA AND OM

From the fact that the actual tended to be represented by sacrifice, the latter by mantra and the last one by its chant, we can now safely infer that the symbolic representation moves towards abridgment. A further step in the same direction is taken in the re-presentation of the same entities by only one of the chants, that is, by the *udgītha*. This symbol is introduced in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* through the story of gods and demons fighting for supremacy over each other. What the gods used as a weapon in course of fighting was the chant *udgītha*. In the beginning, they meditated on it as *prāṇa* in the nose. But the *prāṇa* was afflicted by the demons. This is why, the story goes, we smell with the nose the foul smelling as well as the sweet smelling.¹¹⁴ Then the gods are said to have meditated on the *udgītha* as speech. But this also was afflicted by the demons. This is why, the Upaniṣad observes, we speak the false as well as the true.¹¹⁵ Then followed successively meditation on the same chant as eye, ear and mind. But these also were afflicted by the demons to the effect that we see with the eye both what is worth seeing and what is not worth seeing, hear with the ear both what is worth hearing and what is not worth hearing, imagine with the mind both what is worth imagining and what is not worth imagining.¹¹⁶ Then, at last, they meditated on the chant as the principal *Prāṇa*. This also was sought to be afflicted by the demons, but to no avail. Consequently the *prāṇa* is said to smell neither the sweet nor the foul.¹¹⁷ In view of its invulnerability, the *prāṇa* is said to have been used as the object of meditation by the seers *Aṅgiras*, *Bṛhaspati* and *Ayāśya* in the form of *udgītha*. By means of deep meditation on it, they are said to have become one with the *prāṇa*. This is why *Aṅgiras* is taken to mean "the essence of limbs", *bṛhaspati* "the lord of speech" and *ayāśya* "that which comes from the mouth."¹¹⁸ Thus while at another place in the same Upaniṣad the *hīnkara* is meditated on as mind, the *prastāva* as speech, the *udgītha* as eye, the *pratihāra* as ear and the *nidhāna* as *prāṇa*, here the *udgītha* alone is meditated on as all these, though by discarding successively one after the other until the principal *prāṇa* is reached.¹¹⁹

A still further step in this direction happens to be taken in the symbolic use of the syllables of the word *udgītha*. Obviously the word consists of three syllables: *ut*, *gī* and *tha*. The *Chāndogya* suggests that one should meditate on *ut* as *prāṇa*, on *gī* as

¹¹⁴ *ibid.* 1.2.2.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.* 1.2.3.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.* 1.2.4-6.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.* 1.2.7, 9.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.* 1.2.10-12,

¹¹⁹ *ibid.* 11.11.1.

speech and on *tha* as food. As the ground for the first of these symbolic significations, it is observed that *ut* stands for the *prāṇa* because one stands up by its force. As regards *gī*, its symbolic signification happens to coincide, to a certain extent, with its literal meaning. Finally, *tha* is taken to signify food on account of its derivability from the root *stha*, to stand. Because of its use in supporting life, food can naturally be signified by *tha*.¹²⁰ In fact, none of these three syllables is a complete word in itself and thus capable of signifying any of these three entities independently and fully. Somehow or other a contingent connection has been established between each one of them on the one hand and the corresponding entities on the other. Due to the contingency, the usage has become symbolic.

There are some other meanings also attached to these syllables in the same continuation. *ut* is taken to signify the heaven, *gī* the atmosphere and *tha* the earth. Alternately, *ut* is taken to symbolize the sun, *gī* the air and *tha* the fire. Lastly, *ut* is taken to symbolize the *Samaveda*, *gī* the *Yajurveda* and *tha* the *Ṛgveda*.¹²¹

Thus we see how the universal entities are symbolized by the Veda, particularly by the *Ṛgveda*. the *Ṛgveda* by the *Sāmaveda*, the *Sāmaveda* by its chants, the chants by the most important one among them, that is, the *udgītha*, and the *udgītha* by its own letters. But, are the letters themselves anything absolutely original and irreducible? Evidently they are mere representations of something more fundamental than themselves, i. e., of sound. Needless to say that each and every simple sound represented in the alphabet is a fundamental one. As regards the complex sounds, that one among them would obviously be the most fundamental and comprehensive whose production would involve modulation of the whole of the vocal organ in the shortest possible span. This sound has been agreed upon by the Upanishadic sages as *Om*. It is regarded as the source from which all other sounds are produced. It is one of the reasons why the priest, while reciting a particular Vedic mantra, always begins with this sound. Just as a singer first of all takes an *alāpa*, so the priest utters the word *Om*. The *alāpa* is the unscanned form of the song itself which is intended to be sung. Virtually the whole of the song lies implicit in it. Similarly the whole of the mantra is supposed to lie concealed in *Om*. This is true not only of particular mantras but of the Veda as a whole and even what it signifies. It is why *Om* was chosen to symbolize the *udgītha*.

"One should meditate on the word *Om* as *udgītha*," observes the *Chāndogya*.¹²² The reason as given for the equivalence is that the *udgātr* priest, who sings the *udgītha*, commences his song with *Om*. Another reason adduced for the same is the union of speech and *Prāṇa* or, indeed, of the *ṛk* and the *sāman* in the *udgītha* and in the word *Om*. In fact, *udgītha* is the singing of the *sāman* over the *Ṛgvedic* mantra. The singing involves both, sound and *prāṇa*. The same is the case with the word *Om*. It forms the

¹²⁰ *ibid.* 1.3.6

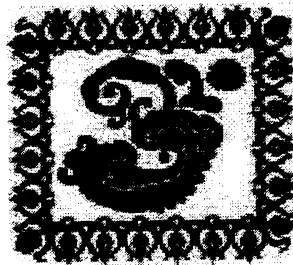
¹²¹ *ibid.* 1.3.7.

¹²² *ibid.* 1.1.1.

common background of recitation of the *ṛk* and the *sāman*. Due to this twofold akinness between them, *Om* is made a symbol of the *udgītha*.¹²³

Besides the Veda and the *udgītha*, *Om* has been taken to symbolize the actual reality also. Because of its symbolic association with the actual as well as the verbal, it has been used in its various modulations as a point of union between the two. The *Praśna Upaniṣad* suggests meditation on it variously by supposing it to consist of one letter, two letters and three letters. Under the first supposition, it is taken to symbolize the earth and the *Ṛgveda*. Meditation on it as such is supposed to bring one to the earth and particularly as a highly spiritualized man¹²⁴. If supposed to consist of two letters, it is taken to symbolize the atmosphere and the *Yajurveda*. Meditation on it under this supposition is regarded as instrumental in taking one to that world by means of the *yajus*. But that world also is supposed to lie within the ambit of mortality. Here one is given to enjoy to the utmost extent no doubt, but sooner or later one is bound to come down to the earth.¹²⁵ When supposed to consist of three letters, it is taken to symbolize the solar *puruṣa* and the *Sāmaveda*. Meditation on it as such is supposed to have the prospect of taking one to that *puruṣa* or, indeed, to the world of the sun. Finally, it, as a whole, is taken to symbolize the highest Brahman. Meditation on it as such is supposed to have the prospect of transforming one into Brahman.¹²⁶

The main idea underlying the above account seems to have been presupposed by the following legend occurring in the *Chāndogya* in connection with meditation on *Om* as *udgītha*. According to it, being afraid of death, gods entered into the *Ṛgveda*, the *Yajurveda* and the *Sāmaveda* and concealed themselves under the metres. But they could not escape the eyes of death there even. The latter saw them hiding themselves there in the same way as one sees a fish in water. Apprehensive of being caught, they entered into the sound *Om*. Reaching there, they felt themselves completely beyond the reach of death. Thus, on account of being conceived as one compact sound, *Om* is taken to symbolize the immortality and the *udgītha*.¹²⁷



¹²³ *ibid.* 1.1.4-6.

¹²⁴ *Praśna*. 5.3.

¹²⁵ *ibid.* 5.4.

¹²⁶ *ibid.* 5.5.

¹²⁷ *Chāndogya*. 1.4.2-4.

OM

OM : ONE GOD UNIVERSAL
A Garland of Offerings

Part III

Truth is One.
God is Truth.
∴ God is One.

Offered by
Murarilal Nagar
and
Sarala Devi Nagar

Om Shanti Mandiram
Columbia Missouri
1999

Apologia.

The reader is advised to read pages 7 ff. of our first Introduction wherein we have presented in vivid terms the nature of our work along with all its limitations. It won't be inappropriate to state here once again that our work may be compared with that of a garland-weaver, who collects the blossoms and threads them to make a wreath. He does not create the flowers. He has no ability to improve their nature or quality.

We have collected the writings of some great specialists who have specialized to a very high degree in their respective fields. Their writings are highly technical and can be understood and appreciated only by those who are equal to them in their attainments. Our knowledge is extremely limited in these fields. However, we have presented their writings the best way we could. There may be some errors, especially of a typographical nature. We crave the indulgence of the reader for this shortcoming. When we have done our best we could not do better. If we are made aware of our shortcomings it may be possible for us to improve the presentation in the second edition, if there is to be one.

We believe the reader will act like a swan. It is said that this discerning bird takes only the milk and leaves out the water if both are presented in a mixed form. It is hoped that the discriminating reader will take only the good part, if any, and leave the bad part, which, no doubt, there is in our presentation.

Om Shanti.

Part III

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¹ For more see the end of the respective paper.



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THE MIGRATION OF THE MAGIC SYLLABLE OM

J. J. BOELES

Bangkok

Om. This syllable is the universe.

Māṇḍūkya-upaniṣad, I, 1.1.

In the dazzling aspects, revealed by the ancient Brahmins in their philosophic speculations, they made use of expressions, coined phrases, words or symbols with the object of defining the result of their ever proceeding mental evolution, each of these representing a world of religious thoughts and far-reaching conceptions.

One of the milestones on the path of Hindu thought is the conception of Om, the importance of which, though quite meaningless in itself, can hardly be overestimated. The foundation of the knowledge of Om is laid down in the secret doctrines of the upaniṣads, which to the initiated reveal the sense of the mysterious Vedas. In the Ṛg- and Atharvaveda Om is not yet mentioned at all ¹). The use of this syllable seems to commence in the Vedic ritual, because the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (VII, 18) mentions that on the day of the ceremonial anointment of a king, chants from the Ṛg-veda shall be recited by the *hotṛ* priest, in reply to which the *adhvaryu* shall say Om. Said Brāhmaṇa states further that the word Om is of divine origin. The important development of the meaning of Om to a mystic doctrine is laid down in the upaniṣads and here in Hinduistic sense it obtains its definite interpretation as the universe, which is the very identification of the sacred principle of brahman. The Chāndogya-upaniṣad of the Sāmaveda (2.23) contains a description of the origin of Om: (2) Prajāpati, the Lord of all creatures, was brooding the wordly spaces, from them ... fled the triple science (the three Vedas); ... from them ... fled these sounds: bhūr, bhuvaḥ, svar (earth, atmosphere, heaven).

(3) These three were brooded by Him; from them... fled the sound Om. Therefore, like all leaves pierced (*saṃtrṇṇa*) by one nail, the sound Om pierces the reason (ratio); the sound Om is the universe.

The Kāthaka-upaniṣad (2.16) of the Yajurveda adds:

Critical contributions

Yes, this syllable (Om̐) is Brahman
This syllable is the Highest
He who knoweth this syllable
Receives, whatever he may wish.

In the philosophy of the Brahmins, the conception of the brahman is the highest obtainable object. The ātman or subjective perception shall unify itself with the brahman; absolute this mystic union can be obtained only by profound meditation upon the meaning of the sound Om̐. Like a spider climbing the thread of his web is the yogin, who ascending through meditation upon the sound Om̐ obtains freedom in the union with brahman ²). The syllable Om̐ is the symbol of the wordless brahman.

Further development of Om̐, in Sanskrit usually represented by the vowel O with Anusvāra (ṁ) is laid down in the Maitrāyaṇa-upaniṣad of the Yajurveda (6.3), in which it is said, that Om̐ is the very essence of the brahman and that the sound Om̐ made itself threefold, for this sound contains the three morae A+U+M.

These three factors give opportunity to the boundless fantasy of Indian thought to raise the sound Om̐ to a symbol for all sorts of trinities as:

1) feminine, masculine, neutral; 2) Fire, Wind, Sun; 3) Brahman, Rudra, Viṣṇu; later: Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva; 4) Gārhapatya, Dakṣiṇāgni, Āhavanīya (three sacrificial fires); 5) Bhūr, Bhuvaḥ, Svar (three worlds); 6) Prāṇa, Agni, Sūrya; 7) Food, Water, Moon; 8) Bud-dhi, Manas, Ahaṁkara (three elements of knowledge); 9) Prāṇa, Apāna, Vyāna (three elements of prāṇa). In later times also: 10) Moon, Sun, Fire; 11) Idā, Piṅgalā, Suṣumnā.

Therefore when the word Om̐ is uttered, all mentioned categories are included and honored at the same time ³). The motto of this paper has not promised too much. Said upaniṣad continues with the following equation: Om̐ = bhūr, bhuvaḥ, svar = Prajāpati: the all pervading vedic God. Bhūr is his head, bhuvaḥ his navel and svar his feet; for this reason bhūr, bhuvaḥ, svar are to be honored with this threefold sound, for Prajāpati will be honored also ⁴).

Still further speculations are developed in the younger Brahnavidyā-upaniṣad containing the secret doctrine of the science of the brahman; the three vedas, sacrificial fires, worlds and gods are the body (śarīra) of the sound Om̐ (I 4-7). Moreover as to the place (sthāna) of this syllable it is mentioned that in the centre of the conchshell (śaṅkha) the A shines as the Sun; and again in its middle (as we are to understand) is the U-sound, like the lustre of the moon. There is also the place of the M-sound, like the fire, without smell and like the lightning's flash. The lustre of the syllables A+U+M shines like the moon, the sun and the fire ⁵). A pointed flame is placed above, like the shine of a torch. Comparison is

made with the last point of the sound Om̐, viz. the point (bindu) of the anusvāra (ṁ) which in Sanskrit is placed above the vowel O and which is likewise a pointed flame (śikha). Also the resound (laya) of Om̐ has a meaning; it is like the last sound of a bell and also in here the brahman is present, which leads to immortality ⁶).

Of later date even a special upaniṣad has been dedicated to the echo (nāda) of Om̐ and the bindu of the anusvāra, called Nādabindu-upaniṣad ⁷).

The Yoga-upaniṣad declares that meditation over the sound Om̐ with its three and later three and a half morae (together with complete disconnection of the conscious mind), contains the real fruit for the exertions of the Yogin, in consequence of which the ultimate goal, the union with the brahman shall be obtained. This doctrine is found also in the complete literature of the Yoga, to begin with Patañjali.

Considering that the mystic syllable Om̐ brings the bliss, the deliverance from the Saṁsāra, it is not surprising that also the Buddhists availed themselves of this holy and imperishable word. As in Hinduism the syllable Om̐ is the dominant factor in the magic prayers or spells, the mantras of tantric Buddhism. The most popular mantra, more correctly the most popular dhāraṇī or mystic power is the wellknown formula Om̐ mani padme hūm i.e. Om̐, holy jewel in the lotus, hum, which in Tibet is the invocation of the Bodhisattva Avalakiteśvara or Padmapāṇi.

In many cases this dhāraṇī when in print, is preceded by a symbol, placed horizontally and it looks like a curl with a loop. From earlier Sanskrit manuscripts we know that it stands for the magic syllable Om̐. We can observe this very clearly in a Tibetan woodcut published by Schlagintweit ⁸).

The use of this symbol representing the auspicious Om̐ in inscriptions and MSS. in India is quite in accordance with the old Brahmanic principle that it is necessary to pronounce Om̐ at the beginning of the instruction of the Veda in order to preserve the holy script as otherwise it will not stay in the memory of the pupil. The law of Manu (II, 74) says: "Let him always pronounce the syllable Om̐ at the beginning and at the end of (a lesson in) the Veda; (for) unless the syllable Om̐ precedes (the lesson) will slip away (from him), and unless it follows it will fade away." Moreover the use of this symbol in inscriptions and MSS. means a good omen, a maṅgala and when this auspicious syllable is represented as in this case by a symbol it is called a maṅgala-symbol by the epigraphists. Besides Om̐ there exist various other maṅgala-symbols such as the svastika, the triśūla and the triratna-symbol with the wheel of the law or dharmacakra. In MSS, grants etc. where they appear in the beginning middle and the end, these maṅgalas are purposely placed there in order to accompany these documents with auspicious signs and to promote the preserva-

tion of the contents ⁹). Therefore these figures are meant as maṅgala-symbols with auspicious and doubtless also with magical significance. In epigraphical records the sacred Om̐ is either written in full or represented by a symbol sometimes both types are met with. The symbol is drawn like a curl or spiral, sometimes turning to the right and in other cases turning to the left and it is quite likely that we must understand this symbol as a conventional representation of the sacred conch shell or śaṅkha. As early as the fifth century of our era the symbol Om̐ is used in MSS. and we find various forms in the famous Bower manuscript, which is written in a mixed Sanskrit with nāgarī characters as used in the Gupta-period. (300-600 A.D.). The manuscript, a medical compendium, was brought to light by the British lieutenant H. Bower in Kachgar, one of the principal settlements in Eastern Turkestan on the great caravan route to China, which skirts the foot of the Tian Shan Range of mountains on the Northern edge of Takla Makan desert ¹⁰). The discovery of this document was the immediate cause of a number of expeditions to Innermost Asia, the startling results of which were brought within the reach of Western Science by such famous explorers like Sir Aurel Stein and A. von Lecoq.

The earliest specimens of the maṅgala Om̐ are taken from fig. 8 of Hoernle's edition of this MS. and shown on our fig. I. The author observes: "The dextrorse form may be seen on the first leaf of the Bower MSS. Part I (our fig. Ia), Part II (fig. Ib and c), and Part III (fig. Id), while the sinistrorse form appears on the first leaf of Part IV (fig. Ie) and Part VI (fig. If) In all the Parts, except the second, the symbol occupies the usual position facing the first line of the text of the manuscript; but in Part II it appears in the more unusual position, exactly as it is seen in the two copper-plate grants of Ananta Varman, dateable probably in the sixth century A.D. (our fig. Ig and h) shown in Dr. Fleet's Gupta Inscriptions pp. 220 and 226, Plates XXXB and XXXI A. Among the dated Northern Indian epigraphical records of the Gupta period, the earliest known examples of the dextrorse form of the symbol Om̐ are those of the year 448-449 A.D. in the stone inscription of Kumāra Gupta I (fig. I i; See *ibid.* p. 45, Plate VI a) and of the year 493-494 A.D. in a copper-plate grant of Jayanātha (our fig. I k; see *ibid.*, p. 120, Plate XVI). The earliest known example of the sinistrorse form occurs in a copper-plate grant of Mahā-Sadevarāja, of an unknown though early date (our fig I l; *ibid.*, p. 198, Plate XXVI), and apparently though mutilated, also in the Bodhgayā inscriptions of 558 A.D. (*Ibid.*, Plate XLI A and B) of course, these dates are not sufficiently numerous to settle the exact beginning and end of the period of the use of the two forms, but on the whole the sinistrorse form seems to be somewhat later in origin" ¹¹).

We must presume that the curious curl on which the Om̐ maṅgala is based must have been derived from the old vowel O, known from Bühler's alphabets. This is demonstrated in the inscription of Aphṣad in Bengal of abt. 675 A.D. written in a Sanskrit alphabet from Northern India (fig. IIa) ¹²). The resemblance of this vowel with the Om̐ symbol of fig. II b as used in the Harṣa inscription of the Cakrāmana[?]-king Vighraha II of 973 A.D., written in a North-Indian Sanskrit alphabet of later date is striking ¹³). This specimen takes the

shape of a question mark. Another form of Om̐ which we only mention here for completeness' sake, is found in the Deval-prāśasti of 993 A.D. in which also a North-Indian Sanskrit alphabet has been used. In this case Om̐ is composed of the vocal O with the anusvāra (ṃ)¹⁴) (fig. II c). We observe that till the present day the common type of Om̐ symbol used in Indian palaeography is the pure curl, since the Bower manuscript designed in a simple curve. A later specimen is met with in the Achyutapuram copper-plate of Indravarman I, king of Kalinga (Orissa); fig. II d. The curve is turning to the right just like the curls of the Buddha Śākyamuni's hair and which marks one of his lakṣanas or auspicious signs. The interesting feature about these copper plates is the symbol Om̐ at the end of the inscription, which is represented by a curl with a drawn out spiral tail (our fig. II e). It seems a younger variety of the Om̐ symbol. The specimens of the mystic syllable in our fig. I and II show the best known varieties of this auspicious sign in India. They are not limited to the use in inscriptions or in MSS. dedicated to one type of Indian religion; on the contrary they are part of the cultural assets of the Indian peoples; whether they are or were Brahmins, Buddhists or Jainists. Furthermore, we hope to prove that those countries, which have kept direct cultural relations with India, have adopted also the use of the maṅgala Om̐ together with the various religious thoughts and other Hindu institutions. Also outside India the influence of the magical power of the syllable Om̐ was felt and we shall try to pursue the migration of this auspicious sign.

Tibet

Nowhere in the world is the use of the dhāraṇī *Om̐ maṅi padme hūm* as popular as in Tibet. According to the Lamaistic scholastici, the syllables contain the quintessence of the mahāyāna and at the same time are its revelation, and this dogma gives them opportunity to ascribe a variety of thoughts to this dhāraṇī¹⁵). One of their sacred books, the Mānikah bum, states that this formula is the very essence of all happiness, prosperity and knowledge and the great means of deliverance (of the saṃsāra). *Om̐* classes rebirth amongst the gods, *ma* amongst the Tibetans, *ṇi* as a man, *pad* as a beast, *me* as a taltalus, and *hūm* as an inhabitant of hell. This shows again the divine origin of the syllable Om̐. With the object of increasing the magic power of these mystic spells, they are sometimes concentrated into a symbolic monogram and very often its picture is seen on the wall of sacred monuments. One of them is the magic monogram rNam-bcu-dlan-ldan or the all powerful ten syllables. This monogram is framed by the outlines of a leaf of the sacred bodhi tree (*ficus religiosa*). Grünwedel seems to be the only reliable source that gives a complete explanation of the all powerful ten, which actually represents the relation between microcosmos and macrocosmos¹⁶). On top of the monogram as we see it, is placed a symbol consisting of moon, sun and fire, which according to the Brahmavidyā upaniṣad stands for Om̐. According to Grünwedel it stands for a new trinity, kāya, vāc and citta¹⁷). These conceptions are very important for the understanding of Kālacakra Buddhism.

Further India

It is not very likely that the symbol Om̐ was brought to Further India together with the Buddhist religion from India; in our opinion the introduction must have taken place later at a time when the Buddhism of the pre-Angkorean period was already overwhelmed by the religion of the Brahmins. It is certainly not a coincidence that when discussing Cambodia, the central part of the old Khmer Empire, we find in the Sanskrit inscription of the large stèle of the temple Prah̐ Ko dated 877 A.D. and erected during the reign of the Cambodian King Indravarman I (877-899), the same use and representation of our Om̐ symbol as shown in our fig. II d and II e of the inscription on the copper plate from Achyutapuram and in which also Indravarman's name is mentioned as a king of Kalinga.

Indravarman I, King of Cambodia, took a pride in his alleged descent from the Indian ṛṣi Agastya, which would point to a relation of Cambodia and Southern India ¹⁸).

During Indravarman's reign a great number of Cambodian temples were erected and Parmentier has dedicated a monograph to the art of Indravarman ¹⁹). Since that time we meet a widespread application of the Om̐ syllable in Cambodian inscriptions both of the single curl-type and in the shape of an inverted question mark with spiral tail. For this purpose a simple perusal of the volumes of the "Inscriptions du Cambodge" is sufficient ²⁰). The Cambodian artist deserves however merit for having raised the magic maṅgala Om̐ to a symbol, that is applied to sculpture both of Śivaitic and Buddhistic nature in a harmonious and ever varying way. As to Śiva we see this god with the Om̐ symbol in his "chignon", the cylindrical hairdress on his head, whilst the Buddha on his uṣṇīṣa wears a flame symbol in the shape of an inverted question mark with spiral tail, as shown in type e of fig. II. The Om̐ symbol applied to statues of Śiva and the Buddha are entirely different and confusion is hardly possible. In this respect we may rely on the Om̐ symbol as a specific iconographic feature of the art of Further India; Burma included ²¹).

We do not know with certainty which religion was first to provide their holy images with the sign of the auspicious symbol. No such statues however are found before the reign of Indravarman, i.e. not before the second half of the 9th century. As in Indravarman's time Buddhism was certainly not the principal religion there is reason to believe, that the Lord Śiva was the oldest wearer of this magical sign. We do not know any specific images of Viṣṇu or Brahmā with the symbol Om̐ in their hairdress. Still Groslier in *Ars Asiatica* XVI, pl. XXXVII 1, shows us a bronze statue with four arms, that judging from the attributes represent Viṣṇu but the cylindrical hairdress shows on the front side and without doubt the symbol Om̐, in a way which so far we have only met in Tibet. It is that symbol consisting of the crescent moon and the sun with rising flame, of which, as we have seen, the Brahnavidyā upaniṣad says: the lustre of the syllables A+U+M shines like the moon, the sun and the fire. The Om̐ sign is a special attribute of Śiva and for this reason Groslier desig-

nates the statue as Harihara, i.e. Viṣṇu and Śiva united in one god ²²). Further varieties of the Om̐ symbols are shown by Groslier, *op. cit.*, in fig. 1, pl. XXXVIII where the head of Śiva as guru or of a Brahman priest (with beard) is reproduced; also Coomaraswamy, *loc. cit.*, fig. 337 showing Śiva with a short beard or perhaps or a Śaiva king.

In later times, the Cambodian Mahāyāna Buddhism as in Tibet has taken possession of the Om̐ symbol and this religion by raising this sign to a mighty symbol of the eternal Buddha has given it a very important signification. In the Buddhist art of the Bayon period (12-13th century) we observe in many cases the Buddha represented by his statue with the flaming Om̐ symbol of the type of the inverted question mark with spiral tail placed on the uṣṇīṣa, in which sign the French scholars did not fail to recognize the holy symbol Om̐. (See Groslier, *Ars Asiatica* XVI, pl. X. 1). The application of this symbol in the Buddhistic art of Further India is quite a new conception and as far as we know, unknown in India and Tibet. Nevertheless we should not forget that the threefold symbol Om̐ actually is part of the design of the all powerful ten which according to Csoma de Körös (*J.A.S.B.* II, 1833, p. 57-58) was very well known in Nālandā, though probably not before the 10th century, the period during which the Kālacakra system seems to have been introduced in India. Grünwedel justly asserts that this latest phase of Buddhism cannot properly be understood without knowledge of the meaning of the all powerful ten formula.

The flame-symbol Om̐ on the uṣṇīṣa of the Buddha i.e. without the crescent moon and sun, has remained in favor among Buddhist clergy to such an extent that even after the renewed rise of Hīnayāna in Further India in the 14th century we find that the best known types of statues of the Maṇuṣi Buddha are provided with an uṣṇīṣa on top of which is placed the flame symbol Om̐, representing the magic energy the *tejas* of the Lord. The fact as shown in the upaniṣads that this fiery energy, the *tejas* is identical with Om̐, enabled the Buddhists to recognize in this flaming emblem a Buddhistic trinity i.e. the triratna, which stands for the Buddha, the Dharma and the Saṅgha to which every Buddhist takes his refuge when entering monkhood.

When the power of the Khmer sovereigns in the neighbouring Siam declined, as a result of which in the latter country Hīnayāna during the reign of the Thai kings of the Sukhodaya dynasty (13th and 14th century) became the religion of the people, we find the flame symbol applied everywhere on top of the Lord's uṣṇīṣa, this conception in our opinion being derived however from Cambodia ²³). Since that time this symbol was maintained in almost all styles of Buddhistic Art in Further India; in later date also in Burma. Plate a shows a very beautiful specimen with the *tejas*-Om̐-flame symbol of the Uthong school in Siam. To-day the Buddhist people in Siam no longer understand the significance of said symbol emerging from the Buddha's head ²⁴). Still the later rulers of Siam were quite aware of the importance of this symbol and even the late king of Siam still carried the mark

of this auspicious sign, the maṅgala Om̐, in His coat-of-arms in the form of the inverted question mark. Still the anointed King's command is called Om̐kāra, as we were informed by H.R.H. Prince Dhani.

In the epigraphical documents of Siam we find that the palm leave manuscripts show often at the end of the text a symbol for the sacred Om̐ in the same way as seen in the inscription of Indravarman of Kalinga. In this connection we like to show in plate b a remarkable vase with beautiful light green glazing, which is reproduced here thanks to the courtesy of the Museum of Asiatic Art in Amsterdam. This vase is of Chinese origin and though the color of its glazing shows Sung influence, it was probably manufactured during the Ming period (1368-1644). The neck of this vase which seems to have been sawn off, is rather interesting; on three sides and within a triangle (*trikoṇa*) we see the figure of an unmistakable Om̐ symbol. As this variety of the inverted question mark belongs typically to Further India and during the Ming period specially in favor in Siam, whilst the shape of this symbol according to experts is unknown in Chinese ceramics, it is quite likely that this vase was ordered from China by Thai or Khmer; an example of "porcelaine de com-mande". Judging from the shape and glazing we do not think that this Vase should belong to the Savankaloke-ware made in Siam during the Sukhotai period. We have recently seen a similar vase in the Museum at Batavia.

Another development in the Buddhistic art of Further India is the representation of the sign of the magical Om̐ on the forehead of Buddhistic gods and which replaces the traditional ūṛṇā. The sculptor Miestchaninoff discovered near the Ta Prohm temple, built during the Bayon period (12th-13th century), a stone head of a Buddhistic god. On the forehead we see the Om̐ symbol instead of the traditional ūṛṇā²⁵). Also saints of Bodhisattva rank seem to have been adorned by the Om̐ type of ūṛṇā. The art of Northern Indochina, the Lao states and that of Northern Siam produced many images of the Buddha with the flame-symbol Om̐ on the uṣṇīṣa, and at the same time also with the Om̐ symbol on the forehead thus replacing the ūṛṇā²⁶). Our conclusion is that the uṣṇīṣa with flame-symbol always indicates the Lord Śākyamuni but the replacement of the ūṛṇā by said symbol is applied to Bodhisattvas also.

Images of the Buddha specially from Northern Siam and Laos are very often seen with an ūṛṇā in the shape of the well-known inverted question mark type, as in our fig. II e, in Siamese called unṇālom, deriving from the Siamese Pratama Saṃbodhi (19th century) which says "unṇāloma bhamukantare". Loma = fine hair. The pāli (and Siamese) lakkhaṇa sutta of the Dīgha-nikāya says: unṇā bhamukantare etc. (Burnouf, Le Lotus de la bonne Loi, tome II, p. 563). The flame uṣṇīṣa is called in Siamese ketumāla = garland of hair or praḥ ketu).

The Maṅgala Om̐ in the Indian Archipelago.

As the inscriptions show that the maṅgala Om̐ was generally used in the epigraphical records of India it will be evident that also in the inscriptions of the East Indies, which as regards its contents, language and characters show such close connection with the Indian documents, the magical symbol Om̐ is encountered very frequently.

The Om̐ symbol serving as a maṅgala is seen again at the beginning and end of the inscriptions in both varieties known in India, i.e. the simple curve of fig. II type a, dextrorse or sinistrorse and in the shape of the inverted question mark with spiral tail of fig. II type e. Our investigation shows that the first and dated record of the Indian Archipelago on which at the end the Om̐ symbol has been engraved is that important inscription in stone of Kota Kapur on the isle of Bangka, dated Śaka 608 (686 A.D.) and written in ancient Malay language. Its contents brings us back to the powerful kingdom of Śrīvijaya extending its sway over parts of Sumatra, Bangka and the Malay Peninsula ²⁷). The maṅgala Om̐ shows the type of the inverted question mark with spiral tail from our type e as seen in fig. III type a. The resemblance with the maṅgala Om̐ at the end of the inscription of Indravarman of Ka-liṅga of the 8th or 9th century (fig. II type e) is striking. The Bangka inscription seems to be of an earlier date than that of Indravarman, but both have the name maṅgala in common, though there is no reason to believe that this type e from Bangka was not introduced from India, the country of origin of all Hinduistic and Buddhistic institutions.

When tracing the track of the Maṅgala Om̐ in the other dated inscriptions we shall be able to follow this symbol in Indonesia till the beginning of the 14th century. When the reader has followed the description of the Om̐ symbol in its various shapes in India, he will have no difficulty in recognizing the maṅgala Om̐ exactly in the middle of the leafwork above the large inscription of Canggal of Śaka 654 (732 A.D.) from Kedu in Central Java (fig. III b). The auspicious sign of this important and oldest dated edict from Java has the simple curl turning to the right of fig. II type d.

Furthermore, we mention two Old-Javanese grants dated about 878 and 881, at the end of these inscriptions we see Om̐ symbols of the Indian type from fig. II a, but in reversed position and showing a crude variety of the elegant type II e with spiral tail (fig. III c and d) ²⁸). An interesting specimen is met in the Old-Javanese jayapattra of Śaka 844 (922 A.D.) published by the late Stutterheim ²⁹). At the end of this grant we find the maṅgala Om̐ behind a curious figure, in which we recognize the emblem of the engraver called Sang Yidi, at the right side of which is placed the Om̐ symbol designed in fig. III e and to be compared with fig. II type d.

The large inscriptions en haut-relief of the monument of Jalatuṅḍa, on the Western slopes of mount Penanggungan in Eastern-Java are in this respect of particular interest. One of these states the Śaka Year 899 (977 A.D.) in large and beautifully designed charac-

ters. On both sides of this date a large Om̐ symbol is placed, designed in the simple shape of curl which turns to the right as shown in type of figure II ³⁰). Precisely the same bold Om̐ symbols are to be found on the pendant of this inscription on both sides of the Old-Javanese word “Gempeng”, of which its meaning is all but clear. See fig. III f ³¹). The latest inscription of this dated range bears the year Śaka 924 (1002 A.D.) and can be seen also hewn in large character en haut relief on a stone from Tulis of the desa Puh-Sarang, district Maparata (Kediri) ³²). Behind the very large paten (virāma) or sound killer at the end of the inscription, a curl is shown which turns to the right, serving as a closing maṅgala Om̐ in the same way as the Om̐ symbol of Jalatuṅḍa ³³). (See fig. III type g).

Inscriptions of King Ādityavarman of Sumatra

The most interesting collection of Om̐ symbols in the Indian archipelago are to be found on Sumatra some 350 years later, in the inscriptions that are known as belonging to the reign of King Ādityavarman. For our purpose we have chosen five of the most characteristic examples which are brought together in fig. IV. Here we see again the maṅgala Om̐ in the shape of a horizontally placed inverted question mark with spiral tail of type e, which about seven centuries ago was last seen in Bangka on the inscription of Kota Kapur; provided we do not count the poor specimen of fig. III d. The first of these series of inscriptions from Sumatra is engraved on the back side of the celebrated image of Amoghapāśa at Rambahan near Lubuk Bulan in the districts of Bantang-Hari in Central-Sumatra; it is dated Śaka 1269 (1347 A.D.) ³⁴). The end of the inscription shows a maṅgala in the shape of a horizontally placed Om̐ symbol (fig. IV a). As already observed this auspicious sign very much resembles type e of the copper-grant of King Indravarman of Kalinga. The maṅgala Om̐ is shown even more conspicuously at the end of Ādityavarman’s undated inscription of ten lines hewn in the rocks at Bandar Batu Bapahat near Suruaso likewise in Sumatra ³⁵). The inscription, hardly to be deciphered, shows at the end a beautiful Om̐ symbol measuring 9 cm as shown in fig. IV type b.

Curious varieties of the maṅgala Om̐ are found in the inscriptions of Ādityavarman of Śaka 1278 (1356 A.D.) and Śaka 1300 (1378 A.D.), now to be seen at Pagarrujung, subdivision Fort Van der Capellen in Sumatra (fig IV c) ³⁶). On top of the memorial stone slab we see in the centre a figure, the lower side of which is formed by an Om̐ symbol in horizontal position. On the left side before the first lines is placed the curious variety of the maṅgala Om̐ as already discussed (fig. IV c) whilst the inscription ends with an Om̐ symbol of the type in use during Ādityavarman’s reign and which resembles the Indian type e of fig. II. Perhaps the purpose of these auspicious signs is no other than to strengthen and protect the power of the edict.

Another variety is seen at the beginning of an inscription of Ādityavarman at Kubur

Raja (Mēnangkabau)³⁷). Here the Om emblem is shown as the first syllable of the text, which otherwise has been written in “barbarous Sanskrit”³⁸). (Fig. IV type d).

When again the patient reader has followed the various varieties of our magical symbol Om, he will not find it difficult to recognize also this auspicious sign in this last of the maṅgalas shown in our table drawn from the epigraphical records of Ādityavarman (fig. IV e). It is to be found on the right side of the first lines of the undated inscription in South-Indian Grantha characters, that was already mentioned in connection with Bandar Batu Bapahat³⁹). It is the finest representation of the magical symbol Om so far met with in Indian records. At the end of our remarks about the Om maṅgala used in Ādityavarman’s time (14th century) we like to observe that the shape of the symbol, of which the engravers of this Sumatran king knew to make such fine varieties, show hardly any resemblance with that sign in the Old-Javanese epigraphy and as we shall see this also will be the case as regards Bali.

We may trust that the examples mentioned above have proved that also in the Indian archipelago the magical syllable Om was used as a maṅgala in its inscriptions. Certainly this will be no news to epigraphists of profession but it might be of value to group the different varieties together. This labor is required when we want to show that also Hindu Javanese and Balinese art made an ample use of said symbols.

The Magical Syllable Om in the Art of Central and Eastern Java

It is a happy circumstance that the finger rings from the Hindu-Javanese period may be considered a link between the epigraphical records and the actual products of art of that period. We avail ourselves of that opportunity to show that at least the shape of our maṅgala Om was used in the art of Central and Eastern Java. This is possible only thanks to the monograph on the subject of those golden finger rings by Professor Bosch of Leyden. Many of those rings show an engraved figure which finds its origin in the design of the syllable *çrī* as known in the old Javanese manuscripts⁴⁰). It is a well known fact that the syllable *çrī* used in this sense, means an auspicious symbol that protects its bearer from evil. On close inspection however it becomes clear that several of these rings also show unmistakably an Om symbol placed above the syllable *çrī*, just as we have encountered it on the flame *uṣṇīṣa* of Buddhist images from Further India, i.e. in fig. I b, d, II b, VI c, VII d, VIII a, b⁴¹). One of these specimens from Professor Bosch’s study is reproduced in plate c. Also on both sides of the elephant hooks or *aṅkuṣa* of ring XII a and b we notice the same Om symbols. Therefore they should not be taken for mere playful curls without meaning; on the contrary, their presence is required to strengthen the magical power of the rings. The central figure here is represented by the auspicious *çrī*. Reluctantly we proceed to those rings where the *nāgarī* script is said to be used. Their surfaces are formed by nail-head type of character as known in India; they consist of triangles whether or not with dots

placed in them. Below these, vertical lines are engraved and between those lines several varieties of small curls are placed that look like question marks in ordinary position (see fig. XIII b, XIV a and B of the study mentioned).

These characters cannot be deciphered and even Brandes was led astray, whilst Professor Bosch recognizes in them a derivation of the *çrī*-syllable ⁴²). Based on our preceding investigations we are of opinion, however, that with more certainty we can accept those curls as representations of the maṅgala Om̐, especially when ring XIII b is taken into consideration, where the familiar Om̐ sign is shown together with the drawn curls of the question mark type in unreversed position (plate d). When the reader has no objections against the above conclusion, we dare to take one step further by assuming to recognize on the backside of the stone image of Blitar (Eastern Java), a huge variety of that question mark. We use the word reluctantly in this respect because we are aware of being in conflict with men of international fame like Brandes and Bosch, as both Orientalists declare to recognize the pattern of this stone to be a variety of the *çrī*-emblem. This is true with the exception of the large stylized curls — the main feature of the figure — which in our opinion represents the auspicious maṅgala Om̐. Nevertheless we have to admit that also in the Indian archipelago we find the Om̐ symbol of type e of fig. II as a rule in the position of the inverted question mark. Exceptions to this rule as seen in those rings of the nāgarī type and the stone of Blitar may occur.

We are again on firm ground when we inspect the ceremonial bell or gaṅṭhā with the upper part formed by a vajra with four points from London's collection of Hīndu-Javanese bronzes ⁴³). On the facing points of the vajra we recognize at once the familiar Om̐ symbol, represented by the type of the inverted question mark of type e, fig. B. On the island of Bali where the gaṅṭhā is the principal attribute in the intricate ritual of the priests the invocational mantra of the gaṅṭhā is Om̐kāra Sadāçīwa ⁴⁴).

A new chapter in the history of the magical Om̐ begins when we discuss — we admit not quite systematically — the famous posthumous statue (abt. 1309) of Kṛtarājasa, ruler of Eastern-Java, an early specimen of the period of art of Majapahit. Judging from the iconographical side, some scholars recognize Śīwa with Vaiṣṇava features, others Viṣṇu with Śaiva features, or Harihara in which both Lords are combined; Śīva being hara and Viṣṇu stands for hari. This statue found at Simping and which is now in the museum in Batavia, combines the attributes of both gods and it carries in the first right hand and second left hand respectively the rosary and a threefold flame-symbol that resembles the triśūla. They are both specific emblems of Śīva. In the first left hand and second right hand is carried the club and the conch shell of Viṣṇu, the latter attribute with the snail, which according to Moens represents the symbol of deliverance, very characteristic of posthumous statues of delivered mortal beings. Our attention is concentrated on the emblem that is carried by this god in the second left hand i.e. the threefold flame-symbol that resembles

the triśūla, in which we recognize very clearly three Om symbols of type e of fig. II viz. the inverted question mark with spiral tail. With our knowledge of this symbol acquired, we must object to the mere acceptance of a simple flame emblem without deeper symbolical sense. We admit that the question mark with spiral tail resembles ordinary flames like those from incense burners as pictured on the reliefs of Bârâbuður, but still there is a difference in shape and this contains a fundamental difference from ordinary flames. We are indebted to Professor Vogel for his penetrating study on *tejas* in the sense of magical power, that gives us the solution for these curious flame symbols used in various circumstances where ordinary flames would be quite out of place⁴⁵). The author proves that the occurrence of flames emanating from the shoulders or in general round the figure of statues of kings and the Buddha as shown a.o. in specimens from Graeco-Buddhist art represents nothing but their magical power, in Sanskrit literature known as *tejas*. As a rule this magical power is reproduced as ordinary flames. Under these circumstances we feel entitled to recognize in those curious small flames issuing from the halo behind Buddhistic statues of the Hindu-Javanese period also a representation of that magical *tejas*. The same curious flames are found also on the back slabs of stone statues from Eastern Java. The remarkable feature of these flames is the fact that in almost all cases they are not pictured as ordinary flames but in the shape of the figure of the magical symbol Om of the type of the inverted question mark with spiral tail. Therefore it stands to reason that we must look for some connection between the conception of *tejas* as magical power or energy and the syllable Om. And there is a connection available in the old literature of India which conception has found its way through many ages to Java. Going all the way back to the Maitrāyaṇa-upaniṣad of the Yajurveda we think we have found the answer in the seventh prapāṭhaka (11) where is said: “This, verily is the intrinsic-form (Svarūpa) of the firmament (nabha) in the vacance of the innerman (antarbhūtasya khe) that is the Supreme Fiery-Energy (*tejas*), determined (abhihita) as the trinity (tredhā) of Fire, Supernal-Sun and Spirit. The intrinsic-aspect of space (nabha-akāśa) in the vacance of the inner man (antarbhūtasya khe) is indeed the Imperishable-Word Om”⁴⁶).

As we have seen before, the trinity mentioned here stands for agni, sūrya and prāṇa that is likewise Om. Deussen’s translation (p. 369) adds that this unlimited power (*tejas*) shall be honored by the sound Om. The equation of *tejas* and Om seems acquired and we may understand now why the supernal energy of gods or of deified kings as in Eastern Java, is represented by the Om symbol of special flame design. The *tejas* or fiery energy emanating from Kṛtarājasa has been very well represented by the threefold flame like emblem, each of which symbolizing at the same time Om and therefore the whole universe. It was a very deep thought to have the equation *tejas* = Om designed as a flame of special design and equal to our auspicious maṅgala. It stands to reason that the flaming Om symbol on the uṣṇīṣa of the Buddha in Siam represents in the first place the magical power or *tejas* of the Lord Śākyamuni, exactly as pointed out by Professor Vogel with regard to the Graeco-Buddhist art.

Critical contributions

If we now direct our attention to the panel reliefs of the temples or caṇḍis Jago and Panataran of Eastern Java, we encounter a new and puzzling aspect of the Om̐ problem. On close inspection of the figures on several of these reliefs it appears that the sculptor made ample use and as it seems in various instances without special purpose, of large Om̐ symbols of type e of fig. II ⁴⁷). But they are not auspicious emblems in the first place and following up Professor Vogel's explanation of the tejas represented by flames we do now understand Stutterheim, who in an earlier study has recognized in those magical flames a representation of that extraordinary magical power or *sēkti* (śakti) that has the same meaning as the powerful tejas. It is exactly the same issue that Professor Vogel developed with regard to India. We have only to add that those sculptors availed themselves of the shape of the maṅgala Om̐ of the type of the inverted question mark with spiral tail and that it represents the presence of the magical sēkti which has the same power as the Old-Indian tejas, the supernatural power or fiery energy. In his *Rāma Legendes* Stutterheim already compared the Sēkti-flames with the Siamese "ulalom", though without explanation.

It is a typical feature of the Indonesian art of Eastern-Java to place the magical symbol next to gods or mortal beings in order to express the presence of their magical power or sēkti and though this power, as we saw, is well known in India, we shall not find a representation as shown in Eastern-Java, on the reliefs of holy monuments in the mother country.

To quote an example: a photograph No. 35 from Brandes' monograph on Caṇḍi Jago we see one of the first episodes of that Buddhistic story called Kuṅjarakaṇḍa, recognized as such by Van Stein Callenfels.

On this relief we see the Yakṣa Kuṅjarakaṇḍa visiting the Supreme Being Vairocana — not pictured as a Dhyāni-Buddha — and who instructs this Yakṣa to pay a visit to the hell in the first place, before he will reveal the true Law ⁴⁸). Round the persons of this relief at least eight sēkti-symbols — as we shall call them here — have been placed; they all seem to represent the magical power that is emanating from them. On other reliefs of the same temple we notice the same appearance; mystical symbols round the principal characters. Of bolder shape are these symbols seen on the reliefs of caṇḍi Panataran of 1323 A.D., of which our plate e shows a clear example. Here we see an episode from the Old-Javanese version of the Rāmāyaṇa of which Brandes says: "Now that was done what he wished that should be done, Hanuman with a war-cry breaks the serpent into pieces and greatly to the alarm of the Rakṣasa that has caught him. Flames are flaring up. All this gives no. 49." ⁴⁹). Indeed, we see the tail of the very popular leader of the army of apes afire. The bold figures above the head of Hanumān are magical Om̐ symbols representing his sēkti or tejas that protects him and allows his acts of miracle. From the story we know with certainty that on plate 13 photograph 52 of Brandes' "Woltentooneelen" are pictured real flames; it is the episode that Hanumān with his flaming tail sets the roof of Rāvaṇa's palace ablaze. These

flames, where amongst others the (Om̐) curl is lacking, show a distinct difference from the sēkti-symbol of the Om̐ type and we should not forget this has certainly been the intention of the sculptor.

Furthermore, we have to draw attention to the metal *kētongans* or *tong-tongs* where we find in various cases large curls placed on both sides of the slotted opening, in which curls some people recognized stylized eyes, but which much more show a likeness with Om̐ symbols of the simple curl design ⁵⁰). Also the ornamental border in many cases is composed of Om̐ symbols that seem flattened out. Even Javanese krisses show representations of the Om̐ symbol and that is not surprising in view of the magic character of these weapons ⁵¹).

The Magic Syllable Om̐ in Bali

In Weck's penetrating study on magical practices still performed by the inhabitants of Bali (East of Java), we find very interesting material on the use of the magic syllable Om̐ in the chapter "Die magischen Schriftzeichen" ⁵²).

For the Balinese, just as for all Asiatic people, the written language contains a meaning, which is far more important than the actual significance of that language. Written characters are magic symbols.

Still greater power than the written characters or symbols is contained in a symbolic monogram. A well known example is the magic dasabayu as seen in fig. V, and which is undoubtedly close akin to the Tibetan monogram of "the all powerful ten", as seen on the left side of the figure. Dasabayu has the same meaning as "powerful ten".

Above this Balinese monogram we recognize again the crescent moon or ardhacandra and above this the sun and the flame, in this case designed as a cone. This threefold symbol is called ulucandra by the Balinese pedanda, who, at the same time, sees it as the akṣaras a + u + m, i.e. the magic syllable Om̐, in Bali called Ong. The syllable Ong is called Ongkāra (Om̐ + Aksara). The three signs of the ulucandra constitute the tryakṣara — the three syllables — but also in accordance with the ancient Indian tradition of the upaniṣad, the lords Brahmā - Viṣṇu - Īśvara (Śiva); moon, sun, fire etc.

The pedanda does not realize any more the connection of the ulucandra with the Indian and Tibetan equivalent Om̐ symbol; neither does he as a rule understand the significance of his magic mantras beginning with Aum or Ong ⁵³). When the pedanda makes a proper use of the dasabayu and ulucandra, illness can be stopped and healing obtained. The ardhacandra has his seat in the eyes, the vindu in the forehead and nāda on the top of the head. This is only one side of the magic powers of these symbols.

Critical contributions

The striking resemblance of the dasabayu monogram with the Tibetan all powerful ten is of course not coincidental. This monogram is clearly of Indian origin and there is reason to believe that the direct source of influence was Bengal and it reached Bali possibly through Java, as we have found the Om̐ syllable also on that island.

And here, in Bali, we end our investigations into the migration of the magic syllable Om̐ which we have followed — not very thoroughly — through India and South East Asia.

¹⁾ KEITH, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 1917, vol. IX, p. 490.

²⁾ DEUSSEN, *Sechzig Upanishads des Veda*, 1938, p. 97-98.

³⁾ *Maitrāyaṇa-upaniṣad*, (6.5).

⁴⁾ *Maitrāyaṇa-upaniṣad*, (6.6).

⁵⁾ In *Maitr. up.* (6) the sun is equal to Om̐. DEUSSEN, *loc cit.*, p. 332: "Führwahr, die Sonne ist dieses Om̐." COOMARASWAMY, *A new approach to the Vedas*, 1933, p. 49: "Beholding that the Supernal- Sun is Om̐, unify therewith thyself." In the same prapāṭhaka (6.4) is also said "the Fiery Energy, the tejas that is the Supernal Sun and it is likewise of the Om̐." We shall refer to this later on.

⁶⁾ *Brahmavidyā-up.* II and III.

⁷⁾ Cf. *Brahmabindu, Amṛtabindu, Dhyānabindu, Tejobindu and Yogaśikha up.*; DEUSSEN, *op. cit.*, p. 643 etc.

⁸⁾ SCHLAGINTWEIT, *Le Bouddhisme au Tibet*, pl. XIV.

⁹⁾ BÜHLER, *Indische Palaeographie*; Grundriss der indo-arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde, 1896, p. 85.

¹⁰⁾ HOERNLE, *The Bower Manuscript, Calcutta*, 1893-1912.

¹¹⁾ *Op. cit.*, p. XXIII.

¹²⁾ BÜHLER, *op. cit.*, T. IV, 6, XVIII, XIX.

¹³⁾ BÜHLER, *op. cit.*, Tafel, V, 47, IX.

¹⁴⁾ BÜHLER, *op. cit.*, Tafel, V, 9, VIII.

¹⁵⁾ KOEPPEN, *Die Lamaistische Hierarchie und Kirche*, 1859, p. 59.

¹⁶⁾ GRÜNWEDEL, *Der Weg nach Śambhala. Abh. kgl. Bayr. Ak. der Wiss. phil.-hist. Kl. Band 29. München* 1918. We owe this deeply buried treasure to POTT, *Yoga en Yantra*, 1946, pp. 61 sq.

¹⁷⁾ A very clear woodcut of the All powerful ten is also to be found in: SCHLAGINTWEIT, *Le Bouddhisme au Tibet, Annales de Musée Guimet*, 1881; pl. XV. The interpretation given however is not correct.

¹⁸⁾ COOMARASWAMY, *Geschichte der indischen und indonesischen Kunst*, 1927, p. 211.

¹⁹⁾ BEFEO, Vol. XIX, p. I etc. For the correct chronology of the monuments see: de CORAL RÉMUSAT; *l'Art Khmer*, 1940, p. 128-130.

²⁰⁾ Vol. VI, Pl. cc XLVIII, cc XLVII, cc XVII, Vol. IV. Pl. cc XXVI, (Lolei).

²¹⁾ The Om̐ symbol is found in the inscriptions of Burma, and also in the later Buddhistic art of that country, as ūṃā.

²²⁾ GROSLIER, *Les collections du Musée Albert Saraut, Ars Asiatica XVI*, 1931, Pl. XXXVII, no.1.

²³⁾ Images of the Buddha from Ceylon are also known to have a flame uṣṇīṣa, This emblem however does not represent the Om̐ symbol, but it looks more like a lyre-like emblem, as Dr. le May calls it. As this Ceylonese variety is not known in Further India, we are not convinced that the flame uṣṇīṣa as found in Siam is derived from Ceylon.

²⁴⁾ LE MAY, *Buddhist Art in Siam*, 1938. The author of this indispensable treatise is the inventor of the expression "inverted question mark with spiral tail."

²⁵⁾ MARCHAL et MIESTCHANINOFF, *Sculptures Khmères*, Pl. VII, VIII. We must admit that the rather cruel features are not very typical for the “softer” Bayon school.

²⁶⁾ A bronze standing statue of Śakyamuni from Laos, with the Om sign as unñālom is to be found in the Ethnographical Museum in Leyden. (Property H. van Meurs) about 18th century.

²⁷⁾ G. GOEDÈS, *Les inscriptions Malaises de Çrīvijaya*, BEFEO XXX, p. 27 etc. With facsimiles. KERN'S facsimiles in *Verspreide Geschriften (V.G.)*, VII, 1917 p. 209 are not clear enough in this respect.

²⁸⁾ COHEN STUART, *Kawi Oorkonden*, 1875. Inscriptions XII and XIV b. Introduction p. X and XI.

²⁹⁾ *Oudheidkundig Verslag (O.V.)* 1925, p. 59-60. STUTTERHEIM, *Epigraphica; Tijdschrift Bataviaasch Genootschap* 75, p. 444, etc.

³⁰⁾ KROM, *Inleiding tot de Hindoe-Javaansche Kunst* (1923) II, plate 46.

³¹⁾ KROM, *H. J. G.*, p. 234; *O.V.* 1921, p. 78, fig. 1.

³²⁾ KERN, *V.G.* VII, p. 80 etc. with facsimile

³³⁾ Though not a dated inscription, we wish to draw attention to the inscribed brick as per No. 52 of Groeneveldts catalogue of the Batavia Museum p. 391. The inscription “Si ka” is preceded by a curl, according to Dr. CRUCQ a symbolic sign. Indeed and we are inclined to call it an Om symbol. Various Om maṅgalas are also to be found in the well-known book on Indonesian alphabets of Holle under the heading “Zintekens”. See CRUCQ, *Epigrafische aantekeningen, O.V.*, 1929, p. 262 and HOLLE, *Tabel van Oud- en Nieuw-Indische Alphabetten*, 1882, p. 33-35. The very fine Om symbols of copperplate II of ç 762 (?) are taken from the “Spurious inscription” No. II of COHEN STUART'S *Kawi-Oorkonden*.

³⁴⁾ KERN, *V.G.* VII, 1917, p. 163-175.

³⁵⁾ *O.V.* 1912, p. 46; Inventaris nr. 39a.

³⁶⁾ *O.V.* 1912, p. 51; Inventaris nr. 23. Photo O.D. no. 1639, 1640; Kern, *V.G.* VI, p. 267 etc.

³⁷⁾ *O.V.* 1912, p. 41; Inventaris nr. 20.

³⁸⁾ KERN, *V.G.* VII, p. 215. Also Kern read the first syllable as Om.

³⁹⁾ *O.V.* 1912, p. 46; Inventaris nr. 39b. Photo O.D. nr. 1646. KROM, *H.J.G.*, p. 414.

⁴⁰⁾ BOSCH, *Gouden vingerringen uit het Hindoe-Javaansche tijdperk, Djâwâ*, VII, 1927, p. 305 etc. We follow here the usual transcription of the Old-Javanese language.

⁴¹⁾ It seems to us that ring XII is to be reversed.

⁴²⁾ *Rapporten van de Commissie in Nederlandsch-Indië voor Oudheidkundig Onderzoek op Java en Madoera, (R.O.C.)*, 1903, p. 18, pl. 30, fig. 6; BOSCH; *op. cit.*, p. 314, pl. B.

⁴³⁾ Cf. STUTTERHEIM, *Cultuurgeschiedenis van Java in beeld*, (1926), fig. 55.

⁴⁴⁾ GORIS, *Bijdrage tot de kennis der Oud-Javaansche en Balineesche theologie*, 1926, p. 13.

⁴⁵⁾ VOGEL, *Het Sanskrit woord tejas (= gloed, vuur) in de beteekenis van magische kracht, Med. Kon. Ak. v. Wetensch; Afd. Letterkunde*, dl. 70, Series B, no. 4; 1930.

⁴⁶⁾ COOMARAWAMY, *A new approach to the Vedas*, 1933, p. 50; Cf. DEUSSEN, *Sechzig Upanishads des Veda*, 1938, p. 368.

⁴⁷⁾ STUTTERHEIM, *Cultuurgeschiedenis van Java in Beeld*, 1926, fig. 124; Caṅḍi Soerawana. We see here Śiva surrounded by magic flames emerging from him during the battle.

⁴⁸⁾ KROM, *Inleiding H.J.K.* II, p. 116.

⁴⁹⁾ BRANDES, *Beschrijving van Tjandi Singasari en de Wolkentooneelen van Panataran*, 1909, p. 24.

⁵⁰⁾ *O.V.* 1929, pl. 35a.

⁵¹⁾ Cf. *Nederlandsch-Indië, Oud- en Nieuw*, 1917, nr. 12, p. 547.

⁵²⁾ WECK, *Heilkunde und Volkstum auf Bali*, 1937, p. 67, etc.

⁵³⁾ De KAT ANGELINO, *Mudra's op Bali*, 1922, p. 61.

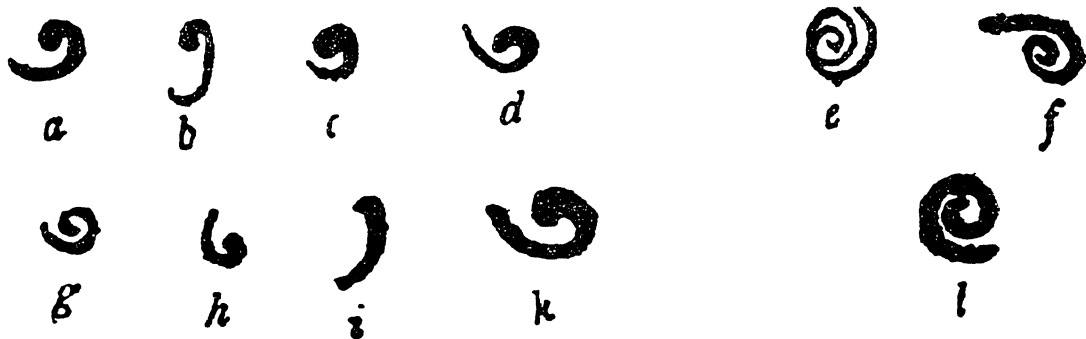


Figure I
Ref. p. 43

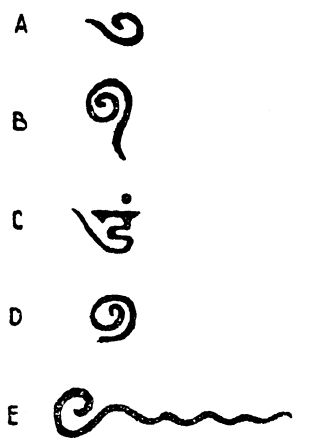


Figure II

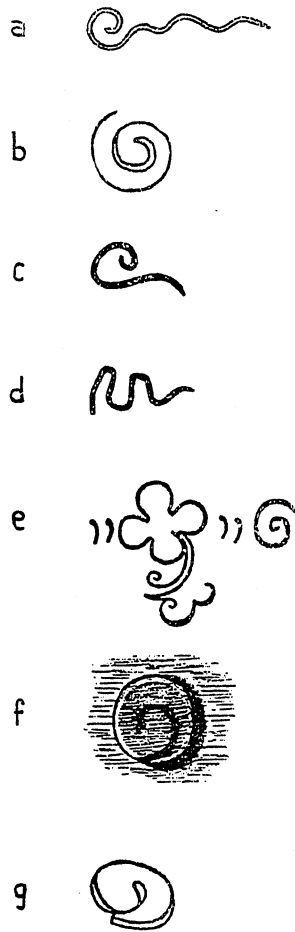


Figure III
Ref. p. 49

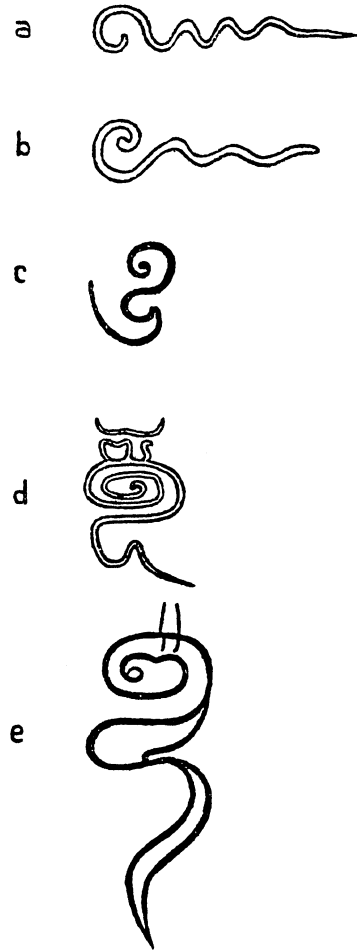


Figure IV
Ref. p. 50

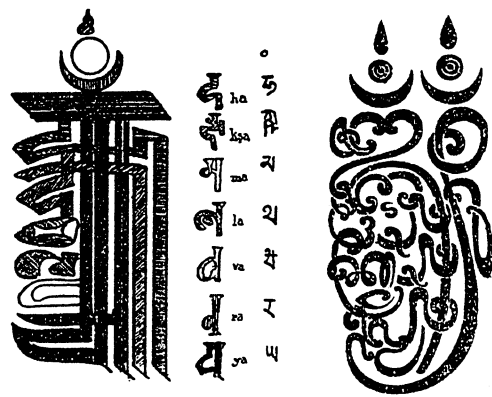


Figure V
Ref. p. 56



Plate VI
Facing p. 48

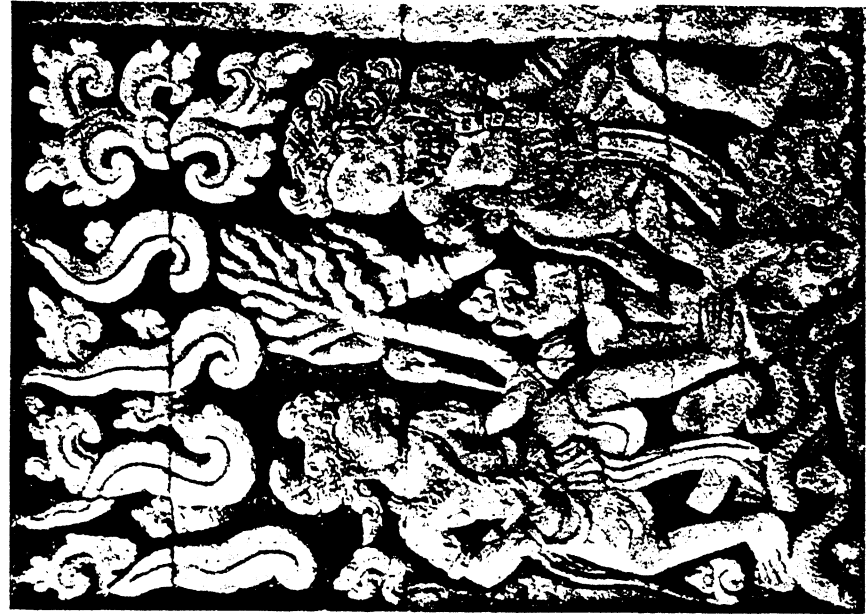
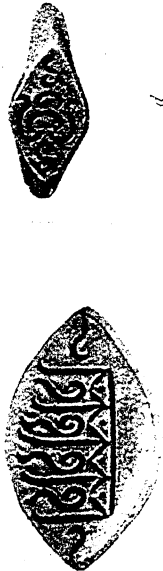
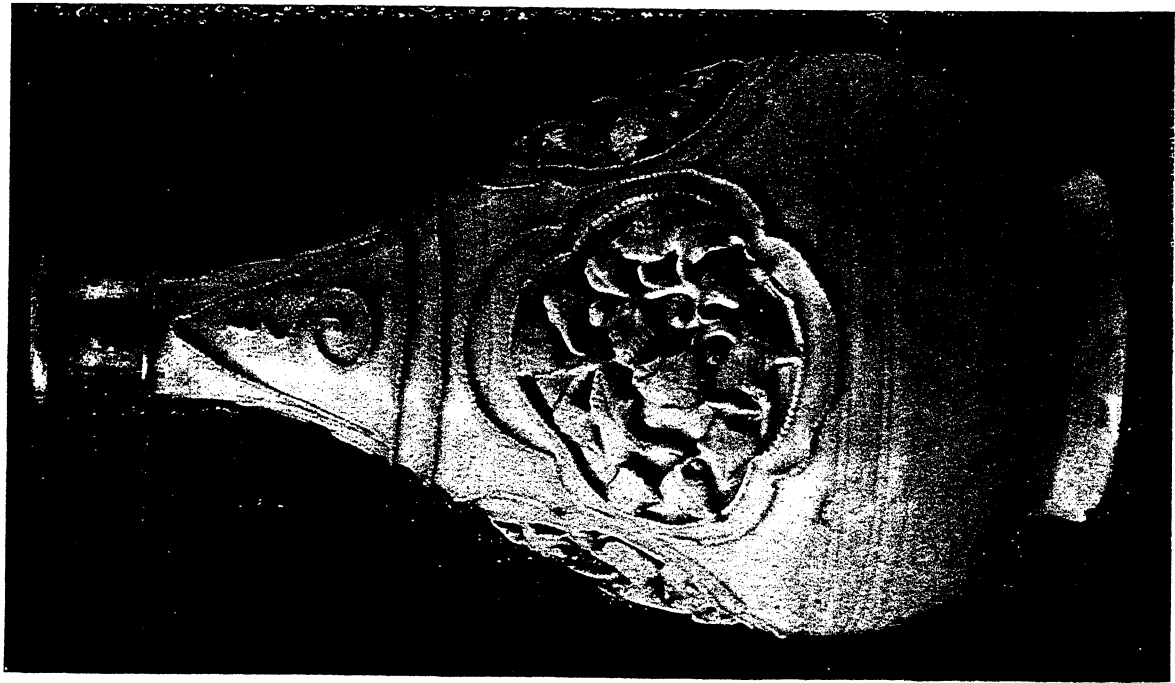


Plate VII
Facing p. 49

ON THE PRIMARY MEANING AND ETYMOLOGY OF THE SACRED SYLLABLE *ōm*

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THE NORDIC SOUTH ASIA CONFERENCE: HELSINKI

1. Introduction

1.1. The religious importance of *ōm*

A paramount representation of Brahma and a pivot for meditation and concentration, the syllable *ōm* has remained sacrosanct in Hinduism for some three millennia. It is a prominent religious symbol in Tantric Buddhism and in Jainism as well.

1.2. Previous research of *ōm*

Rather surprisingly, a comprehensive study of the sacred syllable *ōm* still remains a task to be undertaken. Even substantial articles dealing more extensively with this topic are few in number. Keith¹ has given a useful synopsis, and Boeles² has examined the written symbols of *ōm* in India and abroad. The term *akṣara*, which means both 'imperishable' and 'syllable' and is used with particular reference to *ōm*, has been researched by van Buitenen.³ Other studies worth mentioning are referred to below, in § 2.1.

1.3. The scope of the present paper

The present paper reproduces the essence of a study to be published elsewhere in fuller form and documentation. It concentrates on the most central problem concerning the sacred syllable *ōm*, namely, its primary meaning and etymology. The solution sketched here has been very briefly mentioned by the author on earlier occasions.⁴

2. Earlier etymological explanations

2.1. A synopsis of the explanations offered so far

- 1) *ōm* is originally just a meaningless sound.⁵
- 2) *ōm* < Sanskrit *āp-* 'to attain' (Praṇava-Upaniṣad in Gopatha-Brāhmaṇa 1,1,26) or Sanskrit *av-* 'to urge, to help, etc.' ("some [teachers]" quoted *ibid.*, and Uṇādisūtra 1.141/142).
- 3) *ōm* < Sanskrit **āvam* 'that' (cf. § 4.1).⁶
- 4) *ōm* < Sanskrit *ām* 'yes' < Sanskrit *ā* 'interjection of reminiscence, etc.' (cf. § 4.2-3).⁷
- 5) *ōm* < *ōm̐* < *ō* < Proto-Indo-European **au* 'introductory particle'.

The last mentioned etymology is the one proposed by Maurice Bloomfield in 1889 in his paper "On the etymology of the particle *om̐*"⁸, and the only one mentioned by Manfred Mayrhofer in his recently completed etymological dictionary of the Sanskrit language⁹, as well as by M. B. Emeneau in 1959.¹⁰ It is clearly the currently valid etymology, and deserves a closer scrutiny.

2.2. The primary meaning according to Bloomfield: *ōm* = *atha*

In Bloomfield's opinion, "*om̐* . . . may have been originally nothing but an introductory

word of somewhat the same value as *atha*.” As evidence for this, he quotes two rather late references, *Gr̥hyāsamgraha* 2, 9 and *Vājasaneyi-Prātiśākhya* 1,16-19 correlating the use of *ōm* at the beginning of a Vedic text with that of *atha* in works composed in prose. Warrant for such a use is found by Bloomfield also in Pāṇini’s rule 8,2,87 *om abhyādāne* “*ōm* (is pronounced as prolonged, *pluta*) at the commencement (of the recitation of a sacred text)”.

In fact, there are also other (recent) passages attesting to the pronunciation of *ōm* at the beginning - and end - of a Vedic text to be recited, e.g. *Menu* 2,74-75. From this place it will however appear that *ōm* is not so much an introductory particle as a means for mental concentration, which is accompanied by suppressions of breath. *Ōm* is evidently associated here with Yogic practices, whose purpose it is to ensure that the text taught - or recited at self-study - will be retained in the memory and not slip away.

The beginnings of Yoga seem to be connected with the worship of the rising sun, representing Brahma, the creator and the world soul. At the *sanāhyāvandana*, the worshipper pays homage to the sun with the sacred syllable *ōm* and the *sāvitrī* verse, and identifies himself with Brahma. This daily ritual is the first to be taught to the student at the initiation, the context in which *Manu* deals with the syllable *ōm*.

Beginning, like sunrise, represents creation. *Gr̥hyāsamgraha* 2,9 expressly links *ōm* with creation and indicates that it conveys auspiciousness (inherent in creation). *Āpastamba-Dharmasūtra* 1,13,6-7 explains that *ōm* is the door to heaven, and therefore one who starts reciting sacred texts (conducive to heaven) should begin with *ōm*. The same text also states that “in rites of welfare which belong to the ordinary life (outside the solemn Vedic ritual) such sentences (of benediction) as those containing the words ‘auspicious day’, ‘good luck’, and ‘prosperity’ should start with it (i.e. *ōm*)” (1,13,9). As the commentator explains, these benedictions are pronounced in reply to a request made by the performer of the rite. They are thus quite parallel to the *prasavas* of the śrauta ritual mentioned as beginning with *ōm* in the immediately preceding sūtra (1,13,8).

The *prasava* of the Brahman priest (see § 3.3.1) is the earliest context in which the sacred syllable *ōm* is found in the Vedic texts, and the Brahman priest is the human representative of the divine Brahma, i.e. god Savitar, the rising sun as the instigator. Most of the other ritual usages of *ōm* seem to be derivable from this one.

In any case, it is from the parallelism with *ōm* that the introductory particle *atha* appears to have acquired its auspicious meaning, and this parallelism seems to be secondary and irrelevant to the etymology of *ōm*. But before assessing the primary meaning of *ōm*, let us consider Bloomfield’s etymology.

2.3. Bloomfield’s etymology: $\bar{o}m < \bar{o}m < \bar{o} < \text{Proto-Indo-European } *au$

With reference to Pāṇini’s rule on the prolongation of *ōm* at the beginning of a recitation (cf. § 2.2), Bloomfield continues: “To this long-drawn utterance we may ascribe the nasal, which was afterwards felt an organic part of the word and treated as an independent *m*.” There are, indeed, several Vedic examples of such a nasalization in prolonged syllables,

Critical contributions

e.g. in Ṛgveda 10,146,1 *vindatī3m* for *vindati*.

Bloomfield, thus considering *ō* to be the original form of the sacred syllable, derives it from Proto-Indo-European **au* preserved in such words as Greek α (α -π, α -πς, α -θις), Latin *au-t* (*em*), Gothic *au-k*, etc., the meanings of which point to an original adversative-connective particle comparable to that of Sanskrit *atha*.

Bloomfield further points out that if Greek α is the full-grade ablaut form corresponding to the reduced-grade particle υ in πόνυ-υ, then *ōm* has the same relation to the common Vedic particle *u*, and *u* is always written *ūm* in the *padapāṭhas*.

Bloomfield himself does “not venture to attach any significance” to this last mentioned fact beyond its support for the hypothesis that the nasalization of *ōm* is secondary, but Emeneau calls it a “curious fact” which is “apparently given more weight by Wackernagel”¹⁰.

Wackernagel, it is true, singles out this reference, but at the same time reserves his own judgement, holding the nasalization as possible but not certain: “Vielleicht beruht auch der Opferruf *ōm*, falls dies und nicht *om* die Grundform ist, auf einer derartigen Nasalierung . . .”¹¹ Wackernagel here refers to Jaiminīya-Upaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa 1,24,3 as rejecting the pronunciations *ōm* and *ō*, and accepting only *ōm* as correct. However, the manuscripts, and Bhavatrāta’s quotation in the commentary on Jaiminīya-Śrautasūtra 1,11,9, do not read *ōm*, but *ō* (with a different intonation). Kauṣītaki-Brāhmaṇa 11,5 and 14,3 also discusses *ōm* and *ō* as variant forms used for the attainment of different wishes, stating that as a rule the syllable should be pronounced *ō*. In themselves, such statements by ancient authors are no proofs of the originality of a particular variant. The variation in fact seems to be based not only on temporal but also on local factors¹².

Actually it is equally possible to defend the view that *ōm* and not *ōm* is the original form. In the Vedic (as well as later Buddhist) texts there are clear examples of the dropping of the final *m*, especially before a following vowel, cf. e.g. Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa 7,27 *asmākāsti vīro* for *asmākam asti vīro*, or Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā 2,12,6 *jihvābhi* (*Padapāṭha jihvām abhi*) for *jihvām abhi* in Vājasaneyi-Saṃhitā 28,18 and Taittirīya-Saṃhitā 4,1,8,2. There are many cases in the Ṛgveda and especially in the Atharvaveda for such an elision and contraction, though it is mostly recognizable by means of metre only. The phenomenon has been explained as resulting from a preceding change of *-m > -m̄*; this is regular in Middle Indo-Aryan, where *-m̄* is also often dropped before vowels as well as consonants.¹³

3. The primary meaning of *ōm*: ‘yes’

3.1. Some earlier opinions

The weak point of Bloomfield’s etymology is in the meaning, and in the etymological study of particles meaning is of crucial importance. At the outset of his paper, Bloomfield declares that “the word *ōm*, as we find it in Indian literature, has no organic connection with the language. All its uses are conscious and secondary.” In particular, he turns against the different view adopted by Böhtlingk and Roth: “The Petersburg Lexicon explains *ōm* as a word of solemn asseveration and reverent assent, comparing its meaning with that of

amen of the Scriptures. This explanation involves the transfer of a Semitic conception, colored by Germanic religious feeling; it does not seem to represent an Indian view.”

I shall try to show that Bloomfield is here quite wrong, and that there are cogent reasons for considering ‘yes’ as the primary meaning of *ōm*. If this is the case, Bloomfield’s etymology collapses. And the view that *ōm* originally means ‘yes’ is held by numerous authorities in addition to Böhlingk and Roth, such as Weber, Monier-Williams, Oldenberg, van Buitenen and Zaehner.

3.2. *Explicit statements in ancient texts*

Chāndogya-Upaniṣad 1,1,8 contains an explicit statement on the meaning of *ōm*: *tad vā etad anujñākṣaram; yad dhi kiṃ cānujānāty, om ity eva tad āha*. Bloomfield himself, admitting that this reference might be cited in support of the view he is opposing, translates: “This syllable is one of permission; for when one permits anything he says *om*.” Similar statements are found in Nṛsiṃha-Tāpanīya-Upaniṣad 2,8,3 and 2,8,7.

“But”, says Bloomfield, “such passages must not be employed for the elucidation of the original value of the particle.” Reason: “The statement comes directly from the ritual, in which formulas of assent or permission are introduced by *om*. This, however, is equally true of other formulas, questions, orders (*prāiṣa*), etc., as is in fact stated in the very next verse (Chānd. Up. i.1.9).”

3.3. *Ōm in the formulae and liturgy of the Vedic ritual*

It may readily be admitted that in the Vedic ritual *ōm* is also used in formulae where it does not grant permission; such are for example the very numerous mantras where it is connected with the “mystical words” *bhūr bhuvah svar*. In this case it can be shown that *ōm* has been secondarily added to this series (cf. § 3.4). But this and other secondary developments (cf. § 3.3.1-2) cannot disqualify all evidence suggesting that permission is the primary meaning, although Bloomfield is ready to dismiss it in one broad sentence. The liturgical usage of *ōm* is the oldest we have access to, and thus of the greatest importance for the determination of the primary meaning.

3.3.1. *The prasava of the Brahman priest*

Looking at the references in Bloomfield’s *Vedic Concordance* where *ōm* introduces a mantra, one is struck by the fact that most of the oldest occurrences consist of nothing but of *ōm* followed by an imperative.

It would however be inexact to call these “orders” *prāiṣa*, which in the strict sense refers to the orders given by the Maitrāvaruṇa priest to the Hotar, prompting the latter to recite the verses of invitation to a deity and these orders (e.g. *agnaye ’nubrūhi*) are not introduced with *ōm*.

The proper term for the “orders” introduced with *ōm* is *prasava*, literally ‘instigation’, but in this context also translated ‘permission, assent’¹, which is the literal meaning of the synonymously used term *anujñā*. The corresponding verbs are *pra-sū-* ‘to impel, instigate,

order, permit, allow’, and *anu-jñā-* ‘permit, allow, assent’. Āpastamba-Dharmasūtra (1,13, 8) makes just the following statement about the use of *ōm* in the śrauta ritual (cf. § 2.2): *yajñeṣu caitadādayaḥ prasavāḥ* “and in the sacrificial rites, the instigations begin with it”. The commentator glosses *prasavāḥ* with *anujñāvākyāni brahmādinām* “sentences of assent by the Brahman etc.”, and quotes as examples such mantras as *om praṇaya* or *om stuta*.

It is principally the Brahman priest (sometimes also the Sacrificer, cf. e.g. Baudhāyana-Śrautasūtra 1,5: 7,20 ff.) who utters the prasava. This is indeed one of his principal duties, as is described in detail in the various Śrautasūtras (Śāṅkhāyana 4,6,17; Lāṭyāyana 4,10,29; Āśvalāyana 1,12,11-15; Āpastamba 3,18,9 - 3,19,2; Baudhāyana 3,23-24: 95,21 ff.; Vaitāna 1,2,1; Kauśika 9,9). The study of these passages reveals that the prasava or anujñā is issued by the Brahman (who personifies Bṛhaspati or Savitar) in response to an address (*āmantraṇa*) directed at him by another priest, usually the Adhvaryu, where this states his intention to perform a given act (e.g. *brahmann apaḥ praneṣyāmi*, “O Brahman, I am about to carry forwards the water”). The dialogue (*saṃvāda*, cf. Āpastamba-Śrautasūtra 24,1,9-10) is closed by the Brahman’s reply, which is twofold: first comes an inaudibly muttered mantra (often relating the Brahman to his divine counterpart); then the actual prasava, consisting of *ōm* followed by the imperative of the respective verb (e.g. *om praṇaya*), is said aloud.

In Kauśikasūtra 9,9, the word *ōm* (together with the word *bṛhaspatisūtaḥ*, which properly belongs to the reply of the Brahman only) has been secondarily transferred, on account of the parallelism, from the assent (*anujñā*) to the request for assent (*anujñāpana* = *āmantraṇa*), which in all other texts is devoid of *ōm*.

3.3.2. *The āśrāvaya of the Adhvaryu*

A similar analogical secondary development has apparently taken place in one particularly important *saṃpraiṣa* uttered by the Adhvaryu. These orders issued by the Adhvaryu to other priests usually do not begin with *ōm*. For instance, the Adhvaryu says to the Maitrāvaruṇa priest *agnaye preṣya* immediately before he in turn issues the *praiṣa* (*agnaye ’nubrūhi*) to the Hotar. But immediately after the Hotar has finished the verses of invitation ordered here, the Adhvaryu delivers to the Agnīdh priest the exceptional *saṃpraiṣa* beginning with the sacred syllable: *o(m) śrāvaya!*

The majority of the oldest texts, however, record this formula as *ā śrāvaya* (Kaṭha-Saṃhitā 31,13, etc.), and Āpastamba-Śrautasūtra 2,15,3 has four alternatives: *ā śrāvaya*; *o śrāvaya*; *śrāvaya*; and *om ā śrāvaya*. The last mentioned variant is identical with the prasava uttered by the Brahman just before this, in reply to the Adhvaryu’s declaration worded *brahman pravarāyāśrāvayisyāmi*. It seems clear to me that we witness here a gradual assimilation of the Adhvaryu’s *saṃpraiṣa* to the foregoing prasava.

3.3.3. *The recitation of the Hotar, and the Adhvaryu’s pratigara*

In the recitation of Ṛgvedic verses, the Hotar priest substitutes the sacred syllable *ōm* - which in this context is usually called *pra-ṇava* or ‘fore-shout’ - for the vowel and any possible following consonant(s) of the last syllable of each verse, as well as of the

foregoing *āhāva* ‘invocative call’ (which may be compared with the *āmantraṇa* addressed to the Brahman).

The Adhvaryu priest has to respond (*praty-ā-gar-* or *prati-grh-*) to the Hotar’s *āhāva* and to each of the *praṇavas* as well as to the pauses held at each half verse. The simplest form of the response (*pratigara*) is *ōm*. (Cf. Āśvalāyana-Śrautasūtra 1,2,8-15 and 5,9,7-10.)

3.3.4. *The laud of the Chanter priests*

In the Sāmavedic chant, too, there is a somewhat similar dialogue. After the Prastotar (‘fore-lauder’) has informed the Brahman and Maitrāvaruṇa of the Chanters’ intention to sing a laud and these have issued their prasava (“Ōm, laud ye!”), he sings the prelude (*prastāva*), ending it with *ōm*.

The Udgātar, who chants the immediately following *udgītha*, starts his ‘high chant’ with *ōm*. In specific cases, *ōm* is continued over the entire udgītha. Indeed, it occupies so prominent a position in the Sāmavedic chant that it is considered as its characteristic “form” (cf. e.g. Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 1,4,1,1). It is also significant to note that this first part of the udgītha, which always consists of *ōm*, is called *ādi* ‘beginning’ (cf. e.g. Jaiminīya-Śrautasūtra at Bhavatrāta, p. 214,1 ff.).

3.4. *Early Vedic speculations on ōm*

3.4.1. *Ōm and the three Vedas*

The earliest speculations on *ōm* emphasize its being shared by the liturgy of all the three Vedas, cf. e.g. Chāndogya-Upaniṣad 1,1,9, which Bloomfield cited as counterevidence to the meaning ‘yes’: *teneyaṃ trayī vidyā vartata; om ity āśrāvayaty* [§3.3.2], *om iti śaṃsaty* [§ 3.3.3], *om ity udgāyati* [§ 3.3.4]. We shall see (cf. § 3.5-6 and 4.10) that not only in the case of the prasava, but in all the cases mentioned in Chāndogya-Upaniṣad 1,1, 9, *ōm* denotes assent or permission. This is implied here already by the context, the passage following immediately after Chāndogya-Upaniṣad 1,1,8 quoted in § 3.2. In Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka 7,8,1 = Taittirīya-Upaniṣad 1,8, where *ōm* is said to be *anukṛti* ‘compliance’, these same and other similar ritual uses are enumerated.

3.4.2. *Brāhmaṇa-texts on the Brahman’s duties*

Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 11,5,8 and Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa 1,357-358 discuss the duties of the Brahman priest and especially the three “mystical words” (*vyāhṛti*) *bhūr bhuvah svar*. They have to be pronounced all three in succession, when an error not clearly assignable to a particular Veda or an error concerning all the three Vedas is concerned, while an error related to the Ṛgveda only is to be expiated by pronouncing the word *bhūh* alone *Bhuvah* is similarly connected with the Yajurveda, and *sva* with the Sāmaveda. The word *ōm* is not mentioned in this connection at all.

In the parallel passage of Kauṣītaki-Brāhmaṇa 6,10-12, there is also a discussion of the *prasava* (§ 3.3.1), which is said to consist of nothing but the word *ōm*. *Ōm* is, however, not linked with the “mystical words”, which are correlated with the three worlds (earth, atmosphere and sky, and the three Vedas in a creation myth).

Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa 5,32-34 appears to represent the youngest textual development in the description of the Brahman's duties, for here a similar creation account ends in deriving *ōm* from the three sounds *a*, *u* and *m*, which Prajāpati finally produced from the three "mystical words" respectively. This is stated to be the reason why the Brahman priest in his reply to (the representatives of) each of the three Vedas (corresponding to the three "mystical words") says *ōm*.

Once *ōm* had been explained as the essence of the three "mystical words", it also started being added to the expiatory formula *bhūr bhuvah svar*, so as to make *bhūr bhuvah svar om*, or being substituted for it as its equivalent. All these three alternatives are given in Jaiminīya-Upaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa 1,18, where the use of the youngest formula, the mere *om*, is prescribed as the correct procedure.

Through their etymological meaning the three "mystical words" are equal to "this whole (universe)", with which the formula *bhūr bhuvah svar* is identified (cf. Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa 1,357). Naturally their "essence", the syllable *ōm*, is also identified with "this whole (universe)" (cf. Chāndogya-Upaniṣad 2,23,4) and with the world soul Brahma which represents everything (cf. Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka 7,8,1, etc.). From the identification of *ōm* with the three worlds, the three Vedas, and the three "mystical words", it is a short step to further equations, such as with the past, present and future in Māṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad 1,1.

From the point of view of the present study, it is important to observe that at the beginning of this speculative development stands the discussion of the *prasava* in Kauṣītaki-Brāhmaṇa 6,12. And in the *prasava*, *ōm* was beyond any doubt understood to mean 'yes'. Let us quote here still the commentary on one of the earliest *prasavas*, *om pratiṣṭha* in Vājasaneyi-Saṃhitā (Mādhy.) 2,13: *om ity aṅgikārthaḥ: tathāstu!*

3.5. *Ōm and tathā*

That *ōm* means 'yes' also in the Adhvaryu's *pratigara* is plain from Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa 7,18 and Śāṅkhāyana-Śrautasūtra 15,27. According to these texts, when the Śunaḥśepa legend is told, the Adhvaryu responds with *ōm* to a *ṛk* verse, and with *tathā* to a *gāthā* verse related by the Hotar (*om ity ṛcaḥ pratigara, evaṃ tatheti gāthāyāḥ*). The statement that "*ōm* is divine, *tathā* is human" (ibid.) can hardly mean anything else than that *ōm* is the sacred (hieratic, ritualistic) counterpart of the normal profane affirmative particle *tathā*. *Tathā*, or in fuller form *tathāstu* (e.g. in Viṣṇu-Smṛti 73,29), literally means 'so' or 'be it so!' For the meaning, cf. Latin *sic* 'so; yes' > Italian & Spanish *si* 'yes', etc.

The parallelism of *tathā* and *ōm* is clear from several other Vedic passages, too, e.g. Āśvalāyana-Śrautasūtra 8,3,25, where the *pratigaras* to the devanītha hymn are specified to be *om ha jaritar othāmodaiva* and *tathā ha jaritar othāmodaiva*.

3.6. *Ōm and Hebrew 'āmên*

It is certainly a mistake to think (as has sometimes been done) that *ōm* and Hebrew 'āmên are etymologically related. But their respective uses may be profitably compared.

The Hebrew word, meaning ‘certainly, truly’, when used formulaically denotes the acceptance of what has been said before. Such a use of *’āmên* is known already from the Old Testament (cf. Deut. 27:15-26; Jer. 11:5). In the liturgical praise (doxology), the congregation replies by pronouncing this word (1 Chron. 16:36; Neh. 8:6; Ps. 41:4; 72:19; 89:53; 106:48), and in this connection the word has two shades of meaning: ‘it is so!’ and ‘be it so!’¹⁴

Such a usage appears to be very widespread among different peoples throughout the world, and for quite natural reasons. In a Namibian divination ceremony, the accompanying party claps their hands and says together *ye savuma*, ‘Ye, we agree’, to each and every statement made by the diviner.

This kind of asseveration has much the same function as the refrain in the choral performance of primitive song: to assert the communal character by making the party join the leader.¹⁶ For non-Vedic parallels from India, see § 4.10.

3.7. *Ōm* in profane speech

Ōm is used as an affirmative particle also in several non-liturgical discussion in the Brāhmaṇa and Upaniṣad texts, as well as in later classical literature. One example may suffice.

In Brhad-Āraṇyaka-Upaniṣad 6,2,1, Pravāhaṇa Jaibali asks Śvetaketu Āruṇeya: “Have you been instructed by your father?” He answers: “*Ōm*.” When Jaibali thereafter asks him, “Know you how people here, on deceasing, separate in different directions?”, the answer is: “No (*na*).” The parallel passage in Chāndogya-Upaniṣad 5,3,1 ff. confirms the affirmative meaning of *ōm*; here the reply to the question, *kumāra, anu vāśiṣat piteti*, “Young man, has your father instructed you?”, is given in a different way, by repeating the preverb: *anu hi bhagava iti*, “He has indeed, Sir.”

Cf. further Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa 1,43-44 and 3,270; Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa 10,6,1,4-9; 11,6,3,4 ≈ 14,6,9,1-2 (= BĀU 3,9,1-2); 14,8,2,1-4 (= BĀU 5,2,1-4), and in later literature, Mālatīmādhava 6; Śiśupālavadhā 1,75; Sāhityadarpaṇa 1.

3.8. *Ōm* and *na*

In the above-quoted discussion, *ōm* alternates with *na* as the affirmative and negative reply respectively. In some texts these two words are expressly contrasted, e.g. in Aitareya-Āraṇyaka 2,3,8 *yad vāca om iti yac ca neti*, translated by Keith “of speech that which is ‘yes’ and which is ‘no’ ”, and by Horsch “Was der Rede Ja und Nein . . .” Their difference is discussed ibidem 2,3,6, a highly instructive passage, from which it is clear that *ōm* is the word used when one agrees to give away something that one possesses to another person requesting it, and *na* again the word used when one selfishly denies the request. *Ōm* therefore represents truth, and *na* untruth.

According to Baudhāyana-Śrautasūtra 2,2: 35,1 ff., when requested by the Sacrificer to give him the sacrificial ground, the Adhvaryu priest grants the request by saying *om tathā*.

In Jaiminīya-Śrautasūtra 1,2,16-18, the Udgātar, when requested by the Sacrificer to give the sacrificial ground, first replies inaudibly *tathā* and then aloud *ōm*. According to Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa 7,20, the royal sacrificer should request the sacrificial ground from the rising sun; “in that being asked here he creeps upwards, therewith he in effect says: ‘Yes, I give it’ ” (*sa yat tatra yācita uttarām sarpaty, oṃ tathā dadāmīti haiva tad āha*). The word *uttara* ‘higher, upper (sc. direction)’ evidently suggests here the meaning ‘reply’. The commentator compares the sun’s creeping up to the waving of hand or head by means of which men silently give an affirmative reply.

4. The etymology of *ōm* ‘yes’

4.1. *Ōm* and Sanskrit **avam* ‘that’

The Prakritic development *ava* > *au* > *ō* is well attested in a number of Vedic words, and the semantic development ‘that’ > ‘yes’ can be paralleled by Latin *hoc illud* ‘this here’ becoming French *oui* ‘yes’¹. The difficulty with Windischmann’s old etymology (§ 2.1.3) is the extreme rarity of the pronoun *av-* in Sanskrit - it occurs only three times in the Ṛgveda (6,67,11; 7,67,4; 10,132,5), always in the genitive-locative of the dual (*avós*) - and the absence of the meaning ‘yes’ in the use of the cognate Old Iranian *ava-* ‘that’ and Old Church Slavonic *овъ* ‘that’.

4.2. *Ōm* and Sanskrit *ām* ‘yes’

Weber’s suggestion that *ōm* is just a “dumpfe Aussprache” of the Sanskrit particle *ām* ‘yes’ (§ 2.1.4) does not suffer from such difficulties.

Ām occurs for the first time in Sanskrit in Pāṇini’s grammar (8,1,55). The lexicographers record it in the meaning ‘yes’ (Amarakośa 3,5,16; Trikāṇḍaśeṣa 3,4,2; Hemacandra 1540, comm.; Hemacandra, An. 7,2; Medinīkośa, Avy. 50) and as an interjection of reminiscence (in the last two references). As an affirmative particle it is found in a very large number of Neo-Indo-Aryan languages, usually in the form *ā̃*, or with an aspiration (for which see § 4.9) *hā̃*.¹⁷

Phonetically the change *ām* > *ōm* may be explained as due to the labialization of the vowel, conditioned by the following labial nasal, whose articulation position is anticipated by the speech organs. This hypothesis is supported by an independent parallel (see § 4.7).

4.3. Sanskrit *ām* and the Sanskrit particle *ā*

But if *ām* is the origin of Sanskrit *ōm*, what is the etymology of Sanskrit *ām*? Weber suggested the Sanskrit particle *ā* (§ 2.1.4), assuming that the nasal is secondary and due to the lengthened pronunciation (cf. § 2.3). This is implausible, because the lexicographers do not know Sanskrit *ā* in the meaning ‘yes’, though as a particle of reminiscence it may be the origin of the secondary use of *ām*. The affirmative sense is equally absent from the other Indo-European words to which *ā* is compared.¹⁸

4.4. The age of *ōm* and *ām* in Sanskrit

Ōm is first recorded in the Yajurvedic Saṃhitās (Vājasaneyi-Saṃhitā M 2,13; Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā 4,9,2) *ām* in Pāṇini 8,1,55. Both are thus absent from the oldest Vedic texts,

although such indirect references as Ṛgveda 1,162,41-42³ and Atharvaveda 13,1,15 (cf. *ibid.* 10) and 13,3,6 suggest that *ōm* was already current as an important religious word. The contexts which cannot be discussed here, suggest that it stems from the religion of the pre-Vedic inhabitants of India, which was gradually and selectively adopted by the Vedic Aryans (cf. § 5).

The word could therefore be rather of Dravidian than of Indo-European etymology. Thomas Burrow, for instance, has pointed out that “the most” important source of the foreign element in the Sanskrit vocabulary is to be found in the Dravidian languages” and that the large majority of the Dravidian loans first appear in the early stage of classical Sanskrit, “being first recorded in Pāṇini, Patañjali, Mahābhārata, Śrautasūtra, etc.”¹⁹

4.5. Dravidian *ām* ‘yes’ < ‘it is, it is becoming’

The principal word for assent in all the main literary Dravidian languages is clearly related to Sanskrit *ām*: Tamil *ām* ‘yes, so, expressing assent, recollection’; Malayalam *ām* ‘a particle expressing ability, possibility, willingness, permission, suitability’; Kannada *ām* ‘an interjection of assent or recollection’; Telugu *avunu* ‘yes’.²⁰ Cognates can be found in several other Dravidian languages, too.

It is widely accepted that *ām* in these Dravidian languages is a regular contraction of *ākum*, due to the loss of the intervocalic *-k-* [-*g*-/*y*-], which is very common in spoken Tamil, and known from Malayalam and Kannada, too. (The spirantization of the voiced intervocalic guttural is assumed to have taken place already in Proto-Dravidian.) *-aku-* in such contractions results in *-ā-*.²¹ The Telugu form *avunu* or *agun* corresponds etymologically to Tamil *ākum*, the final *-m* having in Telugu changed into *-n*, and the euphonic *-u* having been added.²²

Ām/ākum is originally the third person finite form of the non-past (i.e. present/ habitual/ future) tense of the native Dravidian root *ā-/āk-* ‘to be, to become’, attested in virtually all known Dravidian languages, and used as a basic auxiliary verb, also in the meaning ‘to become, to be fitting, suitable, agreeable’.²³ The non-past third person suffix *-um* can also with certainty be reconstructed for Proto-Dravidian.²²

The corresponding negative form of the same root is in several languages used as a negative reply, e.g. Tamil *ākātu* ‘no’ and Telugu *kādu* (with characteristic initial metathesis) ‘no’, literally ‘it is not, it is not becoming, it is not agreeable’.²⁴

4.6 The Vedic analysis of Sanskrit *ōm*: *a+u+m*, *ō3m*, **āum*

It is possible that the analysis of Sanskrit *ōm* as resulting from the putting together of *a*, *u*, and *m*, first recorded in Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa 5,32 (cf. § 3.4.2), is due to speculation based upon the discovery of sandhi.²⁵

Certain peculiarities in the sandhi of *ōm* show that it was understood to consist of the preposition *ā* followed by *um*,²⁶ and as *ōm* is said to be three morae long (cf. e.g. Maitrāyaṇī-Upaniṣad 6,3), its assumed form may be reconstructed as **āum*. This is very close to the

uncontracted alloforms of *ām* in the various dialects of modern Tamil [*āgum*, *āyum*, *āxum*, *āvum*], as well as to Gujarati *āū* ‘yes’. Taking into account that intervocalic hiatus resulting from the loss of intervocalic voiced stops is attested in early Prakrit (cf. Pāṇini 6,2,70 *māireya* ~ Ṛgvedic *madira*),²⁷ it does not seem impossible that the Vedic analysis of *ōm* as **āum* might as well be based on an early North Dravidian alloform of *ām*.

4.7. *The labialization of ām ‘yes’ in Tamil dialects*

Vedic *ōm* might therefore also be derived from **āum*, with the contraction of *ā + u > ō* in accordance with the Sanskrit sandhi. The alternative hypothesis of a labialization of *ām* (cf. § 4.2), which may have taken place in an early North Dravidian dialect,²⁸ seems more likely. An independent parallel for such a labialization in this very word is offered by the Tamil dialects. In the Jaffna dialect of Sri Lanka, Tamil *ām* ‘yes’ has become *ōm*.²⁹ Another example of labialization is the suffix of the first person plural of the finite verb forms, Tamil *-ōm* < *-ām*.³⁰

4.8. *Intensifying reduplication of ām ‘yes’*

An intensifying reduplication of the affirmative particle may naturally be expected to take place in affective speech, and *ām* ‘yes’ is indeed very often repeated in colloquial Tamil, as *ām-ām* or rather *ām-ā*, sometimes even *ām-ām-ā*.³¹ This provides an explanation for the Prakrit affirmatives *āmaṃ* or *āma* ‘yes, indeed, certainly’ (e.g. in Hāla’s *Sattasāi* 417), Pali *āma* ‘id.’ (in *Jātaka*, *Dīghanikāya*, *Milindapañha*, etc.).

4.9. *Facultative initial aspiration of ām ‘yes’ in Neo-Indo-Aryan*

A Dravidian etymology for Indo-Aryan *ām* ‘yes’ would also explain its frequent initial aspiration, with aspirated and unaspirated variants occurring even within one and the same language.¹⁷ The aspiration seems to reflect the subphonemic glottal stop, which in North Dravidian reinforces all initial vowels. In the transcription of Brahui, this glottal stop at the beginning of the word has been marked with *h-*. I have elsewhere discussed this question on the basis of eight Indo-Aryan etyma with a probable Dravidian origin and a facultative *hV-/V-* alternation.³²

4.10. *Ōm and hum*

One of these words with the *hV-/V-* alternation (in addition to *ām*) must be briefly recounted here, because it is nearly synonymous with *ōm* and provides a particularly instructive parallel to its use in the Vedic liturgy.

Among Dravidian-speaking Todas of the isolated Nilagiri hills of South India, the narrator of a story exclaims at the end of every sentence *ini*, and the audience exclaims in response, *ī, ī!* This exclamation is etymologically related to Telugu *ū*, translated ‘ay! yes! what next?’, similarly ejaculated in response in hearing a story, indicating that one is listening and expecting to hear the sequel. In Tamil, too, there is a related interjection *um*, also used in urging on the story-teller. Burrow and Emeneau consider this etymon to be Dravidian in origin.³³

Tamil *um* can also be more generally used as an affirmative particle. Its relation to *ām* is

exemplified in the following sentence quoted and translated by Arden: *tirunāḷukkup pōki-rāyā eṇṇāl ām, ām! tirumpi varukirāyā eṇṇāl um, um!* “ If we ask anyone, ‘Art thou going to a festival?’, he says ‘Yes, yes.’ If we ask, ‘Art thou coming back?’, he grunts ‘Um, um!’”³⁴ Here the speaker replying *um* appears to be angry.

The Sanskrit particles *um*, *ūm*, *hum* and *hūm* are explained by lexicographers as interjections with many different meanings, those of question, assent, and anger being most often mentioned. Sanskrit *hum/hūm* has cognates in Pali, Prakrit and many Neo-Indo-Aryan languages. The meanings of the different Neo-Indo-Aryan languages make it quite certain that this etymon is related to Tamil *um* etc., for apart from ‘grunt of assent’, the word is used as ‘grunt to drive a camel or to urge on cattle’ as well as (at least in Sindhi, Gujarati and Marathi) ‘sound of attention or assent made during a narrative’.³⁵

The exclamation *hum* appears already in the Sāmavedic chant, where it normally starts the *pratihāra* part (the term means ‘reception’) following the udgītha, the chief part chanted by the Udgātar. Moreover, when the verses of the chant are repeated, as e.g. in the ājya lauds, each turn, with the significant exception of the first one, is introduced by the exclamation *hum*, pronounced by the ‘fore-lauder’, Prastotar (cf. Lāṭyāyana Śrautasūtra 1,12,8-9). It appears to function as a signal that one verse has been completed and that a new one is about to begin.

I am told that in Sri Lanka there are verbal contests during festivals for Tamils whose forbears have come from South India in the 19th century. These contests involve two performers, who try to outwit each other with improvised verses. Each of these verses is concluded with a challenging *-y-ām-ā*, which serves to the other as a signal that one has concluded. The opponent replies *ām-ā*, and goes on with his reply. The audience reacts to the performance, clapping their hands and shouting *ām-ā* ‘yes, yes!’ or *vā! vā!* ‘come, come!’ ‘for good turns, and - though there is seldom cause for this, since the performers are usually very skillful - *pō! pō!* ‘go, go!’ or *pōtum* ‘enough!’ for bad turns.³⁶

Thus the very word *ām* is attested in this popular usage, which is widely documented for the word (*h*)*um*. We have already seen (cf. § 3.5) that *ōm* - and the synonymous *tathā* ‘yes’ - were used as responses to each single verse in the recitals of ancient popular narratives, during such Vedic rituals as the royal consecration and the horse/human sacrifice (which is all likelihood are of pre-Vedic Indian origin)³⁷.

5. Conclusion

Unfortunately I cannot here discuss other aspects relating to the early religious uses of the sacred syllable *ōm*, particularly in connection with the cult of the (rising) sun. In my opinion this word of the utmost religious importance provides yet another proof that the religion of pre-Vedic India goes back to a large extent to a Dravidian substratum. I have discussed elsewhere another key term of early Vedic religion, *kimpuruṣa*, coming to a similar conclusion. In that and other connections I have given grounds for my basic working hypothesis, according to which the Dravidian substratum is to be linked with the Harappan culture. Its traditions were transmitted to Vedic times by an earlier wave of non-

Vedic Aryans, the Dāsas and Vrātyas.³⁷

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¹ Keith 1917.

² Boeles 1947.

³ van Buitenen 1959.

⁴ Cf. Parpola 1978, p. 248, n. 7.

⁵ Cf. Hauer 1958, p. 24 f. and p. 451, n. 22 (Hauer compares *ōm* to the sound of the bull-roarer) Heiler 1961, p. 307 f. (*ōm* is 'numinous primordial sound'); Keith 1917, p. 490 (*ōm* developed from the nasalized lengthening of the final vowel in the R̥gvedic recitation: cf. § 3.3.3, and contra, § 3.4.1).

⁶ Windischmann 1834, p. 144; Benfey 1848, p. 41; Müller 1899, p. 322.

⁷ Weber 1853, p. 187 f., n.; Böhrtlingk & Roth 1855 I, col. 1122.

⁸ Bloomfield 1889. Cited below without further reference.

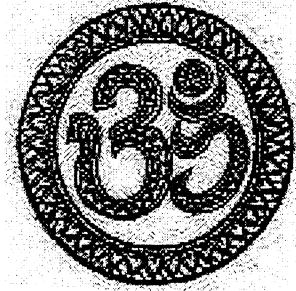
⁹ Mayrhofer 1976 III/26, p. 657.

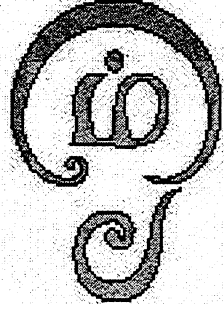
¹⁰ Emeneau 1959.

¹¹ Wackernagel 1896 I, p. 302.

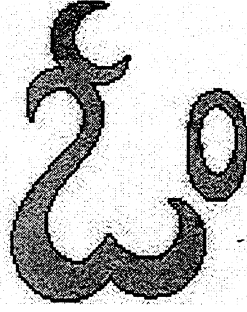
Critical contributions

- ¹² Cf. Bharati 1965, p. 133, 136.
¹³ Cf. Wackernagel 1896 I, p. 333; Pischel 1900, § 348-350.
¹⁴ Palva 1974, p. 11.
¹⁵ Cf. Hunter 1964, p. 337 ff.
¹⁶ Cf. Bowra 1963, p. 49 f.
¹⁷ Cf. Turner 1966, no. 1235.
¹⁸ Cf. Mayrhofer 1956 I, p. 69.
¹⁹ Burrow 1973², pp. 380, 385 f.
²⁰ TL I, p. 233; ML II, p. 3; Kittel 1968² I, p. 144; Brown 1903², p. 97.
²¹ Cf. TL & ML (n. 20); Caldwell 1913³, p. 361; Arden 1942⁵, pp. 140, 204, 245; Andronov 1967, p. 212; Zvelebil 1970, pp. 120-122, 24.
²² Cf. Subrahmanyam 1971, pp. 317-321.
²³ Burrow & Emeneau 1961, 1968, 1972 (DED + DE DS + DEN), no. 282.
²⁴ Cf. *ibid.* and Arden 1942⁵, pp. 223, 245.
²⁵ Cf. Scharfe 1977, p. 79, n. 14.
²⁶ See especially Hoffmann 1976, p. 554, n. 5.
²⁷ Cf. Emeneau 1966, p. 129.
²⁸ A possible North Dravidian labialization of $\bar{a} > \bar{o}$ due to the immediately following labial semivowel $-v-$ (later lost) is found in Kurux $\bar{o}y$ 'cow' and Malto $\bar{o}yu$ 'cow, ox' < Proto-Dravidian $*\bar{a}-l\bar{a}-v-$, cf. Pfeiffer 1972, p. 58, no. 362. On the other hand, there seems to be no parallel to $\bar{o}m$ quotable from Sanskrit (cf. Wackernagel 1896 I, p. 40) or Prakrit (cf. Pischel 1900).
²⁹ Cf. Jotimuttu 1970³, p. 27; TL I, p. 624b s.v. $\bar{o}m-pa\mu$.
³⁰ Cf. Caldwell 1913³, p. 361.
³¹ Cf. Arden 1942⁵, p. 285; TL I, p. 235a; Andronov 1967, p. 212.
³² Parpola 1978.
³³ Burrow & Emeneau 1961 (DED), no. 552.
³⁴ Arden 1942⁵, p. 285.
³⁵ Turner 1966, no. 14132-3.
³⁶ Oral information given by Mr. S. Chandrasekeram, Helsinki.
³⁷ Parpola 1980; 1975.

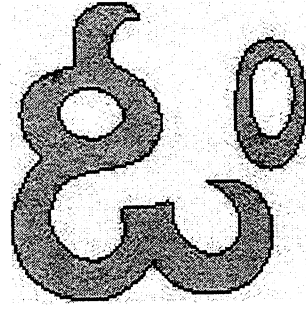




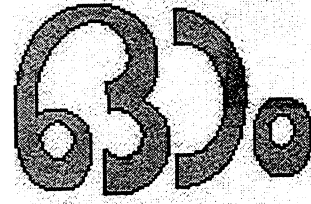
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दाक्षिण्य भाषा प्रणव प्रतीक



ON THE ORIGIN AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE SACRED SANSKRIT SYLLABLE *OM*+*

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0. In a recent paper (1981), Parpola claims that the Sanskrit particle *om* (also referred to as *praṇava*) was borrowed from Dravidian in the meaning ‘yes’. He rejects earlier views, including Keith’s (1917) derivation of *om* from the nasal(ized) lengthening of final vowels in Vedic recitation. (Keith’s derivation agrees with Bloomfield’s earlier (1890) interpretation as far as the origin of the nasal is concerned. Bloomfield, however, derived the particle from PIE **au* which he glossed as ‘now then, well now’. Recitational nasalization is considered a possibility also in Wackernagel 1896:302. For other early views see Böhrtlingk & Roth 1855 s.v. *om* and Weber 1853:187-8.)

Parpola’s argument is based first on his reading of the Śrautasūtras as establishing the liturgically oldest use of *om*: According to him, the word is used in expressions such as *om praṇaya* ‘*om*, bring forward’ which he calls *prasava* and glosses as ‘literally “instigation”, but in this context also translated “permission, assent” ...’ The passage cited in example (1), with *om* substituting for the prefix *ā*, in his view, then, reflects a secondary extension, ‘a gradual assimilation of the Adhvaryu’s *saṃpraīṣa* to the foregoing *prasava*.’

- (1) a) *ó śrāvaya* (MS 1.4.11)
b) *óm śrāvaya* (MS 4.1.11)
= *ā śrāvaya* (KS 31.13) etc.
‘Call for the śrausaṭ.’

A similar extension is in Parpola’s view found in the Rig-Vedic recitation of the *hotṛ*, where *om* is substituted ‘for the vowel and any possible following consonant(s) of the last syllable of each verse,’ as well as in the *adhvaryu*’s response or *pratigara*. These two uses of *om* are not specially illustrated by Parpola; for examples see (2) and (3). (Example (2) actually represents a special modification or modulation and extension of the *praṇava*, called *nyūñkha*. For the present purposes, we can ignore the modulation characterized by the nasalized *ṁ* and concentrate on the *o*-vocalism into which the *ṁ* is inserted.¹ For the time being, I will leave (3) uninterpreted.) Parpola finds similar extended uses of *om* in Sāmavedic recitation.

- (2) *āpo 3 ṁ ṁ ṁ ṁ ṁ o 3 ṁ ṁ ṁ ṁ ṁ o 3 ṁ ṁ revatīḥ ...*
vayo dhom (AŚS 7.11.7)
= *āpo revatīḥ ...vāyo dhāt* (RV 10.30.12)
‘Wealthy waters ..., may she bestow vigor.’
(3) *othāmodaivom* (AŚS 7.11.15; sim. ib. 17 and elsewhere)

In his interpretation, Parpola thus clearly disagrees with Keith’s earlier assumption that the uses of *om* in examples like (1) - (3) are primary. Moreover, he disagrees with the view that the nasalization of *om* reflects recitational practices. Instead, he argues that examples

like (1a), without nasal, can be related to the fact (noted by Wackernagel 1896:333) that final *-m* occasionally drops before vowel-initial words. To support his claim that the original meaning of *om* is ‘yes’, Parpola points to the passage in (4) in which *om* is directly equated with *tathā*, a word which clearly can be employed in the meaning ‘yes’.

- (4) *om ity ṛcaḥ pratigara evaṁ tatheti gāthāyā om iti vai daivam evaṁ tatheti mānuṣam* (AB 7.18.13)
 ‘*Om* is the response to the ṛc, *evaṁ tathā* of the gāthā; *om* is of the gods, *evaṁ tathā* of men.’

Parpola argues that *om* and the related *ām*, which he considers post-Vedic, are derived from Dravidian words for ‘yes’ such as Tam. *ām*, which in turn are internally motivated in Dravidian as derivatives from **ākum*. Finally, he attempts to relate *om* and *ām* to the particle *hum*, by pointing to Dravidian uses of a particle *ũ* used both for assent and as an ‘ejaculation’ of response ‘in hearing a story’.

In this paper I argue that the chronology of Vedic attestations suggests that the meaning ‘yes’ is innovated, that Keith’s ‘recitational’ derivation of *om* is more consonant with the Vedic facts, but that in addition we need to postulate an ‘exclamatory’ origin for some of the uses of *om*. It is not entirely clear whether these two different sources can be reduced to one. I conclude by speculating on the path by which *om* became the Sanskrit sacred syllable par excellence.

1. To come to a better understanding of *om* it is, I believe, necessary to go beyond the fairly late evidence of the Śrautasūtras, and of the likewise quite late Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa passage in (4) and to examine instead the earliest relevant attestations, found in the Yajur-Veda Saṁhitās and in the Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa, one of the oldest brāhmaṇa texts.²

1.1. Let me begin with the citations in (5). Of these, only the ones in (a) and (c) are compatible with Parpola’s claim that *om* in the oldest ritualistic texts introduces prasavas. That interpretation is not possible for the similar (d), since the latter is not directed at a participant in the ritual. And the interpretation is rather difficult to apply to (b), in which the person addressed is a participant in the ritual, but is not asked to engage in any ritual act (other than to respond to the question being asked).

- (5) a) *bhūr bhúvaḥ svàr devásya savitúḥ prasavé bṛhaspáti-prasūtā* |
óm indravántaḥ pracarata (MS 4.9.2)
 ‘*Bhūr bhúvaḥ svàr*, under the impulse of god Savitr (the impeller), impelled by Bṛhaspati;
Om, proceed, (you) with the word *Indra!*’
- b) *áver apò ‘dhvaryá3 óm || íty ávido yajñá3m íti vā etád āha* (MS 4.5.2)
 ‘“Have you seen the waters, Adhvaryu, *om?*” Thereby he says “Have you seen the sacrifice?”’
- c) *óm prátisṭha* (VS(M)2.13)
 ‘*Om*, proceed!’

- d) 63m kráto smara (VS(M) 40.15)
'Om, (you) mystical power, remember!'

Rather, closer examination of the passages in (5) leads to a different generalization: The passages in (5a,c,d) contain imperatives, (5d) has a vocative beside the imperative, and (5b) contains a vocative. This suggests that *om* here functions as a particle of address, used with vocatives and imperatives, just like a variety of other particles in Sanskrit and elsewhere in early Indo-European. Cf. e.g. (6) for Sanskrit, and (7) - (10) for other early Indo-European languages.³

- (6) a) **ho** hotar (AŚS 8.13.5, 10.6.13)
'Ho, hotṛ.'
- cf. b) **ꣳ** hotas tathā hotar (ib. 8.13.5)
'Om, hotṛ; yes/thus, hotṛ.'
- c) mahānāmnīr **bho** anubrūh(i) (ib. 8.14.15)
'Repeat the mahānāmnīs, *bhoḥ*.'
- e) jāye **ho** tiṣṭha (Harivaṁśa 1398)
'Wife, *ho*, stay ...'
- f) **hayé** jāye mánasā tiṣṭha ghore (RV 10.95.1a)
'Haye, wife, in your mind, stay, cruel one ...'
(Sim. RV 2.29.4a, 5.57.8a.)
- g) tárda **haí** pátaṅga **haí** jámyā **h(aí)** ... apódita
(AV 6.50.2)
'Borer, *hai*, locust, *hai*, grinder, *hai* ... go on away.'
(Paipp. instead has *hem* (2x); sim. AV 18.4.66a)
- h) **hé** 'lávo **hé** 'láva(h) (ŚB(M) 3.2.1.23)
'He, enemies/strangers; *he*, enemies/strangers!'
(Sim. Mahābhāṣya on Pāṇ.1.1.1, Kielhorn p.2.7-13.
ŚB(K) 4.2.1.24 has *hailó hailá(h)* instead.)
- i) sa ha saṁgrahītāram uvāca
ānayasva **are** ... (JUB 3.2.2.8)
'He said to the charioteer: "Lead up (the chariot), *are*..."'
- (7) a) ô Khrúsē, pró m' épempsen ánox andrôn Agamémnōn
(Il.1.442)
'Oh Chryses, Agamemnon, king of men, sent me forth.'
- b) ô paûe, paûe ... (Aristoph.Ran.269)⁴
'Oh, stop, stop ...'
- c) éason ô (Aristoph. Lysistr. 350)
'Give up, Oh.'
- d) â deil(é) (Il. 11.441)
'Ah, wretch ...'
- e) âmè kólaze, présbu (Soph. O.R. 1147)
'Ah, do not punish, prince.'
- (8) a) o mi ocule, o mi anime (Plt. Mil. 1330)
'Oh, my eye, Oh, my soul.'
- b) **heia** mea Iuno (Plt. Cas. 231)

- ‘Oh, my Juno ...’
- c) **Heus**, sta ilico, amator (Plt. Cas. 955)
‘Oh/hey, stay here, my lover.’
- d) **Heus**, foras | exite huc aliquis (Plt. Epid.398-9)
‘Oh/hey come ye (pl.) out here, someone (sg.).’
- (9) a) **La**, næddrena cyn (Mt. Kmb. 3.7:12.34)
‘Oh, generation of vipers.’
- b) Uton **la** geþencan (Th.305.9)
‘Then, Oh, let us consider...’
- c) **O** mihti meiden (OED sv.1225)
‘Oh, mighty virgin.’
- d) **Hei** traitours, quap þemperour, beo ge icome herto
(OED, sv. *hey*, 1305)
‘“Hey, traitors,” said the emperor, “come here.”’
- (10) a) **la** lieb man (Notk. Bth. 115b)
‘O homo.’ = ‘Oh, man.’
- b) il-**a** du zit (Gl. 812.4)
‘Festina tempus.’ = ‘Hurry-Oh, time.’
- c) **o** wunneclicher herre (Elis. 4725)
‘O marvellous sir.’

Many of the same particles can be used in other contexts, as well, which share with those in (5) - (10) the fact that they constitute exclamations; cf. (6’) - (10’)

- (6’) a) úpahūtām³ **hó** íty āh(a) (TS 2.6.7.3)
‘(It is) invoked, *ho*.’
(Sim. ŚB(M) 1.8.1.23, but with *hég*; ŚB(K) 2.7.3.14,
with MS variants *hég*, *hé*, *ha*, *ho*, *hag*, *harig*, *hog*.)
- b) yán nú **ho** tād gāyatrīvid ābrūthā átha katháññ hastī bhūtó
vahas(i) (ŚB(M)14.8.15.11 = BAU 5.15.11)
‘How now, *ho*, if you called yourself one who knows the
gāyatrī, have you become an elephant and carry (people)?’
- c) **hai** mahā(3) **hai** mahā(3) idarñ madhv idarñ madhv
(JB 2.404)
‘*Hai*, the happiness, *hai*, the happiness; here is honey,
here is honey.’ (Sim. KŚS13.3.21-22, Dr.ŚS 11.3.17)
- d) ká īm **are** piśaṅgilá ká īm kurupiśaṅgilá (VS(M) 23.55)
‘What, *are*, is the reddish one, what is the kuru-reddish
one?’ (Similarly BAU 2.4.1, ChU 4.1.7, etc.)
- (7’) a) ó moi (Il. 1.149 and passim)
‘Oh my.’
- b) ô pròs theôn (Soph. Ai.371)
‘Oh, by the Gods.’
- (8’) a) **Oh** perii (Plt. Cas. 237)
‘Oh, I’ve died = I’m dead.’
- b) **Heia**, delicias facis (Plt. Men. 381)

- ‘Hey, you’re being cute.’
- c) **heus**, *ecquis hic est ianitor?* (Plt. Men. 673)
‘Oh/hey, is there any doorman here?’
- (9’) **þæt la mæg secgan ...** (Beow. 3404)
‘That, Oh, may say ...’
- (10’) a) **wer-a wer l ia**, *wer mac der man gesin ...?*
(Erl. 5402-3)
‘Who, Oh, who, indeed, who may that be?’
- b) **owe mir unde o wafen** (Trist.254.19)
‘Oh, woe is me, and Oh, to arms.’
- c) **wafen-o** (Parz. 675.18)
‘To arms, Oh.’
- d) **hei**, *waz er grozer eren ze diser werlde gewan* (Nib.21.4)
‘Hey, what great honors he won in this world.’

Beyond the fact that these particles accompany exclamations, they share several other features. One is the possibility of alternating with each other, as in (6d) beside (6e) and cf. the variations in (6g), (6’a). Note further the *ho* in (6a) beside *ǣ* in (6b), in combination with the same vocative, as well as *bhoḥ* in (6c), in a similar ‘prasava’ passage.

Another feature is the fact, noted e.g. by Schwentner (1924), that the particles tend to be either purely vocalic, such as *ō*, *ā*, or to consist of a sequence of *h* + vowel, as in *hō*, *hā*; note also Lat. *heia*, *heus*.⁵ Greek additionally offers similar particles with final nasal: *ēn* ‘lo’ (post-Hom.) and *ōun*, *ōn* ‘truly, indeed’; cf. also (O)Lat. *hem*.

Schwentner attempts to link (many of) these particles to Proto-Indo-European antecedents, but Schwyzler (1949:600, n. 1 and 6) considers borrowing possible for some of these and notes that Ion. *â* does not exhibit the regular shift **ā > ē*. This suggests the possibility of independent developments, a possibility admitted in principle also by Schwentner (1924:2-3 with references). This impression is reinforced by the fact that in many languages particles of this type, whatever their origin, may be secondarily combined with each other, along language-specific lines, as in Gk. *ai*: *ai-ai*; *ô*, *ê*: *ô-ê*; MHG *hei*, *a*: *hei-a*; *o-we* in (10’b) above, etc. Note also sets like NHG *ha(h)*, *ah*, *a-ha*; *ho*, *oh*, *o-ho*.

A language-specific feature of Sanskrit is the tendency of (some of) these particles to undergo ‘pluti’, i.e., to become trimoric (cf. e.g. (5c, d), (6c)), or to be associated with words exhibiting pluti, as in (5b), (6’a, c). (This matter will be taken up again in §§2.2 and 3.)

Finally, a syntactic feature of these particles is their crosslinguistic tendency to either precede or follow the ‘exclamation’ with which they are associated; cf. e.g. (5a,c,d) vs. (5b), (6a) vs. (6d), (6d) vs. (6’c), (7a,b) vs. (7c). This tendency seems to have persisted into (early) Modern English, leading to structures of the type (11); cf. also *sirra(h)* (OED s.v., since 1526).

- (11) **O**, the mill, mill-**o**, and the kill, kill-**o**

(OED s.v. *O*, 1724-7)

What is significant is the parallelism between *om* and the other Sanskrit exclamatory particles as regards phonetic behavior (association with *pluti*), function (in ‘exclamatory’ contexts; cf. especially (6a-c)), and word order (before or after the ‘exclamation’). This suggests that in the passages cited in (5), *om* does in fact function as an exclamatory particle, not as a particle of assent.

This impression is reinforced by the earliest prose use of *om* and the related *ām* exemplified in (12). (As (12a) shows, *ām* is attested in fairly early Vedic Prose, pace Parpola.) In the extended context of these passages, the two particles, even where they are used in response to another statement, do not convey affirmative connotations. (To express affirmation, other particles are used, including the *hi* in (12b), second line; cf. also (13) and Delbrück 1888:524.) Rather, here too, *om* (and *ām*) function(s) as exclamatory particle(s).⁶

(12) a) *jīvalaś ca ha kārīrādir indradyumnaś ca bhāllaveyas tau*
hāruṇer ācārasya sabhāga ājagmatus te hāṣāḍhasya
gr̥heṣu śiśyire sa hovācāṣāḍha
ām āruṇe yat sahaiva brahmacaryam acarāva (JB 1.271)
 ‘*jīvala Kārīrādi and Indradyumna Bhāllaveya*, these
 two came to the dwelling of their teacher *Āruṇi*, (but)
 they lived in *Āṣāḍha*’s house. Then *Āṣāḍha* said:
 “Lo/hey, *Āruṇi*, since we have studied together ...” ’
 (Sim. 1.285, 2.431 passim, 3. 190)

b) ... *tān hovāca* ṁ *itha grāmaṁ jaghanenā3 iti* ṁ
imo hi ṁ *iti kasmai kāmāyeti* *patha ity*
om *ity hovāca na nu vas tat svargyam ity* (JB 3.269)
 ‘He said to them, “Do you go behind the village?”
 “We go indeed.” = “Yes, we go.” “For what
 purpose?” “For the road.”
 “Lo/hey, that does not get you to heaven.” ’
 (Similarly JB 1.43 passim and 1.44)

(13) a) *hi* ṁ *ity annaṁ pradīyate* (PB 12.11.14, 15.5.23)
 ‘(With the word) “Yes”, food is given.’

b) *tāv abravīd āstu mé ‘trápīty āstu hī3 ity abrūtām*
 (TS 7.1.6.1)
 ‘He said to the two of them, “Let something be also for
 me.” “Let there be indeed/Yes, let there be,” they said.’

In many later prose dialogue passages, *om* appears to have a similar function. By the time of the *Bṛhad-Āraṇaka-Upaniṣad*, however, we find passages in which it seems to clearly mean ‘yes’; cf. e.g. (14a) beside the parallel (14b) from the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* (with affirmative *hi*) and consider the even more overt passage in (14c). This new use must have arisen from reinterpretation of the *om* in passages like (12b) as meaning something like ‘Yes, but ...’, just as *hi* became an affirmative particle by reinterpretation in passages like (13b). It is this development, then, which must have given rise to passages like (4), in

which *om* is explicitly equated with, or parallels, *tathā* ‘yes’.⁷

- (14) a) *anuśiṣṭo nv asi pitreti om iti hovāca* (BAU 6.2.1)
 ‘ “Have you been instructed by your father?” “Yes,” he said.’
- b) *anu trāśiṣat piteti anu hi bhagava iti* (ChU 5.3.1)
 ‘ “Has your father instructed you?” “Yes, (he) in(structed me), Sir.” ’
- c) *tad vā etad ajñākṣaram yad dhi kiṁ cānujānāti om ity eva tad āha* (ChU 1.1.8)
 ‘This very (syllable) is a syllable of assent; for whatever one assents to, to that one says “*Om*”!’

1.3. An apparently very different use of *om* is found in (15) which, except for the final *svaṛṇājyotiḥ* ‘light of gold’ is very difficult to interpret and which, therefore, I leave un glossed. In this passage, note first the multiple occurrences of *om*, one of which seems to be unaccented. Secondly, we find other syllables (*vā3* beside *vā*, as well as *e* and *ai*). These latter syllables are highly reminiscent of the ‘filler’ particles in Sāma-Vedic chant, especially *vā3/vā* (or its ‘mystical’ equivalent *vā3c/vāc*⁸); cf. e.g. the passages in (16).

- (15) *nidhāyo vā3 nidhāyo vā3 nidhāyo vā3 óm vā3 óm vā3 óm vā e ai om svaṛṇājyotiḥ* (MS 4.9.21)
- a) *o vā ... o hā u vā... utso devā hirā hā u vā* (JB 1.123)
- b) *... ā au ho hā yi ... au ho huṁ mā tā yā huṁ mā* (JB 1.141)
- c) *o vā3c o vā3c o vā3c hum bhā o vā* (JUB 4.8.4.2)

What is especially interesting is the frequent occurrence in Sāma-Vedic chant of *o*, *hā*, and *ho*. The latter is phonetically identical with exclamatory *ho* (cf. (6a,e) and (6’a,b)), *hā* has an exclamatory counterpart *hā* in later Sanskrit, and as will be seen in §§2.2 and 3, *o* can be phonologically related to *om*.

This suggests the interpretation of the *om* in (15) and of (many of) the other Sāma-Vedic ‘filler’ particles as an extension or special use of the corresponding exclamatory particle(s), comparable to that of Engl. *o* in (11) above or (17) below. Similar analogies between exclamatory and ‘filler’ particles can be observed in many other musical traditions; cf. e.g. the German folksong in (18), whose *holla* and *ho* are also used as ordinary exclamatory particles in German.

- (17) Fox went out on a rainy night, prayed to the moon to give him light, for he’d many a mile to go that night afore he reached the town-o, town-o, town-o ...
- (18) Horch, was kommt von draußen rein, **holla hi, holla ho** ...

2.1. The uses of *om* so far examined are eminently compatible with the hypothesis that *om* started out as an exclamatory particle, but are difficult to reconcile with Parpola’s affirmative-particle origin.

Other uses of *om*, however, appear to be very different: First, instead of being added to an utterance, *om* appears to SUBSTITUTE for part of an utterance, specifically for an *a*-vowel; cf. (19a). Moreover, the parallel passage in (19b) contains a non-nasal counterpart, *o*. Finally, plain *o*, without a nasal counterpart, appears to substitute for *a*-vowels in (20). (The interpretation of the latter passage will become clearer once we examine parallel, later passages such as (21) - (22).) Though different from the exclamatory type so far examined, these passages do not, however, provide any meaningful support for Parpola's hypothesis. Rather, (19a) attests to a use of *om* which Parpola considers secondary, at a time when we have no clear evidence for the allegedly primary use of *om* as an affirmative particle.

(19) a) óm śrāvaya (MS 4.1.11)

b) ó śrāvaya (MS 1.4.11)
=ā śrāvaya (KS 31.13) etc.
'Call for the śrauṣaṭ.'

(20) (ś)óṃsā móda iva ṁ íti prátýāhvayate (TS 3.2.9.5)
'He responds: śóṃsā móda iva.' (Keith: 'Recite, let us two rejoice.')

(21) śomsāvom ... śamsāmodaivom ... (AB 3.12.1-4)
cf. śamsāva ṁ adhvaryo prāti me ḡnīhi (RV 3.53.31)
'Let us two praise, Adhvaryu, respond to me.'

(22) a) madā moda iva modā moda iva
or: madā moda iva othā moda iva modā moda iva
(ĀpŚS 13.13.8-10)
b) othāmo devamade madāmo daivom ath(ā) (AŚS 6.3.15)
c) otho3 o3 modo3 o3 eva (Śāṅkh.ŚS 10.5.27)
d) śastraṁ vyatyāsaṁ pratigṛṇāti
othā moda iva madā moda ivom athā (BhŚS 14.16.6)
'He responds to the śastra in reverse fashion:
othā moda iva modā moda ivom athā.'

Now, the proper interpretation of (19) is suggested first of all by the padapāṭha gloss on MS 1.4.11 (cf. (23)) which accounts for *o* as a SUBSTITUTION for *ā* and moreover, by adding the symbol 3 (which elsewhere refers to recitational phenomena like trimoric ('pluta') pronunciation or to a particular chanting pitch) relates that substitution to RECITATIONAL practices. Let us refer to this use of *o(m)* as 'recitational substitution'.

(23) ó śrāvayéty ā³ śrāva³ya

To this evidence must be added what appears to me the proper interpretation of the formula in (20) ≈ (21) and of the typologically related formula in (3) ≈ (22) which, though not attested in the earliest texts, appears to be quite old and established, to judge by its widespread appearance in later Vedic and in the Śrautasūtras. (The two formulas occur next to each other in Bhāradvāja-Śrautasūtra 13.31.12. For further examples and references see Weber 1868:36-7, n. 3.)

In (21) we find, again, that *o* and *om* are recitational substitutions for *a*-vowels, cf.

RV *śāmsāva* beside AB *śomsāvom*. The variations in (23), such as *othā: otho3 o3* and *moda: modo3 o3*, suggest the same analysis for this formula. We can then extend this explanation to the alternation in the first syllables of *modā* and *madā*, rather than assuming these to be different words (from the roots *mud/mod-* and *mad-*, respectively). And the variations between *-da iva*, *-daiva*, and *-deva* are, as Weber (1868) realized, best accounted for as involving a sequence ending in *eva* ‘indeed’. We may thus postulate an ‘underlying’ expression of the type (24). And similarly, we may postulate a formula (25) underlying the expression in (20/21).⁹

- (24) (*) (*athā*) *madā madā eva*
 ‘(Now), rejoice, rejoice indeed.’
- (25) (*) *śāmsāva ... śāmsā madā eva*
 ‘Let us two recite ... Recite, rejoice indeed.’

2.2. Passages of the type (20) - (22) further create difficulties for Parpola’s phonetic account of the alternation between nasal *om* and plain *o* and raise interesting questions about the historical origin of the alternation.

First of all, note the predominance in these passages of the non-nasal form. This is important since the positions in which the non-nasal forms occur, namely before consonant (as in the first syllable of *śomsāvom*), are precisely the contexts in which Wackernagel’s (1896:333) occasional loss of word-final *-m* before vowel would not apply.

More than that, the passages in (22b,d) involve reverse recitation, where the formula is first recited in the order of (22c) = (24) and then in inverse order, with *athā* following, rather than preceding the rest of the formula.¹⁰ (Note the express statement to this effect in (22d).) And in this reverse recitation, vowel-initial *athā* is preceded by the nasal variant *om*, instead of normal *o*. That is, here nasal *om* occurs in the context in which Parpola’s hypothesis calls for non-nasal *o*.

In these formulas, then, the distribution of nasal and non-nasal forms is precisely the opposite of what Parpola’s scenario leads us to expect. This suggests that the variation between nasal and non-nasal forms has to be accounted for by a different scenario.

A very similar distribution tends to occur in the Rig-Vedic recitation called *śāstra* and its variant, the *nyūnkha*, illustrated earlier in example (2) — except that here the nasal form *om* is required only in final or PREPAUSAL position; cf. the formal account in AŚS 7.11.2-13. While evidence for this mode of recitation generally comes from the fairly late Śrautasūtras, there is at least one attestation in Vedic literature, cf. (26). Moreover, we find an explicit formal account as early as the Kauṣītaki-Brāhmaṇa; cf. (27), especially the last three lines. (A similar account is found in Śāṅkhāyana-Śrautasūtra 1.1.19-22.) The passage in (27) is interesting on two counts. First, it, too, clearly states that nasal *om* is required before pause. But secondly, it notes some division of opinion on the basic, presumably non-prepausal, form of the particle. (Moreover, following the typical approach of ritualistic Vedic texts, it attempts to motivate the variation in terms of different benefits to the sacrificer.) The issue of non-prepausal variation will be taken up in §2.3. At this point, let

me concentrate on the question of prepausal nasalization.

- (26) ... yasyendraḥ pītvā vṛtrāṇi jaṅghanat
pra sa janyāni tāriṣo3m (AB 2.20.14)
= tāriṣat

‘... Of whom having drunk, Indra slew the vṛtras,
may he extend (our) people.’

- (27) śuddhaḥ praṇavaḥ syāt prajākāmānām
makārāntaḥ pratiṣṭhākāmānām |
makārāntaḥ praṇavaḥ syāt iti haika āhuḥ
śuddha iti tv eva sthitiḥ | ...
śuddha eva praṇavaḥ syāc chastrānuvacanayor madhya iti
ha smāha kauṣītakiḥ | ...
makārānte ‘vasānārthe ... (KB 11.5)
‘The praṇava (= *om*) should be pure (= non-nasal) for
those who desire offspring, ending in *m* for those who
desire support. (Now,) some say “The praṇava should
end in *m* (in general).” But the (correct) position is that it
should be pure. On this matter, Kauṣītaki used to say:
“The praṇava should be pure in the middle of the śastra
and (other) recitations ..., (but) ending in *m* before
pause.’

As e.g. Bloomfield and Keith noted, this (near-)obligatory use of nasal *om* before pause follows from more general principles of prepausal nasalization, laid down in the prātiśākhya literature. Moreover, some traditional grammatical authorities correlate nasalization with pluta or trimoric vowel pronunciation, a pronunciation commonly encountered for *o(m)*; cf. e.g. (2), (22c), and especially (26). Note for example the citation in (28), similar statements in the Taittirīya-Prātiśākhya (15.6-7) and Atharva-Prātiśākhya (1.70), and Pāṇini’s sūtra 8.4.57 which provides for the optional nasalization of prepausal *ā*, *ī*, *ū* that are not praṅghya. Moreover, Śaṅkhāyana-Śrautasūtra 1.1.20-1 and Pāṇini 8.2.89 teach the substitution of pluta *o3m* for the last vowel (± following consonant) of a mantra in ritual recitation.

- (28) aṣṭāv ādyān avasāne ‘praṅghyān ācāryā āhur anunāsikān
svarān | tat trimātre śākalā darśayanti (RP 1.63-4)
‘The teachers proclaim the eight vowels at the beginning (of
the list of sounds) to be nasal before pause, if they are not
praṅghya. The Śākalas show this (to be true) in a trimoric
(vowel).’

The tendency of final pluta vowels to be nasalized is, of course, well-known. (For a recent discussion, see Strunk 1983.) However, as observed in Wackernagel 1896:302, the attested text of the Rig-Veda shows it also in other contexts, namely for pāda-final *a* or *ā* if the following line begins with a vowel, as in (29).¹¹ According to Wackernagel, the nasalization was retained in these contexts in order to avoid hiatus between pāda-final *ā* and the initial vowel of the following line. This suggests a similar ‘hiatus-breaking’

explanation for the nasalization of prevocalic *o(m)* before *atha* in (22b,d).

- (29) nyùptāśca babhrávo vācam ákrataṁ (l) émiḍ ...
 (RV 10.34.5c/d)
 ‘If the brown ones (the dice), thrown out, have raised
 their voice, I go ...’

Note that in both cases, in pluta vowels and in the more specific Rig-Vedic context, the nasal forms are derived from non-nasal forms, not the other way around as Parpola suggests.

In this regard, the passage in (30) is quite interesting. For here we find, in formula-final position, three different versions, one with *-ā3*, one with non-nasal *-o3*, and one with nasal *-o3m*. That is, we find all of the three stages postulated in the present account: the original *a*-vocalism, the recitational substitution *-o*, and the prepausal (or formula-final) nasalization — all associated with pluta. (The passage, of course, was not intended to demonstrate any such derivation, either historical or synchronic, but merely to state the existence of variation.) Moreover, the passage shows that even in formula-final position, nasalization has not yet become obligatory for all branches of the Veda.

- (30) upāsmāi gāyatā nara3m iti dhanamjāyā
 upāsmāi gāyatā nara3 iti śāṅḍilya
 upāsmāi gāyatā narā3 ity eke (LŚS 7.10.16)
 ‘According to Dhanamjāyā, it is *upāsmāi gāyatā nara3m*;
 according to Śāṅḍilya, *upāsmāi gāyatā nara3*, according
 to some (others), *upāsmāi gāyatā narā3*.’
 (Sim. Dr.ŚS 19.1.34-6)

Finally, expanding slightly on Keith’s original account, we can argue that the present account of *o(m)* explains a peculiar sandhi property of this particle, noted e.g. by Pāṇini (6.1.95), namely that unlike other sequences of *a*-vowel plus *o* which contract into the diphthong *au*, the combination of *om* with a preceding *a*-vowel yields *om*, as in (31). (Note that (31a) comes from the fairly early Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa.)

- (31) a) subrahmaṇyoṁ subrahmaṇyom (JB 2.78-9)
 b) subrahmaṇyo3m subrahmaṇyo3m (ŚB 3.3.4.17)
 = subrahmaṇyā+ ó(3)m
 (An announcement of the subrahmaṇyā litany.)

This behavior is as expected if we accept the notion that recitational *o(m)* is a substitution for *a*-vowels, or for any vowel ± following consonant in śāstra and nyūṅkha recitation. In either case, we have a substitution, rather than an addition of *o(m)* and thus no occasion for contraction. Parpola’s hypothesis, on the other hand, provides no explanation whatsoever for this behavior of *om*.

2.3. What remains to be addressed is the variation between nasal and non-nasal *o(m)* in non-prepausal contexts, a variation which appears to be quite extensive and which to a large extent is linked to differences between different branches of the Veda. In addition to

the references and citations in the preceding section, note the passages in (32).¹² (32a) illustrates different preferences in different branches of the White Yajur-Veda. (Cf. Caland & Henry 1906:231-3, as well as (27) above, for differences in the Rig-Veda Brāhmaṇas.) (32b) testifies to similar differences in the tradition of the Śrautasūtras.

- (32) a) *tād utāśrāvayanty ó3 svàdhéty ...* (ŚB(K) 1.6.1.16)
 vs. *tād utāśrāvayanty ó3ṁ svàdhéty ...* (ŚB(M) 2.6.1.24)
 ‘And on this occasion (the pitṛyajña), they call for the śrausaṭ with *o(ṁ) svadhā*.’
- b) *tad dhaika om iti gāyanti | tat tathā na gāyet ...*
atho dve ivaivaṁ bhavata om iti | o ity u haike gāyanti |
tad u ha tan na gītam | no eva tathā gāyet | ॐ ity eva gāyet
 (JUB 1.8.2.3-4)
 ‘Now, some chant *om*. (But) one should not chant that way ... Moreover, there are two as it were, as follows: *om*, (and) some chant *o*. That is not (properly) chanted, nor should one chant that way. One should chant ॐ.’

The fact that some of the Vedic traditions thus accept nasal *om* even in non-final contexts requires the assumption that in these traditions the prepausal form has been reanalyzed as the base form and as such, has been extended into non-final environments. Given the pervasive generalization of prepausal forms in Sanskrit sandhi, such an extension does not seem excessively far-fetched.

3. If my arguments up to this point are on the right track, then we need to recognize two early uses of *o* or *om*, one as an exclamatory or filler particle which can be translated as something like ‘lo, hey, ho’, another as a recitational substitution. In this section I will examine the extent to which these two different phenomena can be related to each other.

In the later Vedic language, when *om* has become a syllable of formidable mystical significance (cf. §4 below), the two uses of *o(m)* have become identified with each other; witness for instance the many passages in the Jaiminīya-Upaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa (such as JUB 1.2.2.1-3) which treat of the mystical importance of both types of *o(m)*.

Further, in the later Brāhmaṇas, exclamatory (→ affirmative) *om* undergoes the same exceptional sandhi as the recitational substitution *o(m)*; i.e., *om* + preceding *a*-vowel yields *om*, not *aum*; cf. (33). (The (*á*)*dhvaryā3 óm* of (5b) is no exception, for the *-á* preceding *om* is underlyingly *-o* → *-á3(u)* under pluta.)

- (33) *kiṁ sarvaprāyaścittam [hoṣyasi] iti*
mahāvyaḥrtīr eva maghavann iti
sa hovācom aruṇe yad āhutimān ūciṣe katham nu vidām
 = *uvāca + om*
cakartha markāto ‘mīsūn ādatta _ iti (ŚB 1.6.15-17)
 ‘“Which total expiation [will you sacrifice as a libation]?”
 “The great expressions, lord.”
 He (i.e. Markāta) said: “Hey/OK, Aruṇa, since you are

called oblation-holder, how did you think that Markaṭa took the drafts (of soma)?” ’

What is interesting is that this exceptional sandhi behavior holds true also for the Sāma-Vedic filler particle *o*; cf. (34). Moreover, the passages in (35) show that like the recitational substitution *o(m)*, the filler particle may have both nasal and non-nasal variants. (As Caland & Henry (1906:173-4) note, the passage in (35a) refers to a performance practice in the bahiṣpavamāna where the udgāṭṛs accompany the chant with a constant chanting of *ho* on a low tone, while the yajamāna chants *om*. In (35b), the roles are reversed, and the counterpart of *ho* is plain, non-nasal *o*.¹³) It is this evidence, combined with parallel sandhi behavior, that makes it possible to relate exclamatory *om* and filler *o(m)* to each other, as suggested toward the end of §1.3, on the assumption that the final nasal was introduced under the same conditions as that of the recitational substitution *o(m)*. A parallel, with nasal/non-nasal alternation in an exclamatory particle, is found in (6g), with *hai* beside *hem* in different branches of the Atharva-Veda.

(34) tasmai haitad uvāco ho iyā ity (JB 1.338)

= uvāca + o ho ...

‘To him he said this: *o ho iyā*.’ (Sim. e.g. JB 3.24)

(35) a) te ho ity etenākṣareṇopagāyeyur om iti yajamānaḥ
(Dr. ŚS 3.4.6)

b) o ity anya ṛtvija upagāyanti | ho iti yajamānaḥ
(BhŚS 13.17.9)

In fact, just like the recitational substitution, exclamatory *om* frequently is pronounced with pluta; cf. e.g. (5c,d), as well as Pāṇini 8.2.87. And as noted, pluta tends to be associated with nasalization.

It appears then that exclamatory/filler *o(m)* and the recitational substitution *o(m)* may have been virtually identical, both in their sandhi behavior and in their (original) phonetic shape. However, there is one important difference which argues against a complete identification of the two phenomena, namely the fact that, as noted, the exclamatory/filler particle is an addition, while the other use of *o(m)* is a recitational substitution.

The behavioral similarities of the two phenomena may in fact be secondary; for there are two areas of contact which might motivate their secondary functional identification with each other — beyond the probably not insignificant fact that they are important elements of the Vedic ritual.

First, the filler particle and the recitational substitution are both closely associated with RECITATIONAL PRACTICES, either as an extension of recitation by means of ‘nonsense’ syllables (in the case of the filler particle), or as modulations of the text (in the case of the recitational substitution).

Secondly, in certain contexts it is possible to reinterpret the recitational substitution *om* as exclamatory *om*, and vice versa. Consider again the subrahmaṇyā, formula in (31).

Although in §2.2, I interpreted the final *om* as an instance of recitational substitution, it would be possible to consider it an instance of exclamatory *om* with ‘exceptional’ sandhi. In fact, the passage in (36) shows that this identification was made by at least some ritualists.

- (36) tad dhaita eka om̐ subrahmanyā ṁ ity āhvayanti ...
tad dha tan na tathā | ... tasmāt subrahmanyom̐ ity
evāhvayet (JB 2.78-9 = continuation of (31a.)
‘Now, some invoke (saying) *om̐ subrahmanyā*...
That (is) not (to be done) thus ... Therefore one should
invoke (saying) *subrahmanyom̐*.’

Given these possibilities of secondary identification, as well as the formidable difference between addition and substitution, the way of caution would seem to lie in postulating two origins for *-om*: an exclamatory/filler particle and a recitational substitution. As noted earlier, however, both of these two phenomena antedate the use of *om* as an affirmative particle. Moreover, their phonetic behavior is difficult to explain under Parpola’s assumption that *om* originated as a particle of affirmation. Parpola’s further claim that *o(m)* is derived from Dravidian **ākum/ām* therefore must likewise be considered suspect. Rather, we must return to a position closer to that originally advocated by Keith, which derives at least one of the uses of *om* from Vedic recitational practices.

4. Let me conclude with a few brief speculations on the path by which *om* (and its variants) came to be the Sanskrit sacred syllable par excellence. (This issue deserves a much fuller discussion.)

According to van Buitenen (1959:180-1), the identification of *om* as THE sacred akṣara ‘syllable’ most likely took place in the Sāma-Vedic tradition, specifically in the Chāndogya-Upaniṣad. But this is in conflict with the fact, noted earlier by Keith (1917), that ‘(t)he first evidence of this important position of the word is found to be in the Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa’, a text that seems considerably earlier and belongs to the Rig-Veda. Cf. the citation in (37) which is embedded in the following context: Prajāpati, the creator God, created the three worlds: earth, ether, and sky. From these he created a series of ‘essences’: Agni and the Rig-Veda from the earth, Vāyu and the Yajurveda from the ether, and Āditya (the sun) and the Sāma-Veda from the sky. From these, in turn, he derived the following essences:

- (37) bhūr ity eva ṛgvedād ... bhuva iti yajurvedāt svar iti
sāmavedāt ...
tebhyo ... trayo varṇā ajāyanta ṁ
akāra ukāro makāra iti
tān ekadhā samabharat tad etad o3m̐ iti ...
(AB 5.32.1-2)
‘... *bhūr* from the Rig-Veda, *bhuvā* from the Yajur-
Veda, *sva* from the Sāmaveda. From these, three pho-
nemes arose: *a*, *u*, (and) *m*. These he put together.
That is this *o3m̐*.’¹⁴

The citation in (37), however, comes from a fairly late passage. Moreover, locating the oldest attestation of *om* as the sacred syllable par excellence, in itself, does not explain how *om* acquired this status.

Van Buitenen (1959:181) suggests that this development ‘must have originated from esoteric speculations’. And indeed, we can find speculations concerning the mystical significance of *o(m)*, and the benefits attached to it; cf. e.g. (27) above. However, there are similar speculations on other particles, such as the *ho* or *vā* of Sāma-Vedic recitation; cf. (38). In fact, the Sāma-Vedic brāhmaṇas, as regularly identify *vā* as *vāc* ‘(sacred) speech’; cf. Caland on PB 12.5,11.¹⁵

(38) a) **ho** iti hi sarvā vāk (JB 2.243-4)

‘For *ho* is the entire (sacred) speech.’

b) **vāca** gāyan **vāk** iti nidhanam karoti ...

... asureṣv idam sarvam āsīd | athaikam evākṣaram deveṣv

... āsīt | **vāg** eva | ...

... **vāg** vai brahma ... **vāg** vā akṣaram | ...

(JB 1.104-115)

‘Chanting with *vāc* “speech”, he makes the finale (of the chant) *vāc* (= *vā*, as in (16a)) ... This whole world was once with the Asuras, only one syllable was with the Gods, *vāc* “speech” ... *Vā(c)* is brahman ... *vā(c)* is the syllable (or: the imperishable).’

There is, however, an element in (37) which suggests why it was *om* that was singled out as the sacred syllable par excellence. And this element comes to the foreground more clearly in two earlier passages. Consider first the passage in (39), in which the *praṇava/om* is identified as inherent in the Rig-Vedic priest’s *praṇava* (i.e. the recitational substitution of *o(m)* in the śāstra), in the call for the śrauṣaṭ and the pratigara of the Yajur-Vedic priest, and in the udgītha of the Sāma-Vedic priest. The passage in (40a), occurring shortly after the one in (20) above, is even earlier, though less explicit. Its import is clarified admirably in the related Āraṇyaka passage (40b).

(39) sa eṣa praṇavo ‘bhavat || sa pratigaras sa udgīthas tad
āsrāvaṇam | tasmād om iti praṇauty om iti pratyāgṛṇāty
om ity udgāyaty om ity āsrāvayti | (JB 3.321-2)

‘That became this *praṇava*. That is the pratigara, the udgītha, the call for the śrauṣaṭ. Therefore one makes the *praṇava om*, the pratigara *om*, one chants *om*, (and) one calls for the śrauṣaṭ (with) *om*.’

(40) a) tāt prabāhug vā ṛtvījām udgīthā udgīthā evódgātṛṇām |
ṛcāḥ praṇavā ukthaśaṁsīnām pratigaró ’dhvaryūṇām
(TS 3.2.9.5-6)

The udgīthā is common to (all) the priests, the udgīthā (is common) to the udgātṛs, the ṛces and the *praṇava* (are common) to the reciters of hymns, the pratigaras

to the *adhvaryus*.’

- b) *óm íti bráhma | óm ítídáñ sárvam | óm íty etádanukṛti ha sma vā ápy ó śrāvay(é)ty āśrāvayanti | óm íti sāmāni gāyanti | óm sóm íti śastrāṇi śamsanti | óm íty adhvaryúḥ pratigarám prátiḡṇāti | óm íty agnihotrám ánujānāti | óm iti bráhmanáḥ pravakṣyánn āha ... (TA 7.8.1)*
‘*Om* is brahman; *om* is this whole world; *om*-like, too, is the call for the *śrausaṭ* in (the expression) *ó śrāvaya*; with *om* they chant the chants; with *óm sóm*, they recite the *śastras*; with *om*, the *adhvaryu* gives the response of the *pratigara*; with *om*, he acknowledges the *agnihotra*; with *om*, the brahmin speaks, about to announce.’

What is important about these passages is that they affirm the common bond that exists between different priests, their functions and performances in the ritual, and their respective branches of the Veda. For it is indeed true that *o(m)*, in one form or another, is the linguistic element in ritual recitation that is most prominently employed by all of the participants in the ritual. Compare for instance (1) = (19) and *śamsāmodaivom* of (21) said by priests of the Yajur-Vedic branch, (16) by priests of the Sāma-Veda, and (2), (26), and *śomsāvom* of (21) by priests of the Rig-Veda.

The syllable *om*, therefore, lends itself most readily as the ONE akṣara that embodies all that is shared by the three Vedas — and that which transcends them. The fact that it can be analyzed into THREE component parts, *a*, *u*, and *m* (cf. (37)), no doubt further supported this ‘triune’ character of *om*, as did perhaps the fact, noted by van Buitenen (1959:181), that *om* frequently has TRImoric, *pluta* pronunciation.

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¹ A further difference between the *nyūṅkha* and the *praṇava* is that the latter inserts *o(m)* only at the end of verses, while the former substitutes (modulated) *o(m)* also for the second vowel of each line.

Critical contributions

² Because of their doubtful antiquity, I won't consider the occurrences of *om* in the Rig-Vedic Khilas, such as *sā māṁ ...devī sarvataḥ pari rakṣatu sarvataḥ pari rakṣatu om namaḥ* 'Let that Goddess protect me on all sides, protect me on all sides; *om*, adoration!' (19.11).

³ For a more comprehensive treatment of such particles, see Schwentner 1924 with references. See also Schwyzer 1949:60, 564, 566, 584,600, 601 for Greek, Hofmann-Szantyr 1972:26, 339 for Latin, and Grimm 1890:212, 279-306 for early Germanic. For Old English, I have also drawn on Bosworth-Toller 1887 and the OED.

⁴ The use of *ô* with imperatives not accompanied by vocatives does not seem to be found in the Iliad.

⁵ Some particles, such as Lat. *heus*, differ somewhat by ending in a final non-nasal consonant; but note the similar ŚB variants in (6'a). Skt. *are*, *bhoḥ* differ even more markedly. (As is well known, they are frozen vocatives in origin.)

⁶ Caland consistently translates them as 'hé'.

⁷ Interestingly, these passages appear earlier than the type (14a, c). Another clear passage suggesting that *om* has acquired the meaning 'yes' is AB 5.25.2 (repeated e.g. in AŚS; cf. (6b) above); cf. perhaps also AB 7.20.4 (with *om tathā*).

⁸ On this matter, see further in §4 below.

⁹ A similar interpretation is found in Hoffmann 1976. But his account differs in two aspects. First, he interprets *modaiva* etc. as du. 1 *modeva* 'let us two rejoice', which is possible but presupposes, as Hoffmann acknowledges, the assumption that the formula acquired its phonological shape at a time when the optative affix *-e-* still had diphthongal pronunciation. My analysis instead requires the assumption that the variant *modeva* resulted from a reinterpretation of *modaiva* (sandhi-form of *moda eva* 'rejoice indeed') as first dual on the model of du. 1 *śāmsāva: śomsāvom*. More important, Hoffmann considers *o* a lengthening of short *a* exclusively and proposes two possible accounts: Either *o* directly reflects a pronunciation [ɔ] for short *a*, which becomes [ɔ:] under affective lengthening; or the symbol *o* is used to indicate that lengthened *a* had, like short *a*, a less open pronunciation than long *ā*. Given the oral nature of Vedic tradition, the former, phonetically based interpretation appears more likely, for the second alternative seems to require a written medium to make sense. Hoffmann's interpretation may be considered supported by a mode of Sāma-Vedic recitation cited by Caland & Henry (1907:463-4), in which short *a* if chanted on what is transcribed as a whole note is pronounced *o*, but retains the pronunciation *a* if chanted on a half note. Note, however, that in the earliest attestations of recitational *o(m)*, the Maitrāyaṇī-Saṁhitā passages in (1)/(19), *o(m)* substitutes for the LONG vowel of the preverb *ā*. To account for this substitution in Hoffmann's terms would require the assumption that *o*-substitution became secondarily extended to long *a*-vowels because expressions like *modoṣ oṣ* could be related either to *madā* (with short final vowel) or to *madā* (with long final *ā*).

¹⁰ Actually, one of the occurrences of **madā* is omitted in the first half of the composite formula.

¹¹ Lubotsky (P.C. 1989) suggests that this nasalization may have been linked to a lengthening of final anudātta short *a* before vowel, similar to the lengthening in the well-known Maitrāyaṇīya sandhi (for which see Lubotsky 1983). It is to be hoped that Lubotsky will back up this hypothesis through a complete study of the Rig-Vedic evidence.

¹² Parpola dismisses the passage in (32b) on the grounds that the Mysore L manuscripts have *om ity* for *o ity*; but the same manuscripts offer *o* for *ṣ*. That is, no matter which reading we accept or how we interpret the precise import of this passage, we must recognize that the Jaiminīya-Upaniṣad-Brahmaṇa acknowledges both a nasal and a non-nasal tradition

¹³ Here, incidentally, we have further evidence for variation between nasal and non-nasal *o(m)* in different branches of the Veda.

¹⁴ Note that *om* is the regular sandhi outcome of *a + u + m*.

¹⁵ The identification of *vāc* 'speech' as THE one akṣara is very wide-spread in the ritual texts, not just limited to Sāma-Vedic brahmanas. Cf. e.g. ŚB(M) 4.3.1.43 and passim. This raises significant questions about the cogency of Parpola's suggestion that the word *akṣara* of RV 1.64.39, 41,42 may uniquely refer to *om*.

ON AUMKĀRA
MAṆḌANAMIŚRA AND ŚĀṄKARĀCĀRYA

SRI V. SVAMINATHAN

KENDRIYA VIDYAPITHA, TIRUPATI

The doctrine of Śabdabrahman or Śabdādvaitavāda systematized and expounded by the celebrated grammarian-philosopher Bharṭṛhari was ruthlessly condemned by almost all the philosophers of the post-Bharṭṛhari period save Ācārya Maṇḍana Miśra,¹ the author of the Advaita classic, *Brahmasiddhi*. Writers belonging to diverse philosophical disciplines were busily engaged in demolishing the Śabdādvaitavāda and Kumārila, the reputed author of the *Mīmāṃsā Vārttikas* and Jayanta, the author of the *Nyāyamañjarī*, who directed their energy in exploding the Sphoṭavāda from every possible angle deserve special mention in this connection. Even Śaṅkarācārya could not spare the doctrine of Sphoṭa.² Maṇḍana Miśra's attitude towards the doctrine of Śabdabrahman was not only favourable but vindictive also. Impelled by a missionary zeal he wrote the *Sphoṭasiddhi* with the sole purpose of freeing the sphoṭa doctrine from the onslaughts of Kumārila and placing it on a more secure foundation. That Maṇḍana was under the grip of an irresistible urge to champion the cause of the doctrine of Śabdabrahman is evidenced even in his *Brahmasiddhi* where he maintains the Śabdabrahmavāda by deriving support from the Upaniṣads.³

Of the many words the Upaniṣads employ to indicate Brahman Akṣaram is one.⁴ Akṣaram when traced to its grammatical sources means the Immutable or the Imperishable⁵ and it clearly unfolds the upaniṣadic concept of Brahman enshrined in words like Dhruva and Kūṭastha. As such Akṣara is a yaugika (derivative) word with reference to Brahman. Sometimes the Upaniṣads use the word Akṣaram in its more widely understood sense, the syllable or speech-sound. With reference to syllable Akṣaram will hardly admit any grammatical analysis and therefore it has to be considered as a rūḍha (conventional) word.⁶

Akṣaram is one of the words by which Maṇḍana describes the nature of Brahman in the opening verse of the *Brahmasiddhi*. He elucidates Akṣara in both the senses referred to above. The amplification in the light of the conventional sense is based on the doctrine of Śabdabrahman and has been accomplished in an elaborate manner. Maṇḍana would take Akṣara as signifying the sacred syllable Aum or speech (vāk) in general. His exposition consists of two parts; in the first part he tries to establish that the Brahman of the Upaniṣads is of the nature of speech on the authority of certain Upaniṣadic passages and in the second part on purely rationalistic grounds.

It is well known that no writer on Advaita had ever tolerated the view that Brahman is of the nature of Śabda. It is a matter of great interest to know how Maṇḍana endeavours to accommodate within the fortress of Advaita a doctrine that has been discarded down the ages by all Advaitins alike. It also remains to see to what extent the Upaniṣadic passages referred to by Maṇḍana would lend support to the stand he has taken regarding the nature

of Brahman and how far he succeeds in this venture. The aim of this paper is to evaluate Maṇḍana's interpretations of the Upaniṣadic passages in question and see how they compare with those of Śaṅkarācārya.

Maṇḍana observes: the word Akṣara⁷ indicates speech (in general) as the nature of Brahman, for the particular (the syllable Auṁ) implies the general. That Brahman is of speech could be clearly understood from the identity of Brahman with Auṁkāra spoken of in the *Praśna Upaniṣad* **Param cāparam ca yad omkāraḥ**:⁸ meaning that Brahman higher as well as lower is Auṁkāra. One should not take the identification of Brahman with Auṁkāra as merely figurative on the ground that a real identification of the word (Aum) with its sense (Brahman) is inconceivable. According to grammar a word ending with the suffix-kāra signifies the stem⁹ and never the sense conveyed by the stem. Therefore Auṁkāra stands for the syllable Auṁ and not for the sense expressed by it.

Under these circumstances one cannot take Auṁ in any sense (other than the syllable Auṁ) that might facilitate a figurative identity. The identification is real and it becomes intelligible only when Brahman would be of the nature of speech (Auṁ).

At this stage the pūrvapakṣin recalls the traditional interpretation of the above passage and points out that Auṁ has been recommended, to men of ordinary intellectual powers, only as an object (ālambana) in which Brahman is to be meditated upon for, Brahman, being devoid of any attribute whatsoever, can never become an object of meditation. Brahman is to be meditated upon in its symbol (pratīka) Auṁ, just as one's favorite deity is meditated upon in its symbol, the idol. Meditation upon Auṁ as Brahman is an indispensable means for the attainment of Brahman. On account of its importance in the attainment of Brahman Auṁ itself has been eulogized as Brahman. Hence only in a figurative sense it has been said that Auṁ is Brahman.

Or the identification can be substantiated in another way. Auṁ is the name (abhidhāna) of Brahman. It is to be meditated upon with its name Auṁ. Because of the invariable relation of the word to its sense Auṁ has been spoken of as Brahman itself. In any way the identification cannot be anything but figurative.

Maṇḍana accepts the pūrvapakṣin's statement but with an amendment. For, the pūrvapakṣin's interpretation does not hold good in all instances where the Upaniṣadic texts identify Brahman with Auṁ. To drive this point Maṇḍana classifies the Upaniṣadic passages under two heads, viz, those wherein Auṁ is meant as an accessory to meditation and those wherein it is not so. In passages like **Omityātmānam dhyāyatha**¹⁰ and **Om iti yuñjita**¹¹ where Auṁ is mentioned as an aid to meditation the identification is apparent and hence Auṁ is used in a secondary sense-symbol or pratīka. On the contrary the *Taittirīya* passages like **Om itīdam Brahma**¹² and **Om itīdam sarvam**¹³ where no verb indicating the accessory character of Auṁ is to be met with the identification is real and there is no need to invest Auṁ with a secondary sense. It cannot be urged that even in such cases verbs like **dhyāyata** or **upāsita** are to be supplied in order to maintain consistency in interpretation. For, there is no valid authority that would support such an interpretation.

On the other hand the interpretation would involve the serious defect of what is known as disregarding the sense prevented [presented?] by the words themselves and presuming the sense not warranted by the words (śrutahāni and aśrutakalpanā). Interpreted as they are the *Tattirīya* passages will not purport an identification other than real. Aum̐ therefore is absolutely identical with Brahman or All (Sarvam) as the case may be.

The *Chāndogya* passage beginning with **Tad yathā śaṅkuna**¹⁴ and closing with **Om̐-kāra evedam sarvam** also purports real identity of All (Sarvam) with Aum̐. The passage means, “As all the parts of the leaf are permeated with the stalk so also the entire domain of speech is permeated with the syllable Aum̐. All this (universe) is verily Aum̐kāra.” Here the śruti shows that Aum̐ is the truth underlying the world of speech on the ground that the entire domain of speech is permeated with Aum̐. It concludes that all this (Sarvam) is Aum̐ because of the invariable association of the world of forms (rūpa) with that of speech (nāma).

Although this *Chāndogya* passage speaks of the identity between All (Sarvam) and Aum̐, it is really an identity between Brahman and Aum̐ for All is none other than Brahman as may be seen from **Sarvam khalvidam Brahma**,¹⁵ **Tasmāt tat sarvam abhavat**,¹⁶ **Ātmaivedam sarvam**¹⁷ and **Idam sarvam yad ayam ātmā**.¹⁸ To Maṇḍana Sarvam and Brahman are convertible and it is evident from his interpretation of the following *Praśna* passage that he considers them as more or less synonyms.

Now it may easily be seen that the identity (of Brahman with Aum̐) that Maṇḍana has sought to establish on the authority of the *Praśna Upaniṣad* turns out to be apparent as the passage contains the verb abhidhyāyīta in the succeeding sentences.

The presence of abhidhyāyīta does not in any way affect Maṇḍana’s contention. The sentence containing abhidhyāyīta,¹⁹ it is to be noted, only follows the sentence purporting the identity of Brahman with Aum̐ (sarvātmabhāva). i.e. the injunction on the meditation on Aum̐ and the identity of Brahman with Aum̐ are conveyed by two different sentences, each having a complete sense in itself and having no syntactical connection with each other. Only in instances such as **Omītyevam dhyāyatha ātmānam** where meditation and Brahman-Aum̐ identity are conveyed by one and the same sentence the identity will have to be considered as apparent. Therefore there is nothing in the present instance to prevent the identity from being real.

It may be pressed that the sentence **param cāparam ca** etc. being an arthavāda cannot claim for itself an existence independent from that of **Param puruṣam abhidhyāyīta** with which it has to enter into a syntactical unit and constitute a single sentence. Injunction on meditation and identity being thus brought within the scope of one sentence, the identity will turn out to be only figurative. Sentences conveying such identifications do not have a purport of their own and are mere eulogies on what is expressed by the vidhivākya.

The arthavāda character is not potent enough to divert [divest?] **param cāparam ca** etc. of its purport — real Brahman-Aum̐ identity. Eulogistic statements of the abhūtārthavāda

type as **Yajamānaḥ prastaraḥ** whose purport is not intelligible cannot have a purport of their own. But those of the bhūtārthavāda type as **Agnir himasya bheṣajam** are valid matter-of-fact statements and so do have a purport of their own.

Since the identity conveyed by it happens to be the true purport of several Upaniṣadic texts, **param cāparam ca** etc. belongs to the bhūtārthavāda type and hence is purportful of a real Brahman-Auṁ identity. Thus so long as Sarvam-Brahman identity does not come into conflict with any other pramāṇa it has to be taken as real and it is not proper to relegate it to the status of an apparent one.

This Sarvam-Auṁ identity cannot be ascertained by perception and other instruments of cognition. It is super-sensuous and belongs exclusively to the region of the Śāstra. There is little room therefore to question the identity on the ground that all the objects of the universe would have been perceived or inferred as the syllable Auṁ if the identity were to be real. A fact established by one pramāṇa can never be negated by another pramāṇa within whose range it never falls.

It is necessary to note at this stage that the identity of Brahman or Sarvam is not with the sound Auṁ; but as observed already with the universal principle (sāmānya) of speech which lies beyond the scope of perception and other pramāṇas.

Further the following sentence **tasmāt vidvān**²⁰ etc. prescribes meditation upon Auṁ to the one who has known. i.e. the possession of the knowledge (of some thing) is the qualification for one who aspires after Brahman. What is that knowledge? According to the context the knowledge mentioned here will refer to only what has been spoken of in the immediately preceding sentence. Therefore it follows that **param cāparam ca** etc. speaks of the identity of Brahman with Auṁ, the knowledge of which is a qualification (viśeṣaṇa) to the one bent on meditating upon Auṁ. Knowledge of something apparent becoming an essential qualification is unthinkable. In the light of what has been said it is but proper to consider the Brahman-Auṁ identity, real.

Śaṅkara's interpretations of the Upaniṣadic passages under consideration may be noted briefly as follows. Regarding the *Muṇḍaka* passage **Omityevam dhyāyatha ātmānam** Śaṅkara observes that Auṁ is the focus of meditation (ālambana) and one should meditate upon the self in Auṁ. On the *Taittirīya* passage he observes that Auṁ is the symbol of Brahman and is comparable to the image of Viṣṇu and other Gods. One should think that the sound Auṁ is Brahman because Auṁ is this All. The identification is based on the common characteristic of pervasiveness. Brahman pervades the whole universe. Auṁ pervades the whole universe in that it pervades the entire domain of speech which in turn pervades the whole of objects.

On the *Chāndogya* passage **tad yathā śaṅkunā** etc. Śaṅkara observes that the world of speech is permeated with Auṁ, the symbol of Brahman. Since all the objects of the universe, being the manifestations of the Supreme Being, are not different from it and therefore are mere names, it easily follows that Auṁ is this all. Reference to the story of

Prajāpati's brooding on the worlds etc. in the preceding sentence is to eulogise Aum̐. A eulogy is intelligible only in connection with a vidhi. The vidhi in the present instance is on the meditation upon Brahman in its symbol Aum̐.

On **param cāparam ca** etc. Śaṅkara says that Brahman, higher as well as lower, is but the syllable Aum̐ since Aum̐ is a symbol. Brahman higher, since it defies falling within the range of Śabda and other pramāṇas and is devoid of all distinctions caused by attributes, cannot be comprehended by the mind. Some concrete entity is necessary to enable the aspirant for meditation. It is only on this account that Aum̐ is recommended as the focus of meditation and its status in this regard is similar to that of an image in the worship of deities.

So also is the case with Brahman lower. Therefore it is said in a secondary sense that Brahman is but Aum̐. Aum̐ is the nearest symbol of Brahman. The one who knows that Aum̐ is Brahman is sure to attain Brahman through meditation on Aum̐.

It is worth noting the differences in the interpretations of Maṇḍana and Śaṅkara on the Upaniṣadic passages in question.

1. Śaṅkara does not aim at classifying the Upaniṣadic passages as Maṇḍana has done. To him all passages that speak of an identity of Brahman with Aum̐ prescribe Aum̐ as a symbol (ālambana) to meditate upon Brahman irrespective of the presence or otherwise of a verb indicating the accessory character of Aum̐. It is only a pratīka and therefore the identification is but apparent. All such passages contain an injunction on the meditation (Upāsana) upon Brahman. He holds the same view in his interpretations on the passages conveying Brahman-Aum̐ identity in the *Kaṭha*²¹ and *Māṇḍūkya*²² Upaniṣads. He is consistent throughout.

2. By Aum̐ Śaṅkara invariably understands the perceptible speech sound (śabdarūpam) whereas Maṇḍana understands the super-sensuous principle underlying speech.

3. According to Śaṅkara the first sentence of the *Taittirīya* passage contains an injunction on Brahman-Aum̐ meditation and the second one establishes the Brahman-Aum̐ identity by means of reasoning. Maṇḍana it appears finds in one and the same passage references to both Brahman-Aum̐ and Brahman-Sarvam identifications spoken of in two different Upaniṣads-*Praśna* and *Chāndogya*.

We may now consider the Upaniṣadic passages one by one and try to understand the nature of Aum̐ in the identification.

According to Maṇḍana the presence of the word dhyāyatha in the *Muṇḍaka* passage indicates that Aum̐ is a symbol of Brahman. We may add here that the metaphor of the bow employed in the two preceding mantras²³ also establishes the accessory character of Aum̐ in the act of meditation. The self (ātman) becoming one with Brahman (tanmaya) through meditation (upāsana) on Aum̐ is spoken of as the arrow (śara) merging into the

target (lakṣya) through the action (sandhāna) of the bow (dhanus or the great weapon) of the Upaniṣads. Evidently the identification in the passage is only figurative.

The *Taittirīya* text **Omiti Brahma** etc. is immediately followed by a long passage eulogising Aum̐ by referring to its invariable utterance in all religious acts. The eulogy indicates that the text purports an injunction on the meditation of Aum̐ as otherwise it would become irrelevant.²⁴ Meditation on Brahman in the three vyāhṛtis Bhūḥ, Bhuvah and Suvah is the subject of the three preceding anuvākas.²⁵ That Aum̐ is invariably associated with the vyāhṛtis is too well known to be mentioned. It is but natural that the Upaniṣad takes up Aum̐ after the vyāhṛtis.

The context as well as the subject matter of the three preceding sections establish beyond doubt that meditation on Brahman is ordained in the passage under consideration and Aum̐ is recommended as the pratīka on account of its pervasiveness (idam sarvam), a characteristic it shares with Brahman. Pervasiveness of Aum̐ (viśvarūpaḥ) over the region of speech has been already alluded to in the anuvāka beginning with **Yaś chandasām ṛsabhō dīśvarupaḥ**.²⁶ In the same anuvāka it is said that Aum̐ is the sheath of Brahman (brahmaṇah kośaḥ). The description of Aum̐ as the sheath of Brahman clearly brings out the status of Aum̐ in regard to Brahman. The sheath contains the sword. Aum̐ containing Brahman would mean that Aum̐ signifies Brahman. Aum̐ is the signifier and Brahman is the signified. The foregoing consideration of the *Taittirīya* text reveals two things that Aum̐ is (1) the signifier and (2) the symbol of Brahman. Therefore the identification of Brahman with Aum̐ is but figurative.

Like the *Muṇḍaka* and *Taittirīya* texts the *Chāndogya* does not contain any clue that might throw some light on the nature of Aum̐. In the absence of any positive evidence the context is the infallible guide and the status of Aum̐ has to be decided by a careful study of the context. The *Chāndogya* passage under consideration follows the sentence **Brahmasaṁso'mṛtatvam efi**.²⁷ In between the two passages is a short narration of Prajāpati's successive brooding on the worlds, the three Vedas and the three vyāhṛtis and finally the discovery of Aum̐, the essence of the entire universe. The story has no connection with what has been said in the preceding and succeeding sentences and as such its introduction in this context serves no purpose other than extolling the greatness of Aum̐. The passage **tad yathā śaṅkunā** etc. has to be taken as a direct continuation of **Brahmasaṁso'mṛtatvam eti**. The one who is established in Brahman attains immortality. Brahman alone is immortal. Immortality consists in getting firmly established in Brahman. It makes no sense therefore in saying that one established in Brahman attains Brahman. Attainment of Brahman thus becomes unintelligible if the word Brahman is taken in its most well known sense-the Absolute of the Upaniṣads. Unless it is taken in some other sense it is difficult to make out a sense from the passage. It therefore becomes imperative on the part of the śruti to make clear what it means by Brahman.

Attainment presupposes two things- the one who attains and the one that is attained. The attained no doubt is Brahman, the attainment of which is the centre of the teaching of all the Upaniṣads. The one who attains is qualified by brahmasaṁsthā. Brahmasaṁsthā is

a bahuvrīhi compound and the sentence will have to be construed as **Brahmaṇi samsthā [yasya] saḥ amṛtattvam eti**. Brahmasamsthā is the qualification for the one who attains Brahman. Brahmasamsthā in the context would only mean the means through which one attains Brahman as in instances like **dhanavān sukham eti**. Brahman therefore signifies that entity the establishment in which is the means to attain Brahman. What then is meant by Brahman? It is to this question the śruti furnishes reply **Omkāra evedam sarvam**.²⁸

Brahman therefore is Aumkāra. Samsthā, firm establishment (Samyaksthitih) in relation to the syllable Aum will signify the uninterrupted meditation on the syllable Aum. **Brahmasamsthō'mṛtatvam eti**. means that the one whose meditation is focused on Aum attains Brahman. Aum therefore is the object of meditation (ālambana) and hence the symbol of Brahman. The identification of sarvam with Aum is not different from the identification of Brahman with Aum.

As in the case of the *Chāndogya*, context will be our guiding principle in ascertaining the nature of the Brahman-Aum identification spoken of in the *Praśna* text. The sentence under consideration is immediately followed by **Tasmād vidvān etenaivāyatanenaikataram anveti**.²⁹ The enlightened person attains either of the two through this only. The pronoun ekatara (either of the two) refers to Brahman, para and apara and etena therefore refers to Aumkāra. Etena with the instrumental termination qualifies the noun āyatana, another instrumental ending. Both the instrumental endings indicate the relation that Aum bears to the verb anveti. The word āyatana describes the nature of Aum and it means support. The sentence will therefore mean 'Through this support, Aum, the enlightened attains either of the two Brahman. Support of what? The verb abhidhyāyīta is found in association with Aum in sentence preceding and succeeding the one under consideration. Abhidhyāna means intense meditation. Abhidhyāna in all its detail being the subject of the entire section the verb abhidhyāyīta is to be supplied and the sentence will have to be construed as **(Yo) vidvān etenaivāyatanena (abhidhyāyīta sa) ekataram anveti**. It therefore easily follows that Aum is the support of intense meditation (abhidhyāna). In other words Aum is the focus at which Brahman is to be meditated upon. Aum is the prakṛtika (symbol) of Brahman meditation. The juxtaposition of **Omkāreṇa** and **āyatanena** in the concluding verse of the section also points to the same conclusion.³⁰ The symbolic character of Aum being made explicit by the significant use of the pronoun etena and the word āyatana in the following sentence the identification cannot be anything but figurative.

The section opens with a question by Śaibya Satyakāma regarding the fruit of life-long meditation on Aum. The remaining portion of the entire section embodies Sage Pippalāda's answer to this question. His question makes it evident that Satyakāma knows meditation alone and nothing about the *modus operandi*. Therefore Pippalāda has to explain him the meditation in detail. As the passage is given in answer to the question on meditation it cannot contain anything having no bearing, direct or indirect, on meditation. As otherwise it would not be a consistent reply. If the identification were to be real it has no relevancy in the context. Nor has it any purpose to serve in the meditation upon Brahman in its symbol. Owing to its indispensability in the attainment of Brahman Aum is

elevated to the level of Brahman. The sentence is a eulogy (arthavāda) on Auṁ and the identification of the means (Auṁ) with the end (Brahman) is only figurative.

As already noticed Maṇḍana holds that knowledge of the real identity of Brahma with Auṁ is a qualification for the candidate aspiring for Brahman-meditation. Maṇḍana forgets that it is the meditation on the symbol that is ordained in the passage. Symbol meditation (pratīkopāśana) is based on the difference of the symbol and the object meditated upon. Knowledge of the real identity of Brahman with Auṁ is inimical to symbol-meditation and it will annihilate the notion that Auṁ is but a symbol. Auṁ will then cease to be a symbol of Brahman.³¹

A comparison of the passage under consideration with a passage in the *Kaṭhōpaniṣad* having more or less an identical import throws much light on the issue on hand

**Etaddhyevākṣaram Brahma etadhyevākṣaram param.
Etadhyevākṣaram jñātvā yo yad icchati tasya tat.
Etad ālambanam śrṣṭham etad ālambanam param.
Etad ālambāram jñātvā Brahmaloke mahīyate.**³²

Maṇḍana, it was seen, maintains that the knowledge indicated by the word vidvān in **tasmād vidvān** is the knowledge of the identity of Brahman with Auṁ spoken of in **param cāparam ca** etc. The *Kaṭha* text **Etad ālambanam jñātvā** is the exact counterpart of **vidvān** and the object of the knowledge indicated by Vidvān. Vidvān as such means the one who knows Auṁ as the symbol (ālambana) of Brahman. The above comparison shows that the identification in the *Praśna Upaniṣad* is only figurative. Comparison of passages found in different texts and having identical import and interpreting the less clear text in accordance with the more clear ones is one of the principle adhered to by the author of the *Brahmasūtras* in the interpretation of Upaniṣadic texts.³³

Further the *Praśna* is said to be the Brāhmaṇa of the *Muṇḍaka*. The accessory character of Auṁ in Brahman-meditation is obvious in the *Muṇḍaka*. The *Praśna* being an amplification of the *Muṇḍaka* cannot hold a different view on the nature of Auṁ. If the identification in the *Muṇḍaka* is figurative there is no need to mention that it is so in the *Praśna* also.

It is worthwhile in this connection to notice what the author of the *Brahmasūtras* has to say on this issue. Maṇḍana, we have seen, contends that Brahman is of the nature of Auṁ (speech) on the basis of the use of the word denoting syllable, Akṣaram, with reference to Brahman in texts dealing with Brahman and in support of his contention he cites Upaniṣadic texts which speak of the identity of Brahman with Auṁ. In the Akṣarādhikaraṇa (I. 3. 10-12) Bādarāyaṇa discusses the meaning of Akṣaram appearing in texts dealing with Brahman. Bādarāyaṇa concludes that the word Akṣaram should never be taken to mean the syllable Auṁ since the description of Akṣaram is absolutely incompatible with the nature of Auṁ. In short Akṣaram is not Auṁ. Maṇḍana's contention that Akṣaram is Auṁ, is opposed to the views of the author of the *Brahmasūtras* and therefore a real identity of Brahman with Auṁ cannot be maintained.

The foregone examination of Upaniṣadic passages shows that they cannot be relied upon as positive evidences in establishing that Brahman is of the nature of speech since the identity they speak of is not real. Śaṅkara's interpretation of the passages are natural and are fully borne out by the context. Maṇḍana's interpretations are departures from the context and look rather odd. Maṇḍana has a soft corner in his heart for the Śabdabrahma-vāda and he wants to show, somehow or other, that it has the authority of the Upaniṣads. It is his overflowing sympathy towards the Śabdabrahmavāda that has made him disregard the context in his Upaniṣadic interpretations and overlook the great authorities like Bādarāyaṇa.

Source:

Svaminathan, V. "On Aumkāra-Maṇḍanamiśra and Śaṅkarācārya." *Journal of Oriental Research* (Madras) 40/41, (1970/72): 105-116.

¹ Vyāsa, the author of the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya* also was favourably disposed towards the Sphoṭavāda. Vide his *bhāṣya* on *Y. S.* III. 17.

² *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*, I. 3.28.

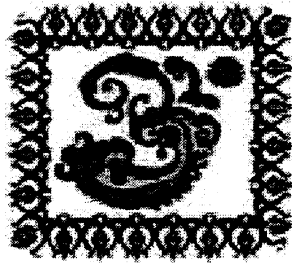
³ *Brahmasiddhi* I. 1.5. pp. 16-17, Madras Government Oriental Manuscripts Series No.

4.

⁴ Cf. *Muṇḍ. Up.* I. 1.5. Atha parā yayā tad akṣaram adhigamyate. *Brh. Up.* III. 8.9.

Critical contributions

- ⁹ Kātyāyana's Vār. on Pāṇini III 3.108.
¹⁰ *Muṇḍ. Up.* II. 2.6.
¹¹ *Mahānār. Up.* 24.2.
¹² *Tait. Up.* 1.8.1.
¹³ *Tait. Up.* 1.8.1.
¹⁴ *Chānd. Up.* II 23.3.
¹⁵ *Ib.* III. 14.1.
¹⁶ *Brh. Up.* I. 4,10.
¹⁷ *Chānd. Up.* VIII. 25.2.
¹⁸ *Brh. Up.* II. 4.6.
¹⁹ Param puruṣam abhidhyāyīta, *Pr. Up.* V. 5.
²⁰ *Pr. Up.* V. 2.
²¹ *Kaṭha Up.* I.2. 15-17.
²² *Māṇḍ. Up.* 1.
²³ *Māṇḍ. Up.* II. 2. 3-4.
²⁴ Cf. Yad vidhīyate tat stūyate.
²⁵ *Tait. Up.* I. 5-7.
²⁶ *Ib.* 1.4.
²⁷ *Chānd Up.* II. 23.1.
²⁸ *Chānd Up.* II. 23. 3.
²⁹ *Pr. Up.* V. 2. 15
³⁰ Tam omkāreṇaivāyatanenānveti vidvān *Muṇḍ. Up.* V.7.
³¹ Cf. *Br. Sū.* IV. 1. 4.
³² *Ka h. Up.* I.2. 16-17.
³³ Cf. Anyārtham tu Jaiminiḥ praśnavyākhyānābhyam api caivam eke. *Br. Sū.* I. 4. 18.
and Śārīraś cokhaye'pi hi bhedenainam adhīyate *Br. Sū.* I. 2. 20.



THE METAPHYSICAL BRAHMAN AND THE MYSTICAL OM¹

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In Indian literature *Brahman* is frequently called imperishable, immovable, firm, a sustaining principle, a support or basis of existence. In the hymns of the *Atharvaveda*, for example, *Brahman* is represented as *skambha* (10, 7-8). (Lindan, pp. 235 ff.) These hymns identify *Skambha* and *Brahman*. The line, *tasmai jyeṣṭhāya brahmaṇe namaḥ*, which recurs at the end of the stanzas 10.7.32, 33, 34, 36 means “to him, (who is) the highest *brahman*, be homage”, ‘him’ denoting the *Skambha*. And the term *Ātman*, which comes at the very end of this important text, shows that it leads up to the fundamental identification of Upanisadic thought. The knowledge of *Brahman* is, therefore, the foundation of all knowledge: “All this is founded on knowledge, knowledge is the foundation, *Brahman* is knowledge” (*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, 5.3).

Etymology of ‘Brahman’

To the question how *Brahman* came to denote the supreme reality, Radhakrishnan answers: “We need not trouble ourselves about the etymology of the word (*brahman*). To us, *Brahman* means reality, which grows, breathes, or swells.” (Radhakrishnan 1.164). But for our purpose, it would be fruitful to go into the problem of etymology. Attempts have been made to connect the concept of *brahman* with *mana*, which is a kind of Siberian shaman or an American Indian medicine-man (Wagenvoot, Intro.). But *Brahman* is too high a concept to be compared with primitive standards of thinking, and hence these attempts need not be considered seriously. The ancient Indians searching for a firm ground or foundation for the universe, including the human soul, must have chosen a word derived from some root meaning “to be firm, strong, etc.” to designate that ultimate foundation of all that exists. It must have had behind it the concept of support. Gonda, therefore, after Indian etymologists, connects the word ‘*brahman*’ with the Sk. root ‘*br̥h-br̥hm̐ti*’. It belongs in origin, according to him, to the class of Indo-European nouns in *-man*. The suffix *man* is especially fit to express the idea of powers manifesting themselves either in actions and processes, or in beings and objects, or at the same time in actions and beings or objects (Gonda 1950, pp. 72-73). Gonda seeks support from the *Naighaṇṭuka*, a commentary on the *Ni-ghaṇṭu*, which connects the word *brahman* with *br̥hv̥rddhau* [?] (2, 8, 15). In the *R̥gveda*, *Brahman* often appears as a *vardhanam*, i.e., as something that causes to increase, strengthens, animates (e.g., 2.12.14). According to the *Bhg.*, *Brahman* is the supreme imperishable or immutable (“*Akṣaram brahma paramaṇ*”, 8.3). The *Brahmasūtra* also states that *Brahman* is *akṣara*, the imperishable, because it supports everything up to *ākāśa*, or space (1.3.10). *Brahman* is also mentioned as *Bhūman*, and according to Sankara, the *bhūman* referred to in the *Chāndogya upaniṣad* (7.23) is *brahman*.

Gonda was right to refute Renou’s derivation of the word ‘*brahman*’ from the Sk. root

'*brah/barh*', conveying the sense of 'enigma' or 'riddle' (Renou 1949, pp. 7 ff.) and to establish his own etymology deriving the word from the Sk. root '*brh*'. But he agrees with Renou in interpreting the word *brahman* as a kind of enigma or riddle, and *brahmodya* as an "attempt at formulating and grasping, in the outward form of 'enigmatical speech', the fundamental, all-pervading, all-connecting power underlying the unstable and transient phenomena, and at the same time an attempt at having a hold on that power" (Gonda 1950, p. 61).

Brahman and Brahma

As regards the distinction between *brahman* and *Brahma*, the god, Gonda has to say that "the more popular, the more concrete, the 'personal', 'spatial' and mythological representations of the Supreme, called by the name *Brahma*, must have existed side by side with the more philosophical, impersonal view for a long period, both being only an attempt to describe the undescrivable and both being positively rooted in a *brahman* conception wavering between the 'personal' and the 'impersonal' aspects of power" (Gonda 1950, p. 66). It is, however, difficult to agree with Gonda on this point, as *Brahma* [?] is a purely mythological figure and stands in no comparison whatsoever with the *Brahman* which is the Reality. St. Ramdas has asked a pointed question in his *Dāsabodha*, denying any existence to god Brahma: "If what people say is true, namely that Brahma creates, Viṣṇu maintains and Rudra destroys everything, then who can be said to have given birth to Brahma, maintained Viṣṇu and destroyed Rudra at the time of the great deluge?" (*Dāsa*, 9.7.10-12). All such talk is, according to Ramdas, just traditional talk and nothing more. We have, therefore, to arrive at the Upanisadic conclusion, narrated through the parable of a fruit of the Nyagrodha tree, that the underlying essence of things is subtle and unmanifest and that it is the same for the cosmos and the individual (*Chāndogya* 6.12).

The *brahman* is *nirguṇa*, and therefore, ineffable. As Wittgenstein wrote, "what we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence." According to Staal, the *jahadajahallakṣaṇā* type of implication is applicable to the *brahman* which is not described but indicated (Staal 1987, pp. 41-46). But then how to reach the ineffable? Answers Staal: "By silence, by silent meditation. And a person who writes about the ineffable should not write too much."

The Syllable 'Om'

The syllable '*Om*' holds a unique position in the Hindu religion. This originally a 'numinous primeval sound' is throughout many centuries regarded as a positive symbol of the Supreme. It is said to have flashed forth in the mind of Brahmā while he was absorbed in meditation. It then unfolded itself in the form of the *Gāyatrī* which in turn became the mother of the *Vedas* (Gonda 1975, p. 278). On the yogic levels *Om* is the very object of contemplation, on the philosophical level it is the only Reality, while on the popular level it persists as the necessary accompaniment of all *mantras*, whether Vedic or Tantric. As regards its history, the syllable *Om* is significantly absent from the oldest Vedic texts. It is first recorded in the *Yajurvedic Samhitās* like the *Vājasaneyī* (2,13) and the *Maitrāyaṇī* (4.9.21). In the *Brāhmaṇas* it is used in an assertive sense. The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, for ex-

ample, states that the response to each verse of the *Rgveda* employed in the ceremony of consecration of a king by the *hotṛ* priest is to be an *Om*, said by the *adhvaryu*. This use of *Om* as a solemn ‘yes’ is found more frequently in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (I. 4, 1, 30, etc.). The *Upaniṣads* and eventually the *Bhagavadgītā* look at *Om* as the symbol of the *Brahman* and the means to attain it by meditating upon it. Identifying *Om* with *prāṇava*, the *Mundaka Upaniṣad* constructs the well known metaphor of the bow and the arrow and advocates its single-minded contemplation in order to merge into the ultimate Reality (II, 2.3-4). The *Bhagavadgītā*, besides claiming that *Om* is the Divinity among all the *Vedas*, calls the triad *om-tat-sat* as the threefold name of the *Brahman* and then proceeds to discuss its *viniyoga*, or employment (17.23).

The Origin of Om

As regards the origin of the syllable *Om*, both Hauer and Heiler take it just as a meaningless sound. The one compares it to the sound of the bull-roarer (Hauer 1958, pp. 24 ff.), while the other treats it as ‘numinous primordial sound’ (Heiler 1961, pp. 307 ff.), Keith, rejecting its connection with a pronominal base *av-*, takes the word as ‘purely an exclamation’, being the nasalised form of *Ó* (Keith 9.490). The *Prāṇavopaniṣad* in the *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* (1.1.26) derives *Om* from the Sk. root *ap* (to attain), while Müller and others derive it from Sk. *avam* (that) (Max Müller 1899, p. 322). The currently accepted etymology of *Om* is the one offered by Bloomfield which derives the word from Proto-European ‘*au*’ which is an ‘introductory particle’ (Bloomfield 1890, pp. Cl-Cli). *Au* developed into *o* to which “long drawn utterance we may ascribe the nasal, which was afterwards felt an organic part of the word and treated as an independent *m*”, according to Bloomfield. He further says that “the word *om* ... has no organic connection with the language” and that “all its uses are conscious and secondary.” As regards the meaning of *Om*, Bloomfield has to say that “*Om*... may have been originally nothing but an introductory word of somewhat the same value as *atha*.” This view gets support in Panini’s *sutra*: “*Om abhyādāne*”, meaning ‘*Om* at the commencement’ (8.2.87).

Both Bloomfield’s etymology and interpretation of *Om* are questioned by Parpola, who suggests new theories (Parpola 1981, pp. 195-213). The weak point in Bloomfield’s etymology of *Om* from Proto-I-E *au* is, according to Parpola, in the meaning. Turning against the different view adopted by the compilers of the Petersburg Lexicon (1.1122), Bloomfield says that it “explains *Om* as a word of solemn assertion and reverent assent, comparing its meaning with that of ‘*amen*’ of the Scriptures. This explanation involves the transfer of a Semitic conception, coloured by Germanic religious feeling; it does not seem to represent an Indian view.” Now, Parpola tries to show that Bloomfield is wrong and that there are cogent reasons for considering ‘yes’ as the primary meaning of *Om*. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* rightly defines *Om* as an ‘*anujñākṣaram*’, a syllable of consent (1.1.8). It is, of course, true that in the Vedic ritual *Om* is also used in formulae where it does not grant consent. But that is a secondary use of *Om*, according to Parpola, which cannot disqualify all evidence suggesting that consent or permission is the primary meaning. He has convincingly shown that most of the oldest occurrences of the liturgical usage of *Om* show the imperative sense. He has also shown the similarity in the usage of the Sk. *Om* and the He-

brew ‘*amen*’, though the two are etymologically not related². In Sanskrit *om* alternates with *na* as the affirmative and negative reply respectively.

If the etymology *ava* > *au* > *o(m)* is accepted, then the semantic development ‘that’ > ‘yes’ can be paralleled by Latin *hoc illud*, ‘this here’, becoming French *oui*, ‘yes’. But this etymology is not acceptable to Parpola. He traces *Om* back to Sk. *ām*, meaning ‘yes’, the change *ām* > *om* being explained as due to the labialisation of the vowel, conditioned by the following labial nasal. Like *Om*, *ām* is also absent from the oldest Vedic texts. It is first recorded in Panini (8.1.55). But then what is the source of *ām*? According to Parpola, it stems from the religion of the pre-Vedic inhabitants of India. Naturally, he connects Sk. *ām*, and hence *om*, to Dravidian *ām* which is the principal word for assent in all the main Dravidian languages. Concluding, Parpola remarks: “This word (*Om*)... provides yet another proof that the religion of pre-Vedic India goes back to a large extent to a Dravidian substratum (... which) is to be linked with the Harappan culture” (Parpola, p. 210).

The only comment one can offer on the aforesaid controversy between the two linguists is that neither of them has provided us with any significant reason for the semantic change that has taken place and about which there is no doubt. ***Om* is not only a word which is of the ‘utmost religious importance’, but also a means of meditation for the realization of the Divine. How a simple particle of assent, whether of Aryan or non-Aryan origin; could come to mean *Brahman* and rise to the status of a symbol for the ultimate Reality is a question left out by both Bloomfield and Parpola.** [emphasis added]

Philosophical Approach

If the western approach to *Om* is philological, the eastern approach is philosophical. Of course, Indians do not lag behind in speculating about the analysis of *Om* into different component sounds. The earliest such speculation recorded is to be found in the *Aitareya-Brahmaṇa* (5.32-34). There *Om* is derived from the three sounds *a*, *u* and *m*, which Prajāpati finally produced from the three mystical words, *bhūr*, *bhuvah* and *sva*, which mean earth, atmosphere and sky. *Om* was explained as the essence of these three and hence identified with the whole universe and the world soul. The *Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā* analyzed *Om* into ‘*O (ta) m(ita)*’, meaning ‘(everything) limited (*mitain*) is threaded (*otam*) (on Him)’ (Gonda 1975, p. 276).

These fanciful attempts to analyze *Om* into different parts and interpret them resulted in identifying *Om* with all possible triads and the Indian mind had a free play with the concept of *Om*. It all began with the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* which glorifies *Om* and its spiritual significance in the following words:

“*Om*: This syllable is the whole world.
The past, the present and the future —
everything is just the word *Om*.
And whatever else that transcends threefold time —

that, too, is just the word *Om*.” (Radhakrishnan 1957, p. 55)

According to the *Māṇḍūkya*, *Om* does not merely consist of the three morae, *a-u-m* (‘mora’ is the duration of a short syllable), but contains also a fourth, mora-less part. Its author brings into correspondence with the four parts of *Om* the four states of consciousness, namely *jāgrti* (wakefulness), *svapna* (dream), *susupti* (sleep) and *turiyā* (super-consciousness) on the one hand, and the four kinds of soul, namely the *Vaiśvānara*, the *Taijasa*, the *Prājña* and the *Ātman* on the other (M. 1.12).

Interpretations of Om

It will be interesting to consider the various interpretations of this mystical sound. Tradition splits *Om* into five component parts: *a*, *u*, *m*, *nāda* and *bindu*. Sometimes *Omkāra* is called the “Five-fold Abode” (*Pañcāyatana*) of Śiva who is said to have five parts. Here the theological interpretation is that within the *Om*, Viṣṇu is the ‘a’, Brahmā is the ‘u’, and Rudra-Śiva the ‘m’; the *Bindu* is the completing fourth, and the *Nāda* is the centre of the quadrant, signifying transcendence. The manifold *Om*, although it is often given an abstract philosophical explanation, as in the commentaries on the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, in this instance appears to have a theistic significance. For there is a myth about the five-fold sound of the mystic *mantra*, *Om*, being heard along with the vision of a great shaft of light in Benaras (Eck 1983, p. 115). Taking *Om* to be composed of not five but three elements, namely *a*, *u* and *m*, it is said to symbolize all possible triads in space and time. Svami Sivananda of Hṛṣīkesā has gone to the length of taking *Om* to be an abridgement of the *Mahāvākya*, or the Great Truth, which is ‘*Soham*’, signifying the identity of the individual and the cosmic soul. “*Soham* is only *Om*”, he says; “delete the consonants *s* and *h*, and you get *Om*”. (Sivananda 1981). Mahadevan analyses *Om* into *a*, *u* and *m*, which stand for waking, dreaming and sleeping respectively, whereas the fourth state, represented by the *bindu*, or the dot, is the silence in which *Om* culminates (Mahadevan 1960).

These are all imaginary, or we may say poetic, explanations of the symbolic word *Om*. Even St. Jnanadev, who usually interprets *Om* in the proper mystical way, has used the figure of God Gaṇeśa as a metaphor in which his feet, belly and head are respectively the three components of *Om*, namely *a*, *u* and *m* (*Jñā.* 1.2-20). A better and more convincing interpretation of *Om* is provided by *Vedānta*. Without entering into any etymological or phonetic analysis, *Vedānta* identifies the word, which is *Om*, with God. In trying to reconcile the conflict between the *Mīmāṃsakas*, who believe in the supremacy of the word, or sound, and the *Naiyāyikas*, who believe in the supremacy of God, the *Vedāntins* identify the Word with God. The significant term *Śabdabrahma* expresses this identity. While in *Mīmāṃsā* the Word is greater than God, and in *Nyāya* God is greater than the Word, in *Vedānta* the Word is made co-equal with God. Vivekananda, being a Vedantin himself, has adopted this attitude. But he goes further and bases his argument on the *sphoṭa* theory of Panini [?] who said that the *Śabda*, which he identified with *Sphoṭa*, or Explosion, was the primal energy of the universe and Patanjali [?] who said that ‘Study (*abhyāsa*) is the repetition of the sacred syllable *Om* (*Mahābhāṣya* 2.32)³. It is from this *Sphoṭa* as the ultimate Reality that all existences in the universe spring. While other grammarians failed to catch

the mystical significance of Panini [?] and took *Sphoṭa* to mean the power of signification, or 'meaning of a word' (*sphuṭyate arthaḥ anena iti sphoṭah*), it was Patanjali who understood Panini in the proper mystical sense⁴. He set aside all philological explanations of *Om* and suggested a mystical one which identifies *Om* with God: *tasya puruṣaviśeṣasya īśvara-sya vācakah praṇavaḥ* (His manifesting word is *Om*). (S. 27). Repetition of this *Om* and meditating on its meaning (is the way): *tajjapas tadarthabhāvanam*. What we find in the writings of Svami Vivekananda is this mystical interpretation of the *Sphoṭa* theory of Panini as explained by Patanjali. To quote from his *Bhakti-yoga*,

All this expressed sensible universe is the form behind which stands the eternal inexpressible *sphoṭa*, the manifester, as Logos, or Word. This eternal *sphoṭa*, the essential eternal material of all ideas or names, is the power through which the Lord creates the universe; may be, the Lord first becomes conditioned as the *sphoṭa*, and then evolves Himself out as the yet more concrete sensible universe. This *Sphoṭa* has one word as its only possible symbol, and this is the *Om*. And as by no possible means of analysis can we separate the word from the idea, this *Om* and the eternal *Sphoṭa* are inseparable; and therefore, it is out of this holiest of all holy words, the eternal *Om*, that the whole universe may be supposed to have been created. This *Sphoṭa* is called the *Nāda-brahma*, the Sound-*brahman*. Being nearest to God, this *Om* is truly symbolic of God.

(Vivekananda 1978, pp. 42:45)

For this doctrine of *Sphoṭa*, we have an excellent parallel in the Christian concept of Logos: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1.1). The theory of *Sphoṭa* also reminds us of the 'Big Bang' theory of modern physics according to which the birth of the universe lies in the primal explosion of the atom.

The Doctrine of Sphoṭa

The theory of *Sphoṭa* is very significant both semantically and metaphysically. Its semantic aspect is discussed at length in the general theory of language propounded by Bhartrhari in his *Vākyapadīya*⁵. Basic to his general philosophy is the concept of *brahman*, the ultimate being, whose very essence is *śabda*, or word, and from whom evolves (*vivartate*) all that there is (Biardeau, pp. 251-449 [?]). In the first chapter of the *Vākyapadīya*, he deals with the metaphysical and semantic problems side by side and states, according to Joshi, "that the eternal word is the supreme reality; it is transcendental and devoid of all qualities. *Śabdabrahman* is the originator of *śabdaprapañca* as well as *arthaprapañca*. It is an existence in its essence. From this *śabdabrahman* the whole universe evolves. It does not change nor does it cease. Both the denoter (*vācaka*) and the denoted (*vācya*, i.e. supreme existence) should not be looked upon as two different realities. But these are the two aspects of the one ultimate reality and, therefore, it is identical with them in essence. The whole phenomenon of material existence is only an appearance (*vivarta*) of the *śabdabrahman*." (VP. 1.1-2; 2.31) (Joshi 1967, Intro. p. 42).

It may be that Bhartrhari's attempt 'to link grammar with *advaita*' might have ultimately resulted in side-tracking the importance of the theory of *sphoṭa* from the linguistic point of view. But, for one thing, this was an act of later grammarians; and secondly, there was nothing wrong on the part of Bhartrhari to interpret the theory of *sphoṭa* both semantically and metaphysically. If the same Patanjali could take away the dross from the mind by *yoga* and from the speech by means of grammar, why should we deny the same position in the case of Bhartrhari? The fact is that he operates at different levels of speech the highest of which is the *parā*, or the transcendental one, where there is no longer any distinction between the *vācya* and the *vācaka*, or the denoted and the denoter, everything being one, the unitary *brahman*. Even Bhattoji Diksita, whose support Joshi seeks in order to bring out the linguistic importance of the theory of *sphoṭa*, defines *sphoṭa* as that by means of which ignorance is destroyed and the *brahman* is manifested: *avidyaiva brahmaiva va sphuṭatya'rtho'smād iti vyutpāṭtya sphoṭa iti sthitam* (Nene 1933, p. 10).

Praṇava-Brahman Identity

Om is thus the primordial manifestation of the Reality known as *Brahman* to Vedānta and is the sole object of meditation according to the *Upaniṣads*. *Omityevātmānam dhyāyata*, meditate on *Ātman* as *Om*, says the *Muṇḍaka* (2.2.6). It is described as not merely the supreme means of meditation, but the goal itself to be reached by meditation. The efficacy of meditation by means of *Om* is repeatedly asserted by the *Upaniṣads*. The *Kaṭha*, for example, says that "that word (*Om*) is the Supreme *Brahman*, the Supreme Symbol, the Supreme Support" (*Kaṭha* 1.2). The *Chāndogya* says that "one should meditate on this syllable, for one sings the long chant (*udgītha*) beginning with *Om*". It further explains *Om* as the essence of everything, of the *Sāman* which is the essence of the *Ṛgveda* which in turn is the essence of speech (Ch. 1.1.1-2, 5). The *Chāndogya* declares that all speech is interwoven on the symbol *Om* in the same manner as the leaves of a tree are woven together on a stalk (Ch. 2.23). The *Muṇḍaka's* metaphor of the bow and arrow is well known: "*Om* is the bow. The arrow is the Self (*Ātman*). *Brahman* is the mark. By the undistracted one is It to be penetrated. One should come to be in It, as the arrow (in the mark)." (*Muṇḍ.* 2.2)

According to Vedānta, *Omkāra*, also called *Praṇava*, and the *Brahman* are identical. This identity is well brought out by the author of the *Gauḍapāda-kārikās* (8th c.) thus:

Praṇavo hyaparam brahma, praṇavaśca param smṛtaḥ
apūrvo 'nāntaro 'bāhyo 'nāparaḥ praṇavo' vyayaḥ 26
Sarvasya praṇavo hyādir madhyam antas tatha eva ca
evam hi praṇavam jñātvā vyaśnute tadanantaram 27
Praṇavam hīśvaram vidyāt sarvasya hṛdaye sthitam
sarvavyāpinam omkāram matvā dhīro na śocati 28
Amātro 'nāntamātraśca dvaitasyopaśamaḥ Śivaḥ
Omkāro vidīto yena sa munir netaro janaḥ 29

(Works, 5.119-121)

The author declares that the *Omkāra* should be known syllablewise (*pādaśaḥ*) and the

mind employed in it (24, 25).

The Mystical Source of Om

What is then the origin of the mystic syllable *Om*? Etymologists and grammarians and metaphysicists hold different views which are almost impossible to reconcile. The problem becomes all the more complicated when two disciplines seem to encroach upon each other. But the problem must have a solution, and that too not very involved. That *Omkāra* emerged as the first sound from the *damaru* of Śiva is too simplistic an answer, acceptable only to the mythic-minded. Mysticism demands a more rational explanation, which is provided by St. Jnanadev, the author of the *Jñāneśvarī*, a commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā* (13th c.). Defining *Om* as *ekākṣara brahma*, or one-syllabled Reality, after the *Bhg.* (8.13), Jnanadev first calls it *śabdabrahma* (*Jñā.* 6.109) and then explains it as the sprout of the seed of the *brahman* which appeared as sound (*ghoṣadhvaninādākāra*, *Jñā.* 9.275) and which was the Supreme Being itself. *Om* is thus a mystic sound, according to Jnanadev, experienced in their ecstatic states by the Upanisadic sages,— Upanisadic because it is then that the word *Om* first occurs. It does not appear in the early *Ṛgveda*, and naturally so; because it was composed in an age of “groping, in which religion, philosophy, superstition and thought were inextricably interrelated and yet in perpetual conflict.” There is very little trace of genuine mysticism in the *Vedas*. The *Upaniṣads*, on the contrary, which came after them, are full of mystical utterings the crowning piece of which is the contemplation of the *Brahman-Atman* ‘*Om*’. There *Om* is the *anāhata nāda*, the unstruck or unbeaten sound, experienced by the mystics and identified by them intuitionally with the *Brahman*, or the ultimate Reality. *Omkāra* is thus and in this sense the *Śabdabrahma*. When Sankar speaks about *nādānusandhānam*, or attention to sound, in his *Yogatārāvalī*, what he means is attention to the unstruck sound of *Om* heard by the *yogīs*. It is by means of the attention to *nāda* that one attains the *tattvapada*, or the status of Essence, according to him. The mystic sound *Om*, with the help of the breathed in *Om*, makes Sankar’s mind merge into God⁶. The author of the *Ha hayogapradīpikā* eulogises *nādānusandhānam*, or attention to the sound, in the highest of terms. It is, according to him, the only one and the chief means of merging, *laya* (HP. 65). It is the net, he says, for catching the mind (HP 93). As regards the *nāda*, or the sound, itself, he has to say that the *Jñeya*, or the object of knowledge, is its very substance and the *parama-pada* into which the mind merges. Thus, *Om* is the sound aspect of the *brahman*, or the Reality, and it is a revelation, an experience, a *paracā*, to use the terminology of the Nātha-panthis. Meditation on *Om* leads to the realisation of the Self. That is what Vedānta tells us. To say it in the words of Ramakrishna, “the *Sandhyā* merges into the *Gāyatrī*, the *Gāyatrī* in *Om*, and *Om* in *samādhi*. It is like the sound of a bell: *t-a-m* [?]. The *yogī*, by following in the trail of the sound *Om*, gradually merges himself in the Supreme *Brahman*.” (M. 1974, p. 419) This *Brahman-Om* relation runs parallel to the *Śūnya-Liṅga* relation in the philosophy of the *Viraśaivas* where *Śūnya* is not naught or negation, but the Infinite, the Absolute, the *Brahman* (*Śūnyasampādane* [?] , Preface p. viii).

In Buddhism, too, the mantra of mantras, *Om Maṇipadme hum*, begins with *Om*. It is the *mantra* of the supremely compassionate Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva. It is known as *Maṇi*. It derives enormous force from the cumulative power of the sacred associations with

which it has been invested by the minds of countless people during the course of centuries. It is more of a soporific sound than an actual word. The inner oscillations set up by the rhythmic murmurings of *Om* and its associations in the consciousness of the disciple open his mind to experience higher states (Blofeld, pp. 33 ff.).

Source

S. G. Tulpule. “*The Metaphysical Brahman and the Mystical Om: A comparative Study*” in *The Divine Name in the Indian Tradition*. (Shimla) pp. 30-42.

¹ For the origin and evolution of the concept of *Brahman*, see S.K. Belvalkar and R.D. Ranade, *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, Creative period, Poona 1927, pp. 346-357.

² It would be interesting to note in this connection that the University of Poona has adopted since its inception in 1948 ‘*Om*’ as the word of consent to be pronounced by the members of its Senate to approve the admission of a candidate to a degree.

³ The term *sphoṭa* is derived from the root *sphuṭ* meaning ‘to burst.’ It is defined in two ways: in its linguistic sense, it is normally defined as ‘that from which the meaning bursts forth’ (*sphuṭati artho yasmāt*⁵). It also means ‘an entity manifested by sounds’ (*sphuṭyate varṇaiḥ yaḥ*). Although the sounds are produced serially, the *sphoṭa* manifested by them has no time-series-pattern. Each sound manifests an individual unit (cf. J. Brough. Audumbarayana’s *Theory of Language*; *BSOAS*, Vol.14, part-I).

⁴ This statement is made on the assumption of the identity of two Patanjalis, the author of the *Yogasūtras* and the author of the *Mahābhāṣya*. The laudatory verse about him (“*Yogena cittasya* etc.”) cited in Sivarama’s Commentary on the *Vāsavadatta* evinces this identity. For a fuller discussion of this problem, see James Haughton Woods, *The yoga-system of Patanjali*, 3rd ed., Delhi 1966; Intro. pp. xiii-xx.

⁵ For editions and translations of the *Vākyapadīya*, see George Cardona, *Panini-A Survey of Research*; Delhi 1980; pp. 297-98.

⁶ Nādānusandhāna, namostu tubhyam.
tvam sādhanam tattvapadasya jāne.
bhavatprasādāt pavanena sākam.
vilīyate Viṣṇupade mano me.

(*Minor Works of Sankaracarya*; Ed. H.R. Bhagavat, Poona, 2nd ed., 1952; p. 101)



NOTES ON AKSARA

J. A. B. VAN BUITENEN

One of the several intriguing terms which play a not insignificant role in the period of thought before the Sāṁkhyakārikās and then fall into desuetude after this landmark has been passed is *akṣara*. In an original, but sometimes controversial study, *Akṣara: a Forgotten Chapter in the Indian Philosophy*, MODI¹ has shown the relative importance of this term in the later Upaniṣads, the Gītā and the Epic. It is not my intention here to enter upon a discussion of MODI'S views but to study the term and its significance before the period at which he starts and to point out a background of associations which, in my opinion, will help us to understand the scope of the concepts later to be described by *akṣara*.

The etymology of the word *na kṣaratīti* has never been seriously questioned. An alternative etymology mentioned by Patañjali,² from AŚ with a suffixed *sara-*, has not found acceptance. Yet, it is interesting to note this derivation of the etymologically transparent term, not because it would be important in itself, but because it betrays a measure of dissatisfaction with the etymology “unflowing” of *akṣara* “syllable”.

That the word started its career as an adjective, meaning “not flowing away, unperishing”, seems obvious. But already in the most ancient source, the Ṛgveda, the word is used in a specialized sense exclusively associated with Vāc, and BERGAIGNE for one would render the word everywhere with “syllable”.³ When, however, the word occurs in later texts where no special associations with Vāc are immediately apparent, all scholars prefer to return to the “etymological sense” and translate “indestructible, eternal” and variants, thereby separating it from *akṣara* “syllable”. Is this separation really justified? In other words: does the later *akṣara* not continue the older *akṣara* “syllable”?

This ‘later’ *akṣara* may be dated from BĀUp. 3, 8. We note, however, that this is the only occurrence in the older Upaniṣads where the meaning “eternal principle” is preferred. Let us consider the other occurrences, BĀUp. 5,2,1; 3,1; 5,1; 5,3; 14,1-3; ChUp. 1,1,1; 5; 6; 7; 9; 10; 3,6-7; 4,1; 4-5; 2,10,3-4; 23,3; 8,3,5. In all these passages *akṣara* occurs in the sense of “syllable”; we may distinguish a more special sense, side by side with that of “any of the syllables into which a given word is analyzed”, namely “the syllable par excellence”, the syllable *OM*. This is the same distinction as made by the author of the Gītā : *girām asmy ekam akṣaram* “I am the one syllable among all words” (10, 25), and: *akṣarānām akāro ’smi* “I am the A among the syllables” (10, 33).

The one *akṣara* *OM* is, in ChUp. 1, equated with the udgītha: *om ity etad akṣaram udgītham upāsīta/ om ity udgāyati* (1,1,1) “know that the udgītha is this syllable *OM*, (for) the udgātar sings the udgītha as *OM*.” This equation *udgītha* = *OM*, which is repeatedly made, is of special interest; it cannot be completely explained by the fact that the udgītha begins with *OM*: the *prastāva* ends with this ubiquitous syllable; the equation with *OM* the udgītha is much more frequent than, e.g., with *ṛc*, though all mantras sung at the sacrifices

end and almost dissolve in OM. The special identity of OM with the udgītha is, I think, better explained by the peculiar way in which certain sāmans are chanted, the so-called *aniruktagāna* “the singing of the unpronounced (syllables).” This is customary with the three pavamānasāmans which are chanted at the three soma pressings of the Agniṣtoma: each syllable of the udgītha is substituted by the sound O. For instance the first udgītha of the bahiṣpavamānasāman, which is chanted at the prātaḥsavana, reads *pāvamānāyēndave abhī devām iya* (RV. 9,11,1) or in Sāmavedic notation *pa'va'mā-na'ye'nda've a'bhī' de'va'm iya'* (SV. 651; 763), but is sung: OM o 2̄ o 2̄ o^r o^r o^r o o 2̄ o o¹ o^r o^r o o² 1212. When one hears it chanted, it sounds like one long-drawn repetition of the initial OM, which it may well have been originally. I would consider it probable that the special significance of the otherwise mysterious equation udgītha = OM is to be understood from this peculiar mode of singing the udgītha at the soma pressings.

After this equation has been enlarged upon and the supremacy of the udgītha established, the speculations of this Chāndogya chapter are pushed farther and the *word* udgītha, which is of course identical with the *thing*, is analyzed into its syllables *ud-gī-tha*. But we are to remember that the udgītha is really the supreme and that this analysis is therefore of the supreme as ‘represented’ by the udgītha. The akṣara *ut-* is equated with prāṇa (cf. also 1,1,5; this equation has its natural explanation in the fact that the Chandogas, much more than the Rgvedic and Yajurvedic priests require breath while singing), sky, sun (cf. 1,3,1) and Sāmaveda; the akṣara *gī* is equated with vāc (=gīr), atmosphere, wind and Yajurveda; the akṣara *tha* with anna, earth, fire and Rgveda.

These triads are fundamental classes of creation. They inventorize creation, which is thus represented as being finally reducible to the three syllables of the word *udgītha* which is also the one syllable OM. The reduction of all things to a triadic scheme which itself is reduced again to one ultimate, from which therefore all things derive, is characteristic of the cosmogonical and cosmological speculations of this age.⁴ That here these triads of akṣaras and their correspondents are ultimately resolved in the unit OM, the akṣara *par excellence*, may already be clear from the context, but it is more explicitly stated elsewhere in the same upaniṣad. ChUp. 2,23,3-4 reads: *prajāpatir lokān abhyatapat / tebhyo 'bhī-taptebhyas trayī vidyā samprāsravat / tām abhyatapat / tasyā abhitaptābhyā etāny akṣarāṇi samprāsravan bhūr bhuvaḥ svar iti/ tāny abhyatapat / tebhyo 'bhītaptebhya omkārah samprāsravat/ tad yathā śāṅkunā sarvāṇi parṇāni sarvā vāk samṛṇṇā / omkāreṇa samṛṇṇāny evam omkāra evedaṃ sarvam omkāra evadaṃ [?] sarvaṃ /* That which is the last to “flow out” when the worlds etc. have been brooded by the creator, is the sap or juice, *rasa* or the essence. The syllable OM is the ultimate essence of all that is, because it is the basis of all speech: here we have to understand by “speech” primarily the sacred language of the Veda which is fundamental to the sacrifice which maintains the order of the universe.

Another version of this episode is found in JaimUpBr. 1,10,⁵ where it appears as an exegetical paraphrases of RV. 1,164,41-42, which we shall discuss later: (1) *sā prthaksalilam kāmādughākṣiti prāṇasamhitam cakṣuśśrotram vākprabhūtam manasā vyāptam hṛdayāgram . . . sahasrākṣaram ayuta-dhāram amṛtaṃ duhānā sarvān imān lokān abhi*

vikṣaratīti “she, the milch-cow of desires, yielding (as milk) the elixir of immortality in separate waves, imperishable, compounded with Breath, possessed of Sight and Hearing, abundant in Speech, pervaded by Mind, having the heart as its top, consisting of a thousand akṣaras and ten thousand streams, flows out in all directions into all these worlds.”⁶ Then this text continues: (2) *tad etat satyam akṣaram yad om iti / tasminn āpaḥ pratiṣṭhitā apsu pṛthivī pṛthivyām ime lokāḥ/ yathā sūcyā palaśāni samtrṇṇāni syur evam etenākṣareṇeme lokās samtrṇṇāḥ* “this is the *satyam akṣaram*, the OM : on it the waters are founded, on the waters the earth, on the earth these worlds: just as leaves are struck on a pin,⁷ so are the worlds stuck on this akṣara.” It is clear that the “cow of desires yielding immortality” is no one but Vāc herself who is frequently described as a cow. A parallel is furnished by ChUp. 1,3,5: *dugdhe ’smāi vāg dohaṃ yo vāco doho ’nnavān annādo bhavati ya etāny evaṃ vidvān udgīthākṣarāṇy upāsta udgītha iti*: “Vāc yields milk — which is the milk of Vāc herself — to him, and rich in food and eating food will be he, who knowing thus recognizes these akṣaras of the udgītha, namely *ud-gī-tha*, for what they really are.”

We find in the JaimUpBr. text just quoted that the akṣara OM is equated with *satyam*: *tad etat satyam akṣaram yad OM*, which can also be rendered: “*this akṣara, viz. OM, is the satyam*”; both this translation and the one given above amount to the same equality of *satyam* and the akṣaram. We find that similar things are said of both. In one text the three *vyāhṛtis*, *bhūḥ*, *bhuvah* and *svah*, are derivatives of udgītha = OM; elsewhere the three are connected with *satyam* in a comparable manner. In BĀUp. 5,5,1 a creation myth starts with the Waters, which beget *satyam* or *satyam brahman*,⁸ which begets Prajāpati, who begets the gods. The gods know only *satyam*. This *satyam* is syllabized into *so-ti-yam*, the first and last syllables of which are true (*satyam*) while the middle one is untrue (*anṛtam*). The same notion is to be found in ChUp. 8,3,5 where of *satyam*, syllabized *sat-ti-yam*, *sat* and *yam* are said to be immortal and *ti* to be mortal: as a matter of fact, the *ti* does not exist really: *satyam* is just *sat-yam*. But the point is, of course, to analyze the supreme called *satyam* into three syllables which can support a triadic scheme: to the three syllables corresponds the triad of *bhūḥ*, *bhuvah* and *svah*. Then this text adds another complication: this triad constitutes the One Puruṣa, both macrocosmically as the person in the sun and microcosmically as the person in the eye. But this notion too refers us back to comparable speculations about the udgītha in ChUp. 1,6,6-7.

This connexion of the tripartite OM = akṣaram = *satyam* with the Puruṣa myth is certainly not an accidental result of ever more comprehensive speculations about the Supreme One. As the BĀUp. 2,3 has it: the Name of the puruṣa is *satyasya satyam*.⁹ Similarly akṣara is connected with the microcosmic person in the eye in JaimUpBr. 1,43,7-9.¹⁰ How closely all these conceptions are associated is shown by the connexions of the BĀUp. passage in 5,14. Here still another Supreme is posited, the Gāyatrī metre. This metre consists of four feet or pādas of eight syllables, which are counted to comprise respectively earth, atmosphere and sky (*bhūmiḥ*, *antarikṣam*, *diauḥ* ~ *bhūḥ*, *bhuvah*, *svah*), the three Vedas (*ṛco*, *yajūṃsi*, *sāmāni*) and three *prāṇas* (*prāṇah*, *apānah*, *viānah*): these three triads constitute three pādas of the Gāyatrī. The fourth pāda is described as follows: *athāsya etad eva turīyaṃ darśataṃ pādaṃ parorajā ya eṣa tapati* “its fourth beautiful foot is the one who shines beyond space”¹¹ and further on: *saiṣā gāyatrī etasmiṃs turīye*

darśate pade parorajasi pratiṣṭhitā / tad vai tat satye pratiṣṭitam. “This gāyatrī is based on this beautiful foot which is beyond space: that foot again is based on satyam.” The one who shines beyond space is no doubt the person in the sun. The passage recalls ChUp. 3,12 where basically the same speculation is found which is, however, more faithful¹² to its ultimately Rgvedic prototype: *Gāyatrī vā idam sarvaṃ bhūtaṃ yad idam kiṃ ca / vāg vai gāyatrī vāg vā idam sarvaṃ bhūtaṃ gāyati ca trāyate ca*. The gāyatrī is sixfold: all beings; vāc; earth; body; heart; prāṇas; but also four-footed, which no doubt refers to such divisions as explained in the above BĀUp. passage. The ChUp. quotes the Ṛgveda (10,90,3): *etāvān asya mahimā 'to jyāyāṃś ca pūruṣaḥ / pādo 'sya vīśvā¹³ bhūtāni tripād asyāmṛtaṃ divi //* “so far goes its greatness; the puruṣa is greater than it still: all beings make up one foot (or quarter) of him; three feet (or quarters) are immortal in heaven.” This description of the Puruṣa is elsewhere given of Vāc (1,164,45) *catvāri vāk pārimitā padāni tāni vidur brāhmaṇā yé manīṣīṇaḥ / gūhā trīṇi nīhitā néngayanti turīyaṃ vācō manuṣyā vadanti//* “Vāc is measured in four feet: the keepers of the brahman who are wise know these feet: three, put away in hiding, do not stir; the fourth foot of Vāc is spoken by men.” It would seem that the Puruṣa has succeeded to some of the functions of Vāc when his association with Vāc became more significant in cosmogonical speculations. We see how Vāc is described as the female partner of the creator, Prajāpati, Vācaspati, Brhaspati, while at the same time his identity with Vāc is confirmed.

It is significant that in the above sūkta 1,164 akṣara is used several times in connexion with Vāc: (24) *gāyatrēna prāti mimīte arkām arkēna sāma traistubhena vākām / vākēna vākām dvipādā cātuspadā 'kṣāreṇa mimate saptā vāñih//* “With the gāyatrī foot he measures the *arka*, with the *arka* the *sāman*, with the *tristubh* foot the *vāka*, with the two-foot and four-foot *vāka* the recitation, with the syllable, the seven voices.” (39) *ṛcō akṣāre paramé vyòman yāsmin devā ādhi vīśve niṣedūḥ / yās tán ná véda kiṃ ṛcā kariṣyati yá ít tád vidús tá imé sám āsate //* “What will he do with the hymns who does not know the syllable of the hymn, which is the highest heaven where the gods all live? Only those who know it are sitting together here.” (41-42) *gaurīr mimāya salilāni tākṣaty ékapadī dvipadī sā cātuspadī / aṣṭāpadī nāvapadī babhūvūṣī sahāsrākṣarā paramé vyòman // tásyāḥ samudrā ādhi ví kṣarānti téna jīvanti pradīśāś cātasraḥ / tātāḥ kṣaraty akṣāraṃ tād vīśvam úpa jīvati //* “The buffalo cow has lowed, building lakes, having become one-footed, two-footed, four-footed, eight-footed, nine-footed — with a thousand syllables in the highest heaven: on the seas that flow out from her do all four world-quarters live: therefrom flows the Syllable: on it lives everything .”

As BERGAIGNE already remarked¹⁴ there is no reason to assume for *akṣara* in 42c another meaning than it has in *sahāsrākṣarā*; GELDNER, who apparently cannot believe in the metaphysical significance of the speculations on metres and syllables,¹⁵ prefers to render the second *akṣāra* more appropriately with “das Unvergängliche”. The Indian exegetes differ: Yāska and Sāyaṇa prefer “water”, Sāyaṇa elsewhere “syllable”.¹⁶ The author of the JaimUpBr. text quoted above patently takes *akṣāra* in 42c as “syllable”, though it is doubtful whether the Rgvedic poet had already the syllable OM in mind. A comparison of the JaimUpBr. exegesis is interesting: *gaurī* is paraphrased with *kāmadughā*; in *pṛthagsalilam* we have doubtless to recognize the RV. *salilāni*, the “lakes” or “pools” anticipating the

variously footed metres summed up in the sequel. It is exceedingly tempting to see in *akṣiti* a corruption of RV. *tákṣatī*. The attributes *prāṇasaṃhitam* etc. certainly mean to explain *ékapadī*, though we may be at a loss to explain some of these explanations.¹⁷ On the other hand it would seem that the JaimUpBr. author understood *sahasrākṣarā* as “having a thousand streams”, as the explicative or associative *ayutadhāram* would suggest. The expression *sahasrākṣarā paramé vyòman* in the sūkta is interesting: the recurring expression *akṣāre paramé vyòman*,¹⁸ to be explained either as “in the syllable which is the highest heaven” or as “which is *in* the highest heaven” is probably at the roof of it.

It is clear that the above upaniṣadic texts continue old speculations about an *akṣara* that had already in Rgvedic “times” been more or less clearly articulated as an ultimate and supreme principle without losing its significance “syllable”. Sometimes the *akṣara* is conceived as a sort of hypostazised Word, as in 1,164,39, sometimes as the simplest measure of recited mantras, as in ib. 24, sometimes as the essence of life as in ib. 42: but these distinctions are ours, not the Rgvedic priest’s. Elsewhere the syllable is the prime utterance of Vāc, as in 3,55,1 ab: *uśásah pūrvā ádha yád vyūśúr mahád ví jajñe akṣāram padé góḥ* / “When the ancient dawns first dawned the great Syllable was born in the footstep of the cow.” Here another association of *akṣara* with the sun is hinted at. The footstep of the cow is also the step or foot of metrical Vāc. That the syllable, as the common denominator of the sacred mantras, can represent the universal order which is based on the sacrifice, is almost a matter of course: so we read in 6,16,35-36: *gárbhe mātúḥ pitúṣpitā vididyutānó akṣāre / śidann ṛtásya yónim á // bráhma prajāvad á bhara jātavedo vícarṣaṇe/ ágne yád dīdáyad diví //* “Thou that art shining in the syllable, the womb of your mother,¹⁹ as your father’s father, sitting in the womb of the ṛtam, fetch thou, O excellent Agni Jātavedas, the child-bearing bráhman which radiates in heaven.” Evidently we have to regard the womb of the mother, the womb of the *ṛtam* and the heaven in which brahman radiates as parallel expressions: we see how easily and naturally *akṣara*, *ṛtam=satyam* and *brahman* in its ancient sense of powerful sacred utterance could be juxtaposed and be substituted one another, as we see happen frequently in later texts.

It cannot be doubted that the “etymological” meaning “unflowing, imperishable” was constantly in the mind of the priests speculating about the syllable. It is this deliberately sought polysemy characteristic of Vedic poetry which perhaps reveals best the mentality behind the speculations on Vāc: it is not mere abstract theorizing to reduce the Universe to its order, the order to the sacred Word and the Word to its metre and ultimate unit of syllable, but the immediate experience of the composing poet himself. It cannot be accidental that the supremacy of Vāc was upheld by priest-poets who themselves attempted — and with what success — to express ever more meanings by ever more pregnant words. With a beautiful stanza like *uśásah pūrvā ádha yád vyūśúr mahád ví jajñe akṣāram padé góḥ* the poet could express not only the dawns of the first day, the first step of a cow at dawn to the river, the primacy of the syllable of the first revelation of the sacrificial world-order, but even his own start on composing a new song while driving his cow to the river at dawn! The resulting obscurity is not an obscurity for its own sake; it is the expression of layer upon layer of identities.

The etymological speculations on akṣara suggest that its derivation²⁰ was more a hindrance than a help to thought. Akṣara is conceived both as the sap or essence that “flowed out” and as the ultimate term of an ascending series which is no longer “flowing out” into an ulterior essence. But the last is always the first, and from the “unflowing” flow out the first seeds of creation. In JaimUpBr. 1,1 we read *athaikasyākṣarasya rasam nāśaknod ādātum / om ity etasyaiva seyaṃ vāg abhavat / om eva nāmaiṣā / tasyā u prāṇa eva rasaḥ* etc. “He (Prajāpati) could not take the sap of this akṣara. Of this akṣara, viz. OM, Vāc came to be: Vāc is in fact OM. Her sap is Breath”. Elsewhere, in 1, 23, there is an attempt to push further; but there is nothing beyond the “irreducible imperishable Syllable”: (1) *ayam evedam agra āsīt / sa u evāpy etarhi/ (2) sa yas sa ākāśo vāg eva śā/ tasmād ākāśād vāg vadati*: “this very ether was here at the beginning: the same is still here. This ether is Vāc, for Vāc speaks from the ether”. Then it is said that Prajāpatī squeezed out Vāc: her sap was the worlds: their sap the deities: their sap the triple Veda: their sap the three vyāhṛtis: and of their sap it is said: *tad etad akṣaram abhavad om iti yad etad / (8) sa etad akṣaram abhyapīlayat / tasyābhipīlitasya rasaḥ prāṇedat // (1,24,1) tad akṣarad eva / yad akṣarad eva tasmād akṣaram / (2) yad v evākṣaram nākṣiyata tasmād akṣayam/ akṣayam ha vai nāmaitat/ tad akṣaram iti parokṣam ācakṣate*: “he squeezed this akṣara; when it had been squeezed, sap trickled forth.”²¹ That flowed, hence it is akṣara. As the akṣara did not perish, therefore, it is imperishable. In fact it is the Imperishable (*akṣayam*): they call it *akṣara* to mystify.” We see that in spite of its being “unflowing” further principles do indeed flow out of akṣara. The above account of 1,23 starts from ākāśa = Vāc, produces from it the worlds, then reverts the order and reduces the Universe, *via* the sacrificial deities, the Vedas, the vyāhṛtis, back to akṣara, which no doubt due to its etymology is here considered an end, but in 1,1 a beginning. Do we meet here already the first inklings of the later aporion of how to derive from the transcendent Unchangeable the phenomenal changes? For akṣara, being the ultimate juice and essence of things, is therefore their *pratiṣṭhā* “standing-place, foothold, firm basis”: JaimUpBr. 1,10,10 has: *sthūṇām eva divastambhanīm sūryam āhur antarikṣc sūryaḥ pṛthivīpratiṣṭhaḥ / apsu bhūmīś ca śīśyire bhūribhārās satyam mahīr adhitiṣṭhanty āpaḥ//* “they say that the sun is the pillar that supports the heaven; the sun rests on the sky which reposes on the earth; the lands of the earth, which support many things, lie on the waters; and the wide waters are rested on the satyam.” Satyam is explained: (11) *om ity etad evākṣaram satyam / tad etad āpo 'dhiṣṭhanti*.

The inner coherence of all these speculations about akṣara is clear enough. They obviously originate from milieux that were intensely preoccupied with the sacred Word which rules and supports the sacrificial order of the Universe. Searching for that principle from which the established order of ritual equilibrium derives its being, the sacred utterance of ṛc, yajus and sāmān which is reflected in and contains all other triads that constitute the world, they arrive at the ‘hypostasized’ Sacred Word, Mother of creation. But they try to push beyond this ultimate and find a more ultimate basis in the metres that measure the Word, or the feet that measure the metres, or the syllable that measure the foot. It is not yet a particular syllable which is supreme: it is the Syllable as such which is the ultimate because it cannot be reduced further. At one stage this Syllable came to be identified with OM, that ubiquitous syllable of consent,²² in which all recitations have their begin-

ning and end²³ and which from minute to minute is heard resounding at the great sacrifices, passed back and forth between the priests of the three Vedas scattered over the sacrificial ground — centre of life and order where these thinkers always returned to find material and inspiration. This akṣara is on the same plane as other terms in which the same quest for the ultimate behind the Order found alternate end-points: *ṛtam, satyam, brahman*.

When we now turn to BĀUp. 3,8, where Yājñavalkya instructs Gārgī about the akṣara, we notice undoubtedly a more rarefied atmosphere,²⁴ but there is no reason whatever to separate Yājñavalkya's akṣara from the akṣara we have just studied. Here too the celebrated metaphysician shows his well-known preference for apophasis. To Gārgī's question: what is the frame on which is woven,²⁵ wrap and woof that which is above heaven, below the earth and in between (a formulation that reveals greater philosophic refinement: the obvious heaven, atmosphere and earth are no longer comprehensive enough, but it is clear that the old triad persists) and that which is past, present and future, — Yājñavalkya replies: the *ākāśa*. But Gārgī demands more: what is the frame on which the *ākāśa* itself is woven? The reply is: akṣara, but a completely immaterial akṣara. At its behest do sun and moon, heaven and earth stand supported. But even Yājñavalkya cannot get completely rid of the association of the Syllable: “at the behest of this syllable do people acclaim generous (yajamānas?), the gods the yajamānas, the deceased ancestors the ladle (with the oblation)”.²⁶

The MaitrUp. 6,8 furnishes an ancient commentary on the manner in which Yājñavalkya's akṣara could still be understood: *dve vāva brahmaṇo rūpe mūrtaṃ cāmūrtaṃ ca / atha yan mūrtaṃ tad asatyam yad amūrtaṃ tat satyam tad brahma taj jyotiḥ / yaj jyotir sa ādityaḥ / sa vā eṣa/ om ity etad ātmābhavat/ sa tredhātmaṇaṃ vyakuruta / om iti tisro mātrā / etābhiḥ sarvaṃ idam otaṃ protaṃ caiva/ asmīty evaṃ hy āha / etad vā āditya om ity eva dhyāyann²⁷ ātmānaṃ yuñjītetī*. The three mātrās or morae of OM contain all manner of other triads which we have met by the way. The term clearly refer us to various upaniṣadic passages, and *otaṃ protaṃ caiva* evidently to Yājñavalkya's *ākāśe eva tad otaṃ ca protaṃ ca* etc.

Later, in the later upaniṣads whose authors no longer found their inspiration exclusively in the world of ritual and had the results of their predecessors to start from, akṣara as a 'philosophic' principle has lost most of its associations with the Sacred Word;²⁸ side by side with the meaning “syllable” in a more strictly grammatical sense and usage, the meaning “Supreme Being”, which must derive from the ancient “Great Syllable”, goes its separate way. The term could lend itself readily to the meaning “Supreme Being”: it was re-etymologized as the “Imperishable”. Less pliant terms like *vāc* itself were doomed,²⁹ while other terms from the same complex, like *satyam* and *brahman* could again more easily be retained: *satyam* could convey not only “truth, true word” but also “that which is truly so, the true and real and dependable”; *brahman*, whether or not a derivative of *BRH*,³⁰ was so etymologized, while it also enjoyed the double advantage of being an archaic word and conceptually, but vaguely defined. That the ancient associations could long persist is shown by the history of Indian thought. There can be little doubt that both the *sphoṭavāda* of the grammarians and the *śabdādvaita* of the vedāntins continue with all the

philosophical sophistication of later thought the ancient complex of ritualistic speculations in which akṣara belongs. Śaṅkara was still aware himself that the immaterial and transcendent akṣara of Yajñavalkya's instruction was, or could be, interpreted as the "syllable OM"³¹ and he went out of his way — according to Bhāskara who refuses to follow him here³² — to refute this interpretation.

1. P. M. MODI, *Akṣara* . . . (Thesis Kiel 1931; Baroda 1932).
2. Mahābhāṣya ad Siddhāntaśloka-vārttika post 1,1,8 aśnoter va saro 'kṣaram; cf. Bhāskara, Brahmasūtrabhāṣya 1,2,22 aśnute vyāpnoti svavikārān ity akṣaram.
3. A. BERGAIGNE, *Etudes sur le Lexique du Rigveda*, J. As 1883, pp. 480 ff., s.v. akṣara; a more qualified but substantially the same opinion gives H. OLDENBERG, *Vedische Untersuchungen* 30, akṣāra, ākṣara im Rigveda (ZDMG, 63; 1909), pp. 293 ff.
4. cf. my *Studies in Sāṃkhya* 1. *An old text reconstituted*, 2. *Ahaṃkāra*, to be published in JAOS.
5. ed. by H. OERTEL, the Jāiminiya or Talavakāra Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa (JAOS 16; 1894), pp. 49 ff.
6. OERTEL renders *prthaksalilam kāmādughākṣiti .. amṛtam duhānā* with "she that milks immortality possessing individual oceans (?), possessing wish-granting imperishableness;" but analyze *kāmādughā akṣiti*; the *prthaksalilam* corresponds to the *salilāni* of RV. 1, 164, 41; *duhānā* "yielding milk"; *akṣiti* here taken adjectivally to *amṛtam*, but probably a corruption of RV. *tākṣatī*, see below.
7. The parallel *sūcyā* in JaimUpBr. where ChUp. has *śaṅkunā* shows that we can accept *śaṅku* here too in the common meaning of "pin, stake", and cancel the meaning "Blattrippe" assumed by BOETHLINGK (pw, s.v. 4) of which this ChUp. is the only occurrence; Hemacandra who gives this meaning "*patrasirājāla*" (Anekārthasamgraha 2, 17) may also have deduced it from the same passage. The expression *sūcyā / śaṅkunā samtrṇṇa-* is parallel to the well-known ones *tantunā / sūtreṇa etc. otaṃ / protam etc.*, the notion being of one ultimate principle running through, and lying at the root of, all the variety of things.
8. E. SENART (*Bṛhad-āraṇyaka-upaniṣad, traduite et annotée*; Paris 1934), prefers to distinguish *satyam* from *Brahman* and emends: *satyaṃ brahma, [brahma] Prajāpatim*.
9. In this related text *satyam* is distinguished into *sat* and *tyam*, the former representing *brahman's* or *satyam's* embodied, mortal and static aspect, *tyam*, its disembodied, immortal and dynamic aspect. The *puruṣa* is the essence of the latter aspect.
10. *Karma vā etat tasya sāmno yad vayaṃ sāmopāsmaha iti / (8) atha kim upāssa iti / akṣaram iti / katamat tad akṣaram iti / yat kṣaran nākṣiyateti / katamat tat kṣaran nākṣiyateti / indra iti / (9) katamas sa indra iti / yo 'kṣan ramata iti / katamas sa yo' kṣan ramata iti / iyaṃ devateti hovāca / (10) yo 'yam cakṣusi puruṣa eṣa indra esa prajāpatih / [sa] samah pṛthivyā sama ākāśena samo divā sarveṇa bhūtena / eṣa paro divo dīpyate / eṣa evedam sarvam ity upāsitavyah /*
11. cf. *paro divo dīpyate* JaimUpBr. 1, 43, 10 (quoted n. 10), and my remarks in *Studies in Sāṃkhya* 3: Sattva (to be published in JAOS).
12. The change of the probably original division into one foot or quarter revealed and three unrevealed is interesting. It cannot be accidental that the change coincides with an increasing preoccupation of these thinkers with a more or less *transcendent* Original Being that at creation manifests itself in a *triad*. At the same time it would seem probable that the idea of the three footsteps of Viṣṇu exerted influence: Viṣṇu's connexion with the *Puruṣa* who is the demiurge definitely belongs in the complex picture. That the four stages of waking, dreaming, dreamless sleep and *turiya* is another application of the same triadictetradic scheme is obvious. One wonders if the remarkable notion of three unrevealed or unuttered parts and one revealed or uttered part of *Vāc / Puruṣa* did not have a basis in sacrificial practice originally, somewhat comparable perhaps to the *aniruktagāna* of the pressing *sāmans* above. A glance at the development of Vedānta speculation shows how fertile the conception of the partly manifest partly transcendent Demiurge could be.

Critical contributions

13. ChUp. reads *sarvā* for *viśvā*.
14. 1.c.
15. Cf. his typical statement *ad* 1, 164, 23: “Hier steigt zunächst der Dichter von den Höhen der bisherigen Spekulation in die Niederungen der dichterischen Technik und der rituellen Praxis hinab”, — in contrast to such stanzas as *ib.* 20-22 which he admires; in my opinion such an attitude which prefers to assume that agreeable statements as in 20-22 are more important because they are more easily comprehensible imperils a proper understanding of what was important to the authors: personally speaking I would always consider such views as are the outcome of the daily preoccupations of the thinker to be more significant than pleasant but vague parables.
16. Yāska, 11, 41; Sāyaṇa *ad hoc*; Sāyaṇa: “OM” *ad* TaittBr. 2,4,6,12 (GELDNER).
17. *prāna* (in the context of the speculations we are dealing with mostly singular) ~ *ekapadī*; *caḥṣuśrotram* ~ *dvipadī*; *vāc* ~ *catuṣpadī* because of the “four feet”; *manas as aṣṭāpadī* escapes me; *hrdaya* as *navapadī* possibly on account of its associations with the *navadvāram puram*?
18. The locution remained popular but was no doubt soon understood as “imperishable supreme heaven”.
19. GELDNER, however, renders: “Im Leibe der Mutter Vater seines Vaters, bei der (heiligen) Rede(?) aufleuchtend, sich in dem Schosz der (Opfer-) Ordnung setzend, Bring uns das kinderreiche Segenswort, das im Himmel leuchtet, du ausgezeichnete Jātavedas Agni.”
20. Although, again, we have no reason to doubt the correctness of the traditional etymology, it is curious to note that *KṢAR-* is very rarely used to describe the flowing of recited mantras: we would expect at least some usage of this root which would explain why its negation *a-kṣara* is used specially for “syllable”. In the RV. *KṢAR-* is used once with *gīr* (1,181,7) *ásarji vām sthāvīrā vedhasā gīr bāḥhé aśvinā tredhā kṣārantī*, which GELDNER renders “es wurde für euch beide, ihr Muster, eine alte Lobrede losgelassen, dreifach in starkem (Strom?) sich ergießend, ihr Aśvin”. We may also cite 8, 49, 6cd *udrīva vajrinn avatā ná siñcaté kṣārantīndra dhītāyaḥ* “wie ein wasserreicher Brunnen dem, der daraus schöpft, so fließen (dir) die Gebeten zu, Indra Keulenträger”; and 8,50,4, where GELDNER renders *dhītāyaḥ* differently: *anehāsam vo hāvamānam ūtāye mādhvah kṣaranti dhītayāḥ* “zu dem fehlerlosen (Soma), der (ihn) zu eurem Beidstand lädt, strömen die süsse Gedanken”. Though, as we see *KṢAR-* with a word for speech is not altogether unknown, the available instances do not show why the negative *a-kṣara* (which once, 1, 164, 42, flow paradoxically itself) would have come to denote “syllable”. Other possibly distinguishable meanings of *akṣāra*, *ākṣara* do not help much because they are too near that of “syllable”— if distinguishable at all: cf. OLDENBERG’S balanced account 1.c.
21. cf. e.g. ŚatBr. 3,9,2,1.
22. ChUp., 1,1,8.
23. cf. e.g. ChUp. 1,1,9, *teneyam trayī vidyā vartate / om ity āśrāvayati / om iti śamsati / om ity udgāyati / etasyaivāśarasyāpacityai mahimnā rasena*: “with it (the Syllable) the triple Veda proceeds: with OM the adhvaryu (Y V.) calls on (the hotar), with OM the hotar (RV) recites the śastra (which ends every mantra with OM Sav OM), with OM the udgātar chants the udgītha: (they do so) to honour this Syllable for its greatness, its essence.”
24. But we must note that 3,8 is really a polished sequel to 3, 6 where this rarefied atmosphere is much less in evidence.
25. cf. GONDA’S remarks on the significance of this expression in *Notes on Brahman* (Utrecht 1950), pp. 44 ff.
26. Note that the Brahmasūtrākāra had reason to explain that this *akṣara* is brahman (1,9,10): *akṣaram ambārāntadhṛteḥ* “(brahman is) akṣara, because (akṣara) supports (earth) and heaven”.
27. Correction of MARYLA FALK, *Nāmarūpa and Dharmarūpa* (Calcutta 1943) p. 42, n. 1, misprinted (?) *dhyāyān* (unless we must restore *dhyāyāt*).
28. Though they are not altogether absent in ŚvetUp. 4,8; 4,18.
29. Some of her functions were taken over by Sarasvatī, some by Viṣṇu’s consort Lakṣmī.
30. GONDA’S case for a derivation from *BRH* seems unanswerable; for a balanced discussion of other views as well, see his *Notes on Brahman*.
31. Bhāṣya *ad* BrS. 1,3,10.
32. Bhāṣya *ad* BrS. 1,3,10; interesting is that Bhāskara attributes this view to the *spṛṣṭavādins*: *kecid* (i.e. Śaṅk-

kara) akṣaraśabdasya varṇe prasiddhatvād akṣaram oṃkāra iti pūrvapakṣayanti/ vaiyākaraṇdarśanaṃ ca sphoṭaḥ śabda ity avatārya gakārādayo varṇā eva śabdā iti sthāpayanti/ tad etad adhikaraṇenāsaṃbaddham.



AKṢARA*

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A FEW YEARS AGO two distinguished Indianists, Gonda¹ and Renou², simultaneously expressed their dissatisfaction with the more or less accepted view on the semantic development of the term *bráhman*, from “sacred formula, hymn, etc.” to “supreme principle.” Both concurred in the opinion that the most ancient meaning,— most ancient in so far as it happens to be attested in the most ancient document, the Ṛgveda,— is really too narrow to allow for the use of the term in *āraṇyaka* and *upaniṣad*, and must reflect the specialized usage in sacerdotal milieux of a more comprehensive significance. For Gonda the notion behind *bráhman* is that of a vast but not unspecific power of support and foundation which in the speech of the Vedic priest-poets was especially articulated as “ritual, sacred or magical utterance,” the bearer of that power. For Renou the term signifies that powerful activity which by way of a putative original meaning “riddle, enigma” came to denote the very object of those riddles that sought to encompass the great cosmic coherence.

Reviewing their suggestions, a third vedicist, Thieme,³ disagreed with both. Rejecting both the original meanings and etymologies proposed, he put forward a novel etymology of *bráhman* on the basis of an original meaning more construed from the meaning of supposed non-Sanskrit cognates than elicited from the unmistakable meaning of the Sanskrit texts. As Thieme himself to some extent recognizes, no one of the three attestations he quotes for this original meaning “formation, either of an embryo or of a poem” (RV. 10.61.7; 10.65.11; AitBr. 5.15.5) is really convincing. In fact, they are not very suggestive, and one may suspect that a meaning “formation” would not occur to someone who, while looking for still another etymology of *bráhman*, had not at once certain German uses of the verb “to form”⁴ and the mere possibilities of $\beta\rho\epsilon\phi\text{-}\sigma\varsigma$ in mind from the outset. As this original meaning must be denied, the etymology based upon it (IE *mrég^h-men-; *mre/og^h- > $\beta\rho\epsilon\phi\text{-}\sigma\varsigma$, $\mu\omicron\rho\phi\text{-}\eta$, *bráh-man*) lacks urgency.

Committed to a methodological view-point which allows him to pronounce on the general meaning without exploring too far the actual denotations (etymology in one case, exegesis in the other, both sharply to be distinguished), Thieme is content to note for the upaniṣadic *bráhman* the meaning (*Bedeutung*) “die durch das Wort *bráhman* bezeichnete Kraft” and the denotation (*Sinn*) “das letzte Prinzip,”⁵ and thereby must remain fundamentally at cross-purposes with Gonda and Renou who attempted to find in this denotation a criterion to establish more precisely the meaning of *bráhman*. Yet their question is etymologically relevant: does in the functions of *bráhman* as a universal principle survive a specific meaning which enabled just THIS word among several near synonyms to acquire

those functions? By denying for the older texts the meanings they propose, Thieme has not really answered their question, and we must conclude that the question, and the answers suggested, still stand.

Renou raises the question: if *bráhman* as a word for sacred, etc., utterance could develop a meaning of “supreme principle,” why had words with similar meanings, like *dhī*, *vāc*, *mantra*, *uktha*, *stoma* such a different fate? ⁶ More meaningfully the question could be restated: is *brahman* the only word that underwent these semantic changes, and if so, why just *brahman*? We must immediately remark that of the five words enumerated, the first two may claim attention as parallels. *Vāc* as Prajāpati’s consort and progenitrix of the world sometimes reaches an eminence entirely comparable to that of *brahman*. *Dhī* becomes identified with *buddhi*, the creator’s self-recognition, and will, as the first product of creation, be the highest in the hierarchy of creative principles, like *brahman*. At another occasion ⁷ I have tried to demonstrate that in *ahaṅkāra*, too, we have a term which, originally denoting an utterance, consequently assumed a role in world creation and the cosmology and psychology based on the creation process. Examples, therefore, seem not to be wanting. Still it may be said that *brahman* is a principle of a different kind: but is it? Do we have in the case of *brahman* really a word of a different meaning, different from the meaning generally prevailing in the texts of the same milieu which later elevate it to its high status? After all that has been written about this word, it requires some temerity to produce another opinion and more presumption to believe oneself right. But there may be some heuristic value in approaching the question of *brahman* obliquely, not dealing with this term alone but with other terms which undoubtedly denoted an “utterance” and yet became a name for “the absolute.” One of these terms, which in every phase of the ancient text occurs side by side with *brahman*, which seems to have had even less of a significant — philosophically significant — content than *brahman*, yet acquired even more rapidly than *brahman* itself this philosophical significance, appears to be especially relevant: not only because it proves that a word denoting some kind of an utterance could indeed denote God, but also because in its case, as well as in *brahman*’s, secondary connotations confirmed and continued its position when the original speculations about word and sound became obsolete. This term is *akṣara* “syllable.”

Already in the Ṛgveda Saṃhitā *akṣara* ⁸ claims the position of a supreme principle, without however for a moment ceasing to mean “syllable.” So 1.164.41-42: *gaurīr mimā-ya salilāni tākṣaty ékapādī dvipādī śā cātuṣpadī / aṣ ṅpadī nāvapadī babhūvūṣī sahāsrāk-ṣarā paramé vyòman // tāsyāḥ samudrā ádhi ví kṣaranti téna jīvanti pradīśāś cātasraḥ / tátaḥ kṣaraty akṣāraṃ tád víśvam úpa jīvati //* “the Buffalo-Cow has lowed, building lakes, having become one-footed, two-footed, four-footed, eight-footed, nine-footed, of a thousand syllables in the supreme heaven; on the rivers that flow out from her live the four quarters of space; therefrom flows the Syllable: on it lives all the world.”

Even here a different rendering of *akṣara* has been proposed. Geldner ⁹ prefers to interpret the *akṣara* on which all the world lives as “imperishable”— *a-kṣara*, a view against which Bergaigne had already protested.¹⁰ Geldner, however, suffers from a preconception about supreme beings:¹¹ not wishing to believe that a syllable could, as

Critical contributions

SYLLABLE, be a source of creation, he prefers a generally descriptive sense, without asking what to these thinkers was the imperishable, and why. But not only does the same term *akṣára* occur twice in the same context as syllable (39; 42 in *sahásrākṣarā*), but the earliest commentaries on this passage leave no possible doubt that the disputed *akṣára* was firmly conceived of as “syllable,” namely TaittS. 5.1.9.1 and JaimUpBr.1.10.1, which we shall discuss presently.

The Cow of this mantra is unmistakably *Vāc*, the life-giving sacral Word, here represented as the roaring thunderstorm which announces the rainy season; just as the monsoon storms — like the cow — pour down their revivifying showers, building lakes which inundate the soil and sustain creation, so the Word manifests itself in the sacred formulae which, over the sacred fire in the sacrifice, bring about the rains. But the ultimate measure of the Word is the Syllable from which all formulae start and to which their power can be reduced. Without the knowledge of this first and ultimate, what use are the hymns? So ib. 39: *ṛcō akṣáre paramé vyòman yásmin devā ádhi víśve niṣedúḥ / yás tán ná véda kím ṛcā kariṣyati yá ít tád vidús tá imé sám āsaté //* “what can he bring about with the hymn who does not know the Syllable in the supreme heaven in which the gods are seated? Only those who do know it are here sitting together in discussion.”

Since the syllable is the smallest bit of speech that can be spoken and the first that must be spoken, it is conceived at once as the matrix and as the embryo of speech and all that can be effected by it. But for speech, that is the ritually powerful utterance, to be effective at all, it must be spoken in conjunction with the ritually powerful fire of the sacrifice. But this fire, too, is effective only in conjunction with the appropriate formulae. Together they originate, inseparable, in the womb of the true order.¹² Thus RV. 6.16.35-36: *gárbhe mātúḥ pitúṣpitā vididyutānó akṣáre / sídann ṛtásya yónim á // bráhma prajāvad á bhara jātavedo vícarṣane / ágne yád dīdáyat diví //* “As Jātavedas, most excellent Fire, sparkling in the Syllable which is thy mother’s womb, as thy father’s father, seated in the womb of the true order, deliver the child-bearing *bráhman* which radiates in heaven.”

The interdependence, the biunity, of Word and Fire could hardly be expressed more completely. Fire is contained in the germ of Speech, which is the Syllable; and the Syllable itself is the embryo which becomes the fully delivered *brahman*; but Fire is also wedded to Word, for without Fire the Word cannot even conceive the Syllable which is the germ of the ritually potent Formula, hence Fire is also the father of the Syllable which in its turn begets the powerful Fire of the sacrifice. The birth of Word and Fire is a cosmic event which is reproduced in the sacrificial area but happened primordially, at the beginning of creation, in heaven. But once reproduced in the sacrificial area, this area itself becomes the matrix of the cosmic order: it is the source from which the *bráhman*, the ritually powerful utterance, is born to beget offspring again,¹³ the source therefore of the everlasting continuity of the true order which, after its first initiation in heaven, is perpetuated ever since. Every single term at some time will become the epitome of this total conception: *etaj jyotir etad akṣaram etad satyam etad brahma* — it is almost a refrain in the upaniṣads.

Cosmically this event is summed up in the incomparable line, 3.55.1 ab: *uśásaḥ pūr-vā ádha yád vyūṣúr mahád ví jajñe akṣáram padé góh* “when the ancient dawns first dawned the Great Syllable was born in the footstep of the Cow.” The lifegranting Voice calls the world into being by CALLING it; in the first foot — for the voice speaks poetry — arises the first syllable from which everything else will follow. The significant relation between Syllable and Sun will occupy us later.

Unless we understand the significance of the ritually effective Word for a class of priests for whom the cosmic order was predicated upon the ritual order, and the significance of the actual manifestation of that Word in the embryonic Syllable which grows into the fully potent *bráhman*, we shall misunderstand the more advanced speculations which are inspired by this central ritual event. If we render *akṣára* as “imperishable,” why is what imperishable? The source of all continuity is Word and Fire; whatever is imperishable is imperishable just by virtue of this pair. *Akṣára* is imperishable just BECAUSE it is the Syllable, the principle of continuity to which everything can be reduced and from which everything can be derived.

In an interesting text of the Sāmaveda tradition, the JaimUpBr. 1.1, we read an account of how the creator squeezed out the classes of creation whose juice or sap, i.e., their first principle, became a higher class. He continues to squeeze until he arrives at the very last principle of all classes of creation, the *akṣara* — *athaitasyākṣarasya rasaṃ nāśaknod ādātum / om ity etasyaiva seyaṃ vāg abhavat / om eva nāmaishā / tasyā u prāṇa eva rasaḥ* “he could not take the juice of this *akṣara*; of this *akṣara*, *OM*, the Word came to be, for the Word is indeed *OM*. The juice of Word is Breath, etc.” Thus, having found the ultimate, the irreducible, the creator starts creation; *akṣara*, that, through which the Word exists, can of course be nothing but “syllable.” Here the syllable is identified: it is the syllable *OM*.

Elsewhere creation is said to start from ether, which is not only the region of the sun but also the medium of sound and thus the natural substratum of the couple Fire and Word. This ether as prime principle evidently continues the *paramám vyòman*, with which the Ṛgvedic *akṣára*, *bráhman* and even the *brahmán*¹⁴ are so closely associated. JaimUpBr. 1.23.1 reads: *ayam evedam agra āsīt / sa u evāpy etarhi / (2) sa yas sa ākāśo vāg eva sā / tasmād ākāśād vāg vadati* “this (ether) was here at first. It is the same ether which is still here. This ether is Word, for the Word speaks from the ether.”

The term *akṣara* goes through an interesting evolution. On the one hand it exists on as a word for syllable in the grammatical sense of the word, on the other hand it retains the significance of first and last principle of the cosmic order and so its creator, a significance which it originally acquired just by meaning “syllable.” In one milieu it persists as a name for the absolute, however conceived of, is gradually, when the *Vāc* speculations become obsolescent (but rather later than we expect) reinterpreted as “imperishable” in order to rationalize its function as a supreme entity, and eventually (but later than the early metrical upaniṣads), it becomes an adjective. In another milieu, probably that of the Sāmaveda, *akṣara* was specifically identified with the syllable *OM*, which then takes over the role of

being a name for the Supreme, until it becomes a symbol for Hinduism [!] in very much the same way as the cross is a symbol for Christianity.

That *akṣara* is indeed imperishable inasmuch as it is “syllable” is clear from such passages as JaimUpBr. 1.23.3 ff. The Word that speaks from ether is squeezed out: its juice is the three-world universe, whose juice is the gods, whose juice is the triple Veda. The juice of the Veda is the three *vyāhrtis*; of their juice it is said: *tad etad akṣaram abhavad OM iti yad etad* “that became the *akṣara*, namely *OM*.” The text continues (8) *sa etad akṣaram abhyapīlayat / tasyābhipīlitasya rasah prāṇedat / (1.24.1) tad akṣarad eva / yad akṣarad eva tasmād akṣaram / (2) yad evākṣaram nākṣīyata tasmād akṣayam / akṣayam ha vai nāmaitat / tad akṣaram iti parokṣam ācakṣate* “he squeezed this *akṣara*; when it was squeezed juice trickled forth. That flowed, hence it is *akṣara*. As the *akṣara* did not perish, therefore it is *akṣaya*. In fact, *akṣara* is really *akṣaya*; they call it *akṣara* to mystify.”¹⁵ As the syllable *OM*, *akṣara* is still “syllable”; yet *OM* has already usurped so much of *akṣara*’s supremacy that there are attempts to reinterpret the term as “that which flowed into the world,” and “that which does not perish.” So *akṣara* has a tendency to become an attribute to *OM*, instead of *OM* a specification of “syllable.” Generally, however, it remains one expression: *OM ity etad akṣaram*.

The relation between *akṣara* as *OM* and the three *vyāhrtis* is interesting. These utterances, *bhūh bhuvah svaḥ*, represent the three worlds, in fact there are accounts¹⁶ that the three worlds arose through their formulation. But all three are contained in *OM*³. So ChUp. 2.23.3-4 *prajāpatir lokān abhyatapat / tebhyo ’bhitaptebhyas trayī vidyā samprāsravat / tāṃ abhyatapat / tasyā abhitaptāyā etāny akṣarāṇi samprāsravanta bhūh bhuvah svar iti / tāny abhyatapat / tebhyo ’bhitaptebhya omkārah samprāsravat / tad yathā śaṅkunā*¹⁷ *sarvāṇi parṇāni samtrṇṇāny evam omkāreṇa sarvā vāk samtrṇṇā / omkāra evedam sarvam*.

The same speculation occurs in JaimUpBr. 1.10.1-2 where it forms part of an exegesis of RV 1.164.41-42: *sā pṛthak salilam kāmādughā *takṣatī*¹⁸ *prāṇasamhitam cakṣuśśrotam manasā vyāptam hrdayāgram . . . sahasrākṣaram ayutadhāram . . . amṛtam duhānā sarvān imān lokān abhi vikṣaratīti* “She, milch-cow of desires, yielding (as her milk) the elixir of immortality, building (?) separate lakes, composed with breath, possessed of sight and hearing, rich in speech, pervaded by mind, culminating from the heart¹⁹. . . with a thousand syllables, ten thousand streams,²⁰ flows out into all these worlds.” Incidentally such passages raise the question whether the popular notion of the *kāmadhuk* does not ultimately derive from the representation of *Vāc* as a cow. ChUp. 1.3.5 in an entirely comparable context has: *dugdhe ’smāi vāg doham yo vāco doho ’navān annādo bhavati ya etāny evam vidvān udgīthākṣarāny upāsta ud-gī-tha iti*.

That the connection between *akṣara* “syllable” and the syllable *OM* was first laid in Sāmavedic circles cannot be proved. But we note that this explicit connection remains confined in the older texts to the Sāmaveda, notably the JaimUpBr. and the closely related ChUp.; implicitly the same connection is found also elsewhere, as we shall see. In any case, the Sāmavedic interest must reflect a sacerdotal preoccupation which was

conspicuously articulated in the *agniṣṭoma* ritual itself. Noteworthy in the ChUp. is the special relation between *OM* and *udgītha*, which, as far as I can see, does not occur before. Why specially the *udgītha*? The *udgītha* may begin with *OM*, but the *prastāva* ends with it, and generally the cry *OM!* is the commonest sound heard at the sacrifice, as the present writer, who once attended every minute of one of the more elaborate derivatives of the *agniṣṭoma* can testify. There must be a special relevance in the equation $OM = udgītha$.

There is. At the three climaxes of the *agniṣṭoma* ceremonial, the three soma pressings, the *udgītha* is chanted in a most curious way. In the *sāmans* proper to these stages, the *pavamānastotras*, the *udgītha* is chanted with *aniruktagāna*. This “chanting without actually pronouncing” is done by substituting the sound *O* for every syllable, so that for example the first *udgītha* of the *bahiṣpavamānastotra*, which reads *pāvamānāyéndave abhī devām íya* (RV. 9.11.1 — SV 651; 763) is actually sounded as

OM-Ō-Ō-O¹-O¹-O¹-O-Ō-O-O¹-O¹-O¹-O-O²-O1212.

When one hears it chanted, it sounds like the repetition of the initial *OM* with which the *udgītha* begins. And that is what it must have been: LāṭṢS. 7.10.20 prescribes here: *śeṣam udgātā manasā tu svabhaktim omkāraṃ tathā svaram vācā gāyet* “the *udgātā* must chant the remaining portion (i.e., after the *prastāva*); his actual part, however, he must chant in thought, (having the words themselves in mind), and just the *Omkāra* and also (its) vowel with the voice.” Caland²¹ quotes a *prayoga* which explains: *omkāreṇākṣarāṇi cchādayan vācā gāyet* “he (the *udgātā*) must chant (the *udgītha*) aloud with his voice while concealing the actual syllables with *OM*.”

This practice itself, which can be dated with the ChUp., must have originated from esoteric speculations about the Syllable, esp. the syllable *OM*, and the actual *brahman*²² of the mantra. The function of the *sāman*, stepchild of Vedic and ritual research, in the sacrifice is really most important. Perhaps one must have heard it chanted at a sacrifice to appreciate this point. It is the fullest manifestation of the sound of the mantra, the very generator of the power of the sacral word which is drawn upon at certain stages in the ceremonial. Just at the climaxes of the ritual the actual words do not even seem enough; their very principle, the ultimate Word is enunciated, instead of the manifest words that from it derive their efficacy.

The identification of *akṣara* with a definite syllable, *OM*, marks another stage in the development of the term. *Akṣara* is no longer the syllable as such, which derives its importance from the fact that it measures ritual utterances, metres, etc.,²³ but a certain syllable, or rather sound, which is the hypostasized *brahman* and from which the Veda and hence the world originates. That just *OM* became the *akṣara*, par excellence, allows, at least partially, of explanation. It is striking that in various passages, where this supremacy of *OM* is speculated upon, the triadic cosmological patterns that gain in importance through *brāhmaṇa* and *āranyaka* are elaborated. In $OM = udgītha$, *ud-gī-tha* sums up in its three syllables whatever triads the author may care to think of. Likewise, in the speculations about *OM bhūḥ bhuvah svah*, where the three *vyāhrtis* are thought to manifest the three *mātrās* of *OM3*. There is little doubt that the *pluta* pronunciation of *OM*, which

already in the *śikṣopaniṣad* of the Taittirīyas is elaborated,²⁴ further contributed to the selection by these esoteric phoneticians of this syllable of consent as the syllable that epitomizes the universal pervasiveness of the ritual word.

As could be expected, the same development of *akṣāra* is found in milieux which did not necessarily connect the Syllable with *OM*. In TaittS. 5.1.9.1, evidently inspired by ṚV. 1.164.42, it is both a metrical unit (as in ṚV. 1.164.24) and the source of creation: *ṣaḍbhir dīkṣayati ṣaḍ vā ṛtava ṛtubhir evainam dīkṣayati / saptabhir dīkṣayati sapta chandāmsi chandobhir viśvo devasya netur ity anuṣ ubhottamayā juhōti / vāg vā anuṣ up tasmāt prā- nānām vāg uttamā / ekasmjād akṣarād anāptam padam tasmād yad vāco 'nāptam tam manuṣyā upa jīvanti / pūrṇayā juhōti / pūrṇā iva hi prajāpatiḥ prajāpater āptyai / nyūnayā juhōti/ nyūnād dhi prajāpatiḥ prajā asṛjanta / prajānām sṛṣ yai* “he consecrates him with six (verses): the seasons are six, so he consecrates with the seasons; he consecrates with seven (verses): the metres are seven, so he consecrates with the metres. He pours the oblation with the last anuṣṭubh, *viśvo*, etc.; the anuṣṭubh is Word, hence Word is the best of the Breaths. The pāda is incomplete by one syllable; therefore men live on that which is the incomplete part of the Word. He pours with the complete Word,— for Prajāpati is, so to say, complete,— in order to have Prajāpati complete. He pours with the incomplete Word,— for from the deficient part of the Word did Prajāpati create the creatures,— in order to create the creatures.”

In this brief but very pregnant piece of exegesis several notions are blended. There is first the Syllable on which all the world lives. But this idea is combined with another, the division of the Word in a higher and a lower part, the complete and the incomplete Word; cf. RV. 1. 164.45 where the incomplete part of Vāc is spoken by men (*turīyam vāco manuṣyā vadanti*). This idea is of course the same as that which underlies the division of the Puruṣa (RV. 10.90.3). All these ideas are interrelated in the conception of the uttered/unuttered Vāc ~ created/uncreated Prajāpati. The unuttered, uncreated and hence still incomplete Creator formulates and completes himself in self-creation out of the unuttered Word which is the Syllable.

Here, as in the JaimUpBr., as in fact already in the Ṛgveda, *akṣāra* “syllable” transcends uttered speech: it is the subtle, germinal principle of the Word, the unborn embryo which when born will be the Word that is creation. This is expressed in a later text, MuṇḍUp. 1.1.4-5 as follows: *dve vidye veditavye iti ha sma yad brahmavido vadanti parā cāparā ca / tatrāparā rgvedo yajurvedaḥ sāmavedaḥ śikṣā kalpaḥ vyākaraṇam niruktaḥ chando jyoti- ṣam iti / atha parā yayā tad akṣaram adhigamyate* “the experts in Vedic lore say that there are two sciences to learn, a higher and a lower one; the lower one consists in the three Vedas and the Vedāṅgas; the higher science is that through which the *akṣāra* is learnt.” Ib. 7 continues: *tathākṣarāt saṁbhavatīha viśvam* “from the *akṣāra* all in this world originates,” and, ib. 1.2.13, *tasmai sa vidvān . . . yenākṣaram puruṣam veda satyam provā- ca tāṁ tattvato brahmavidyām* “he who possessed the science taught the other that which is truly the brahman-science, so that he would know the *akṣāra*, the *puruṣa*, the *satya*.” The knowledge of the *akṣāra*, or the *brahmavidyā* ‘proper’ (*tattvataḥ*), evidently concerns the

esoteric connotations of the Syllable, which is the hypostasized, the higher *brahman* in contrast to the lower *brahman* “Vedic lore.” Similarly MāṇḍUp. 1 *Om ity etad akṣaram idaṃ sarvaṃ / tasyopavyākhyānam — bhūtaṃ bhavad bhaviṣyad iti sarvaṃ omkāra eva / yac cānyat trikālātītaṃ tad apy omkāra eva / sarvaṃ hy etad brahmāyam ātmā brahma so 'yam ātmā catuṣpāt* “all this is the syllable *OM*. The explanation of this: *OM* is everything, in past, present and future; *OM* is also that which is beyond the three times. For this *brahman* is indeed all: *brahman* is this *ātman*, and this *ātman* consists of four quarters.”²⁵ Here we meet the same equation *akṣara OM = brahman = ātman*, but *akṣara/brahman* include the lower science of the lower creation.

In the last quotations we have passed the line beyond which all translators derive the word *akṣara*, not from the old “syllable” of immediately preceding texts, but from another *akṣara-*, mfn. “imperishable.” But is there really any valid reason to assume that the *akṣara* of the later *upaniṣads*, Mokṣadharmā literature and the Bhagavadgītā is genetically a different concept from “syllable as the ultimate measure of ritually potent speech — source of creation — unuttered transcendent principle of speech — *OM* as the subtle germ of the *Veda* — syllable as the womb and embryo of the *brāhman*,” which we have met so far? This is not to quibble about translations (in fact, we ought to leave *akṣara* at one stage untranslated because it has become a kind of proper name), for evidently *akṣara* no longer means just “syllable.” But neither does it mean just “imperishable”; it is not synonymous with descriptive words like *akṣayya*, *nitya*, *dhruva*, and the like, for in later texts *akṣara* still carries along the connotations and associations that went with *akṣara* “syllable.”

Before we enlarge on the interesting implications of the usage of *akṣara* in the metrical *upaniṣads*, we have to deal with Yājñavalkya’s well known discourse²⁶ on *akṣara*, which is the first occurrence of the so-called “new” *akṣara*, “Imperishable Being.” The famous *adhvaryu* is questioned by his wife Gārgī about the first principles of the cosmos: What is the frame on which are woven that which is above heaven, that which is below the earth, and that which is in between? (The formulation itself is quite interesting: there is an attempt to sum up a vaster universe than the old universe of the three worlds, but even this vaster universe can only be viewed from the triadic pattern set by those three worlds.) Yājñavalkya’s reply is: *ākāśa*: ether, region of the sun, medium of the word, is from of old a very high and therefore a very original entity. But Gārgī insists: on what is *ākāśa* woven? In another, less digested, version²⁷ Yājñavalkya tells her to hold her tongue: “Don’t ask too much. Gārgī lest your head fly apart!” But here the *adhvaryu* goes on: *ākāśa* is woven on *akṣara*. The statement lacks surprise after the JaimUpBr. speculations about the primacy of *akṣara* side by side with the primacy of *ākāśa* which is *vāc*, or even after the RV. passages where *akṣara* was closely associated with the *paramāṃ vyōma*. Yājñavalkya’s important contribution here is that *akṣara* is described as a completely transcendent entity; and the tendency which we followed through the Syllable’s equivalencies with *OM* and its narrow connections with the unformulated, uncreated, still incomplete creator, has now reached its climax: *tad akṣaram Gārgi brāhmaṇā abhivadanty asthūlam anaṃv ahrasvam alohitam asneham acchāyam atamo 'vāyv anākāśam asaṅgam arasam agandham acakṣuskam asrottram avāg amano 'tejaskam aprāṇam amukham amātram anantarabāhyaṃ na tad aśnāti*

kiṃcana na tad aśnāti kaścana. Still, however rarified ²⁸ this *akṣara*, this completely transcendent entity has now become, the old associations of the Syllable cannot help persisting: at the behest of the *Akṣara* exists the true order of the world: sun and moon, heaven and earth, year and its divisions, eastward and westward rivers behave as they should; and this cosmic order is, as indeed we would expect from the celebrated adhvaryu whose name perpetuates his brilliance at sacrifices, firmly based in the ritual order: “at ²⁹ the behest of this *Akṣara*, O Gārgī people praise the generous (so praise) the gods the (generous) yajamāna and so do the deceased ancestors who depend on the oblation.” And again he echoes the Ṛgvedic poet (“what use are the hymns if one does not know the syllable?) in the immediate sequel: ³⁰ “if one does not know this *Akṣara*, then one’s oblations, sacrifices and austerities for many thousands of years in this World will come to an end; and when one departs from this world without knowing the *Akṣara*, one is miserable.”

Though it be true that Yājñavalkya’s *Akṣara* is highly abstract (but this qualification is objectionable), in fact more so than in many occurrences in the chronologically later metrical upaniṣads, we have no reason to assume that this *akṣara* is genetically different from *akṣara* “syllable, etc.” The predominantly transcendental connotations are the last phase of a tendency that we see start long before, when the term still clearly reveals its original meaning. Increasingly, *akṣara* loses its more ancient functions as “syllable” but retains the connotations “first and fundamental principle of the cosmic order,” which it acquired by meaning “syllable.”

When we now turn to the later vicissitudes of the word. we must keep in mind that, however absolute some statements may sound about the primacy and supremacy of Word and Syllable — whether *vāc*, *akṣara*, *brahman*, *ahaṃkāra* —, in the background hovers the one who spoke it. In the older upaniṣads there is a persistent effort to do away with this dualism, which continues, or repeats in other terms, that of the male and female progenitors of the mythopoeic age. But this may be more appearance than reality; for, though in the supremes of the upaniṣads the “male” Fire as against the “female” Word are completely blended, yet the one entity thus obtained retains dual features. *Vāc*, as Prajāpati’s partner, may do entirely without him in appearance, but *Vāc*’s most significant expressions, *akṣara* and *brahman*, effortlessly take on “male” or “personal” functions. This rudimentary dualism becomes virtually indistinguishable from another dualism: the self-creating creator is represented in different phases, that of the still UNCREATED, unmanifested creator, and that of the CREATED, creator. The created creator, *puruṣa*, *ātman*, etc., then assumes the functions which we describe as “male.” Yet, since this self-creation is often a self-formulation, the relation may be inverted and the second phase is then the “female.” We do well to keep these two dualistic patterns distinct, for through them we can in part account for the bewildering variety of conceptions about the Supreme which the older and later upaniṣads evidence.

It is in this complex pattern that we find terms like *akṣara* and *brahman* used in the later upaniṣads, which reflect the opinions of a greater variety of thinkers and schools than the older, more brahmanistic ones. We find that key-terms have lost many of their sacerdotal

relevancies and exist on as names of high-ranking principles, whose position in creation hierarchies was not fixed. If in one text we find *akṣara* and *brahman* described as a transcendent supreme being divorced from creation, and in another as almost female sources of creation, or even as the lower (i. e., actual) creation itself, we do not have shifts in the meaning of the terms so used, but a varying treatment of the problem of creation. A term does not ‘mean’ *prakṛti* here and inactive male person there, but the term is used as a name for a creative agent or agency who or which may be divided in different stages, phases or aspects, to anyone of which the name, from among a wide selection of names, may get attached. Anyone of the associations that went with the originally more comprehensive, less analytically distinguished conception, may emerge as a henceforth fixed principle and the name of a more comprehensive entity out of that more comprehensive complex may continue as the name of a more specialized principle.

Akṣara illustrates neatly all these possibilities. Take for example the special use of *akṣara* with *puruṣa* which will end with the noun becoming an adjective to *puruṣa*, paralleled by *brahman* becoming *Brahmā*. The association of Syllable and Person starts long before. We saw our term, unmistakably “syllable,” figure in a creation context with Prajāpati who created the creatures from the incomplete Word, the unuttered Syllable. In JaimUpBr. 1.43 *akṣara* is identified with the *puruṣa*, for “etymologic” reasons first with the person in the eye, who is then equated with Prajāpati: (8-10) *katamat tad akṣaram iti / yat kṣaran nākṣīyateti / katamat tat kṣaran nākṣīyateti / indra iti / katamas sa indra iti / yo ’kṣan ramata iti / katamas sa yo ’kṣan ramata iti iyaṃ devateti / so ’yaṃ cakṣusi puruṣa eṣa indra eṣa prajāpatiḥ / sa samaḥ pṛthivyā sama ākāśena samo divā sarveṇa bhūtena / eṣa paro divo dīpyate / eṣa evedaṃ sarvam ity upāsitavyaḥ*.

This equation of *akṣara* and *puruṣa* is also implicit in ChUp. 8.3.5; here *satyam* is syllabicized as *sat-ti-yam* to support a triadic inventory of the cosmos entirely comparable to that of *ud-gī-tha* in ChUp. 1, which is *akṣara*. To the three syllables correspond *bhūḥ bhuvah svah*, which are not only the universe, but the “spoken” universe; in other words, the three *vyāhṛtis* stand to the creator as the creation stands to *akṣara*. This SPOKEN universe or creation is equal to the CREATED creator, the *puruṣa*, whose highest phase is represented cosmically in the sun, microcosmically in the eye. Not only are the connections between the *vyāhṛtis* and *OM* very close — the complete formula has *OM* either preceding or following —, *OM* being their source and subtle container, but also are the parallel relations of *OM* — *vyāhṛtis* and *puruṣa* — creation (as is already implicit in 8.3.5), really the same relation: *puruṣa* — *udgītha* (ChUp. 1.6.6-8) or *OM* — *udgītha* (ChUp. 1.1).

The same is stated in the old MaitrUp. 6.3 *dve vāva brahmaṇo rūpe mūrtaṃ cāmūrtaṃ ca / atha yan mūrtaṃ tad asatyam / yad amūrtaṃ tat satyam tad brahma taj jyotiḥ / yaj jyotiḥ sa ādityaḥ / sa vā eṣa om iti / etad ātmābhavat / sa tredhātmānam vyakuruta [?] / om iti tisro mātṛāḥ / etābhiḥ sarvam idam otaṃ protaṃ caivāsminn iti*. In Yājñavalkya’s account, which the last line recalls, this same *akṣara*, at whose behest (*praśāsana*) the cosmic order is maintained, has similar personal features in spite of its thorough-going depersonalization. The personalization of *akṣara* continues and seems to increase in popularity, just as the personalization of *brāhman* as *Brahmā*.³¹ This process was assisted

by the more ancient connections between Word and Fire, which are interdependent in their cosmic significance; the ritual fire is more consciously identified with the sun (and, on the *adhyātma* level, with the digestive fire, the *prāṇa* and the eye) and this identification is enacted ritually in *agnicayana* and *agnyādhāna*.³² But already in RV. 3.55.1 the Great Syllable is born in the footstep of the cow at the first appearance of DAWN.

The solar *puruṣa*, the one beyond the sky, who in JaimUpBr. and ChUp. is equated with the *akṣara OM*, is also the creator; and inasmuch as the creator himself is a person, *OM* is *ātman* and *puruṣa*. All these notions are present in such lines as PraśnUp. 5.5 *yaḥ punar etaṃ trimātreṇom ity etenaivākṣareṇa paraṃ puruṣam abhidhyāyīta sa tejasi sūrye saṃpannaḥ*.³³ This *akṣara, OM*, is equated with *brahman* (5.1) *etad vai satyakāma paraṃ cāparaṃ ca brahma yad omkāraḥ / tasmād vidvān etenaivāyatanenaikataram anveti*, and from 5.7 we learn that this syllable, *OM*, gives access to the highest world: *rgbhir etaṃ yajurbhir antarikṣaṃ sāmabhir yat tat kavayo vedayante / tam omkāreṇaivāyatanenānveti vidvān yat tac chāntam ajaram amṛtam abhayaṃ paraṃ ceti*. The world to which the knowledge of the Sāmaveda gives access is certainly the heaven, from among the three worlds summed up in the person of the created creator, earth, atmosphere, heaven. The knowledge of all three Vedas together is the *aparaṃ brahma*, the lower Word as in MuṇḍUp. 1.1.4-5; whereas the transcendent Veda, the *akṣara* or higher *brahman*, leads one to the very highest point, the beginning and therefore the end. *Akṣara* and *Brahman* are two names of the same supreme: KāthUp. 2.16 *etad dhy evākṣaram brahmaitad dhy evākṣaram paraṃ / etad dhy evākṣaram jñātvā yo yad icchati tasya tat*.

In texts like the PraśnUp., where *akṣara* is a neuter noun in all other occurrences, there is no reason to treat it as an adjective in 4.9, however deceptive the context: *eṣa hi draṣṭā spaṣṭā śrotā ghrātā rasayitā mantā boddhā kartā vijñānātmā puruṣaḥ / sa pare'kṣare ātmani saṃpratiṣṭhati* “this *puruṣa* who is . . . the *vijñānātmā*,³⁴ is based upon the supreme, the *akṣara*, the *ātman*.” Cf. 4.10 *vijñānātmā saha devaiś ca sarvaiḥ prāṇā bhūtāni saṃpratiṣṭhanti yatra / tad akṣaram vedayate yas tu somya sa sarvajñaḥ sarvam āviveśeti*, where *akṣaram*, n., is equated with, but not adjectival to, the omniscient, all-prevading *ātman*.

But, as we pointed out, *akṣara* may continue as some kind of “female”³⁵ principle of creation, subordinated to an aloof person. So MuṇḍUp. 2.1. 1-3 reads *tathākṣarād vividhāḥ somya bhāvāḥ prajāyante tatra caivāpiyanti / divyo hy amūrtaḥ puruṣaḥ . . . akṣarāt parataḥ paraḥ / etasmāj jāyate prāṇo manaḥ sarvendriyāṇi ca*, where this person is indeed higher than *Akṣara* and is the *para* because he is before and beyond creation. But how mobile these hierarchies still are is shown by ib. 2.2.2-3 *tad arcimad yad aṇubhyo 'ṇu ca yasmin lokā nihitā lokinaś ca / tad etad akṣaram brahma sa prāṇas tad u vān manaḥ / tad etat satyaṃ tad amṛtaṃ tad veddhavyaṃ somya viddhi . . . tad evākṣaram somya viddhi*.

Just as there is a higher and a lower *brahman*, so we find a higher and a lower *akṣara*, SvetUp. 1.7 *udgītam etat paramaṃ tu brahma tasmimś trayam supratīṣṭhākṣaram ca / atrāntaram brahmavido viditvā līnā brahmaṇi tatparā yonimuktāḥ* “this is explained to be the supreme *brahman*: in it are the triad and their firm basis, the *Akṣara* . . .” This *Akṣara* is

the higher one, on which the triad, e. g. *bhūr bhuvah svaḥ*, or a successor triad like the *guṇas*³⁶ is based. The lower *akṣara* is the *kṣaram* which is related to the *akṣaram* as *vyaktam* is to *avyaktam* (ŚvetUp. 1.8; 1.10). This *avyakta* is not yet entirely the primordial matter of Sāṃkhya, but still rather the creator's state before creation, just as *akṣara* was the unuttered Word from which Prajāpati created the creatures. And just as *Brahman* may comprise both its higher and lower phases, so occasionally *Akṣara*: BhG. 11.18 *tvam akṣaram paramam veditavyam* "thou art to be known as the *Akṣara*, the supreme," is followed in 11.37 by *tvam akṣaram sad asat tatparam yat*: "thou art the *Akṣara*: the reified, the unreified and that which lies beyond them," which recalls BĀUp. 2.3. where the lower *rūpa* of *brahman* is *sat* "reified," almost "solidified." the higher form *asat* "unreified," beyond which is yet another stage, the *satyasya satyam*,³⁷ the *Puruṣa*. But the author, or one of the authors, of the *Gītā* still remembers the Vedic and sacerdotal significance of the name. After having declared that he is supreme, as the *Sāmaveda* is supreme among the *Vedas* (10.22), Kṛṣṇa says *girām asmy ekam akṣaram* "I am supreme, as the One Syllable is supreme among words."³⁸ In 3.15 *Akṣara* is a higher principle than *Brahman*: *karma brahmodbhavaṃ viddhi brahmākṣarasamudbhavam / tasmāt sarvagataṃ brahma nityaṃ yajñe pratiṣṭhitam* "ritual action derives from the *brahman*, and the *brahman* from the *akṣara*; therefore the all-pervading *brahman* is based eternally upon ritual worship." Edgerton³⁹ notes here that this "*brahman* clearly equals *prakṛti*"; but the whole passage (3.9-15) is devoted to ritual, and *brahman* in this context can scarcely be anything but the old *brahman* "Vedas and Vedāṅgas," higher than which is the "science that is *brahman*-science proper." the *akṣara* (MuṇḍUp. 1.2.13.). But ultimately Edgerton is right again in that this *brahman* is a lower *brahman*, the actually manifested *brahman*, which indeed corresponds with the manifest creation.

Gradually we see that *Akṣara*, and so, it would seem, *Brahman*, too, are so exclusively viewed under the aspect of their creativeness, their power to bring things about, even creation as a whole, that original functions of "syllable," "ritually effective utterance," of which functions this creativeness was the most important aspect, themselves become obsolescent. Thus the 'evolution' of the functions in which the terms are used is really the evolution of the creation doctrines with which they were linked up inseparably. Several terms are levelled, *puruṣa*, *ātman*, *akṣara brahman*, *avyakta*, *sattva*, etc. as supreme creative principles, as names of the "first cause," they may be regarded either as the "uncaused cause, uncreated creator," i.e. the original being before and aloof from creation, or as the "creating and created creator." In these functions they may be opposed to any other term, but also to themselves: higher and lower *brahman*, *avyakta* and *vyakta*, *akṣara* and *kṣara*, *ātman* and *puruṣa*, *puruṣa* and *kṣetrajaña*, etc.⁴⁰

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When we now survey the career of *akṣara*, perhaps the most striking fact about it is that between the meanings "syllable" and "name of the first cause" there is much less of a gap than we, with our conceptions, would be inclined to think. In "syllable *OM*" it even exists on in the meaning of "syllable" long after it has come to name the absolute. When we try hereunder to describe successive stages in the development of the uses of the term, we must keep in mind that we are not talking about a semantic development of a certain word,

but are concerned with the evolution of the concept “first cause, source of creation,” one of whose names was *akṣara*.

Originally *akṣara* meant “syllable.” This syllable was not a grammatical artifice of analysis, but a very concrete tool for priest-poets who measured their metrical utterances by syllables. From the beginning we are concerned with *akṣara* as syllable of metrically arranged words in an utterance which is believed to possess an inherent efficacy for these purposes to which it is applied under — the proper ritual conditions. As the measure of such an utterance, the syllable not only has its full share of the power attributed to the utterance, but inasmuch as it rules the complete metrical shape of the utterance and is therefore prior to it, and inasmuch as it is the first and smallest pronounceable unit of speech, it is the true repository of all the power of the formula. This power is tremendous. The ritually spoken Word is the foundation of the cosmic order which is represented and reproduced in the sacrificial area. Anything can be effected with it, for all that has name falls within its realm. This total ritual efficacy is contained in the syllable; hence the syllable is the prime expression of the Word on which all the word lives. Not only is the syllable the smallest pronounceable unit to which all formulae can be reduced, it is necessarily the very first imaginable one, it is the absolutely original manifestation of Word at the dawn of creation. But for the formula to be effective, it must be spoken over and with the ritual fire. This necessary concomitance is always given, and it is given from the start. Since the name is a feature of the thing it names, to name the feature is to create the thing, that is under the proper ritual conditions. So the syllable is not only the embryo, it is the WOMB of creation. The universe as a whole has been called into being by a creator; the syllable, the yet unuttered, the yet unborn Word, is the “nothing” from which the formulated was called to be. As the hypostasis of Word, and of all that can be effected by Word, this Syllable (if we still care to render it so), was itself given a name: it was identified with a particular syllable, *OM*, which, apparently meaningless — a mere affirmative interjection — manifests its extraordinary power in the recitations it introduces, nay PRODUCES. As womb of the world — the fire being its begetter, husband and offspring,— it might be supposed to create by itself, to be really identical with the creator who is the fire, the solar *puruṣa*. For not only is the creator a creator solely by virtue of his Word, he, the unuttered, unformed, incomplete, is made complete, is made HIMSELF, by the Word. When thereupon the original unuttered creator — the three feet of Vāc, the three quarters of the *puruṣa* — is considered the true beginning, the ultimate behind and beyond creation, then *akṣara* may either be this original state itself, or the actual manifestation of creation. So invariable, finally, is in certain circles the concomitance of creator / *puruṣa* / *ātman* with *akṣara* felt to be, that their continuous juxtaposition with *akṣaram*, n., (which in all cases — inevitably singular cases — except the first has the same endings), leads to its adopting masculine gender, a change materially assisted by the possible and later on increasing exploited meaning of “imperishable,” so that it becomes descriptive of the *puruṣa* or *ātman*.

We have repeatedly rejected the translation “imperishable.” This was not because that would be wrong — in fact it is right and at a certain stage it is no longer justified to render it “syllable”—, but because that might imply that the imperishable *akṣara*, from

Yājñavalkya onward, is genetically a different term. Now that it has become clear that it cannot be a different term, that it does indeed continue the ancient Syllable, we must add immediately that the possibility of deriving *akṣara* from KṢAR and privative *a-* “unflowing, constant, imperishable” probably saved the term as a name for the first cause from oblivion. When the term is taken up in philosophizing circles that were apparently no longer close to the ancient ritual and started their speculations from teachings no longer strictly confined to officiating priesthood, the connotations of syllable are not yet quite obsolete but begin to be replaced by that of “imperishable.”

Is it possible to maintain a parallel development in the functions of the term *brahman*? From the beginning *akṣara* and *brahman* have strikingly parallel careers, at every stage meeting each other in comparable functions, so that for *brahman*, too there seems reason to conclude that it really as a word for “ritually effective utterance” rose to name the first cause. In other words, whatever the original meaning of the term, its average R̥gvedic meaning on which Gonda, Renou and Thieme alike agree, was the decisive factor in its evolution. But — and here Gonda’s researches prove of very great importance — other connotations, now not of the concept, but of the word itself, must have contributed significantly to its chances of survival. After Gonda’s massive array of material it seems certain that these connotations came from the root BR̥H- and its derivatives. For the development of the functions attributed to the term *brahman* it is not essential that *brahman* be a derivate of this root; the highly relevant point is that from early times onward its users THOUGHT it was. If *brahman* is indeed from BR̥H-, it may still be its specialized usage of “ritually powerful and effective priestly utterance” which led the way to “first cause.” If *brahman* was only mistakenly connected with BR̥H- by its users, these associations helped it on its way and kept it there. Much less than one would gather from Thieme’s review is Gonda concerned with the etymology of the word for its own sake; his important contribution is in the phenomenology of the concept, and he has shown overwhelmingly in how rich a variety of ways the power of *brahman* was believed to be active and how persistently this power draws upon the capacities conveyed by BR̥H-. Whether one believes with Gonda that the specific power conveyed by this root and its derivatives were at the basis of the vocal power expression which *brahman* denotes in the older texts, or that *braman* as the ritually prepared and pronounced utterance became the vehicle of powers connoted by terms not necessarily etymologically related to the word, the merit of his contribution stands unaffected: that *brahman* in its functions was so close to the meanings expressed by the root BR̥H- that even if etymological relationship is untenable (which remains to be seen), one may now safely say that these very close associations contributed significantly to just *brahman*’s rise to supremacy. We have seen that the same holds for *akṣara*: when the more ancient speculations about the power of formulation gave way to more advanced classification attempts which continued to operate with the terms that previous thought had produced for first and universal principles, the old term for syllable survives by virtue of what are evidently secondary connotations.

* This paper is partly based on a brief note which appeared in the *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute*, 17 (1955-56), 204 ff., under the title “Notes on Akṣara.”

¹ J. Gonda, *Notes on brahman* (Utrecht 1950).

² Louis Renou, "Sur la notion de 'bráhman,'" *JAs*. (1949), 7 ff.

³ Paul Thieme, "Bráhman," *ZDMG*, 102 (1952), 91 ff.

⁴ Cf. his characteristic remark, o.c., p. 113: "Wenn *bráhman* im RV die (dichterische) Formulierung, also ein sprachliche Formung, bezeichnet, werden wir *ohne weiteres* [italics mine] vermuten, dass es ursprünglich "Formung" überhaupt bedeutete . . ."

⁵ O.c., 121 f.

⁶ O.c., 7 ff. "entre la valeur de 'principe universel' (ou de quelque manière qu'on voudra l'appeler) qui est acquise dans les *bráhmana* et déjà solidement fixée dans l'Atharvaveda, et la valeur de 'hymne' ou de 'formule' qu'atteste le Rigveda dans son ensemble, il y a un fossé difficile de franchir. Sans doute, l'intense spéculation qui dès l'origine a marqué tout ce qui touche à la 'parole' pouvait acheminer ce mot vers une pareille surrection d'emploi. Mais pourquoi ce vocable plutôt que tel autre, plutôt que des termes génériques comme *dhīh*, *vāk* ou *mántraḥ*, ou des termes déjà spécialisés comme *ukthám* ou *stómam*?" Thieme agrees (o.c., 101): "Es ist schwer glaublich, dass ein Wort von der Bedeutung 'Formel, Hymnus' die Rolle übernehmen konnte, die *bráhman* später als Name des 'Absoluten' spielt . . . So weit stimme ich Renou völlig bei."

⁷ "Studies in Sāmkhya (II), Ahaṁkāra," *JAOS*, 77 (1957), 15 ff.

⁸ I shall not enter into a discussion of *akṣára* as against *akṣará*, but follow here H. Oldenberg's opinion in "Vedische Untersuchungen 30, *akṣára*, *akṣará* im Rigveda," *ZDMG*, 63 (1909), 203 ff.

⁹ K. F. Geldner, *Der Rig-Veda* I (Cambridge Mass., 1951), *ad loc.*

¹⁰ A. Bergaigne, "Études sur le Lexique du Rigveda," *JAs* (1883), 480 ff.

¹¹ And appropriate statements about them, cf. his note ad 1, 164, 23 "hier steigt zunächst der Dichter von der Höhen des bisherigen Spekulation (i.e., the metaphors of 20-22) in die Niederungen der dichterischen Technik und rituellen Praxis hinab": but it is just through this technique and practice that most discussions about the supreme, even in the upaniṣads, become intelligible.

¹² This is dramatized, for instance, at the *agnimanthana* ceremony. While the Yajamāna drills the fire and the sāmaveda priests in the background chant the strengthening sāmans, the hotar holds himself ready to start reciting the appropriate mantras at the first wisp of smoke that will rise from the lower drilling block. When the drilling fails and the smoke disappears, the mantra, too, ceases; to start again when the smoke appears again. One can say that the mantra bears the fire, or that the fire begets the mantra. Cf. also RV 10.90.5 where Puruṣa begets Virāj and is himself borne by Virāj.

¹³ In the expression *bráhma prajávad* we see the beginnings of Prajāpati and Brahmā the creator.

¹⁴ E. g., RV. 1.164.35. The natural medium of speech, and therefore the element where speech 'originates,' is ether, hence the equation of *paramám vyòman* and *bramán* who is the medium of the scared utterance is obvious. As Thieme rightly observes, "sein Dichten ist nur die Wiederholung der Urschöpfung der Wahrheitsformulierung *en miniature*." (o.c., p. 112). Cf. also RV. 10.90.12 where the Puruṣa's mouth becomes the Brahmin.

¹⁵ The popular etymology *yad akṣarad eva tasmād akṣaram* raises the question of the etymology of the word, which was apparently a problem for these thinkers. On the one hand it does not "flow" any more, being the irreducible source (JaimUpBr. 1.1), yet it "flows out" into creation (RV. 1.164.42; JaimUpBr. 1.24.1). It is interesting to note that another etymology has been proposed just for *akṣara* "syllable." *aś-noter vā saro 'kṣaram*, i.e., *aś* — *sara* → *akṣara* (Mahābhāṣya *ad Siddhāntaśloka-vārttikā post* 1.1.8), which Bhāskara also exploits for *akṣara* "Supreme being": *aśnoti vyāpnoti svavikārān ity akṣaram* (Brahmasūtrabhāṣya 1.2.22, which deals with Yājñavalkya's Akṣara, below). The root KṢAR- is used for the "flowing" of speech (RV. 1.181.7; 8.46.6; 8.50.4); is in *akṣara* "non-flowing" just this irreducible ultimate of metrical speech understood from the beginning?

¹⁶ E.g., MaitrUp. 6.3.

¹⁷ We can do away with the meaning *śaṅku* "Blattrippe" (pw s.v. 4), based on Hemacandra, *Anekār-.. tha-saṁgraha* 2.17 "patrasirājāla" (which was probably also deduced from the same passage); in the parallel JaimUpBr. 1.10.2 we have *sūcī* for *śaṅku*: *yathā sūcyā palaśāni samṭṛṇṇāni syur evam etenākṣare- neme lokās samṭṛṇṇāh*. The idea is certainly that of herb-leaves stuck on a stake to dry.

¹⁸ Oertel's text (*JAOS*, 16 [1894], 49 ff.) reads *kāmadughākṣiti*, which makes no sense. Oertel renders "she that milks immortality possessing individual oceans (?)," thereby also taking medial *duhānā* in an active sense. I take *akṣiti* as a corruption of *takṣatī* from the RV passage which it paraphrases.

¹⁹ RV *ēkapadī* explained as *prāṇa-saṁhītam*, where *prāṇa* must be regarded as the first manifestation, the

first creation; *dvipādī* as *cakṣuḥ* and *śrotra*; *cātuṣpādī* as *vāc*, which is of course four-footed; *aṣṭāpādī* as *manas* is beyond me; *nāvapādī* as *hr̥daya*, possibly on account of the *navadvāraṃ puram*? The translation of *hr̥dayāgram* is uncertain.

²⁰ *ayutadhāram* is obviously inspired by *sahāsrākṣaram*, which the author apparently associated with an *akṣara* somehow understood as “flow.”

²¹ Cland-Henri, *L’Agniṣṭoma* (Paris, 1906-07), p. 180, § 134, n. 38. In the Vājapeya ritual which I attended all three pavamānastotras were executed this way. In the final *udgītha* the *O* was replaced by an *A*, which is an even subtler evocation of the ultimate, inspired, if I am right, by the *A* of *A U M* into which *OM* is eventually analyzed. This analysis is, however, comparatively late and does not seem to start before the later upaniṣad stratum; the triad understood in *OM3* is at first that of *bhūḥ bhuvah svaḥ*, with which the syllable is so closely connected; and only when this triadic *OM* was thus established, the esoteric *A U M* speculations began.

²² The fully articulated formula.

²³ As, e. g., RV. 1.164.24.

²⁴ TaittUp. 1.5-6; cf. also MaitrUp. 6.3 and 6.5, which, as I hope to show in a forthcoming study *The Maitri and Maitrāyanīya upaniṣads* are concerned with the *agnyādhāna* and *agnihotra* speculations of the Maitrāyanīyas.

²⁵ That is to say, the COMPLETE ātman.

²⁶ BĀUP. 3.8.

²⁷ BĀUP. 3.6.

²⁸ In PraśnUp. 4.9 the *viññānātman* that is the CREATED Akṣara is described as the positive counterpart of this negative uncreated Akṣara.

²⁹ *etasya vā akṣarasya praśāsane Gārgi dadato manuṣyāḥ praśaṃsanti yajamānaṃ devā darviṃ pitaro ’nvāyattāḥ.*

³⁰ *yo vā etad akṣaraṃ Gārgy aviditvāsmiṃl loke juhoti yajati tapas tapyata bahūni varṣasahasrāṇi antavad evāsya tad bhavati yo vā etad akṣaraṃ Gārgy aviditvāsmāl lokāt praiti sa kṛpaṇaḥ.*

³¹ On the relation of Brahmā to *brāhman* from a different viewpoint, see Gonda, o.c., 62 ff.

³² I must refer the reader to the study announced in note 24.

³³ “He who will represent the supreme person with this triadic syllable *OM* will find perfection in *tejas*, in the sun.”

³⁴ The *viññānātman* is the created *puruṣa*, which relates to the uncreated *Akṣara* as the *viññānamaya ātman* of TaittUp. 2 to the *ānandamaya ātman*, the *buddhi* of the old Sāṃkhya to the *puruṣa*, etc., etc.

³⁵ For *brahman*, cf. such usages as *brahmayoni*, śvetUp. 5.6; MuṇḍUp. 3.1.3; BhG. 14.3-4.

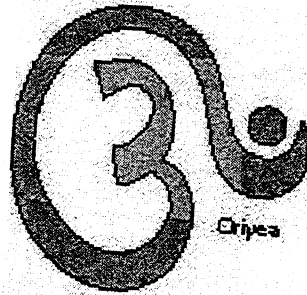
³⁶ Cf. my remarks in “Studies in Sāṃkhya III; *Sattva*,” *JAOS*, 77 (1957), 88 ff.

³⁷ I refer to my observations in “*Vācārambhaṇam* reconsidered,” *IJJ*, 2 (1958), 4.

³⁸ And *gīr* is esp. the solemn utterance.

³⁹ Franklin Edgerton., *The Bhagavad-Gītā* (Cambridge, Mass., 1946), *ad loc.*

⁴⁰ And this duality is most concisely stated in the *ādeśa* of the name *Satyam*, which is *sat*, the lower, and *tyad*, the higher.



RELIGIOUS STATUES AND IMAGES: ICONS AND SYMBOLS

ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA

(Micropedia) 26:823

In Tantrism (a Hindu and Buddhist esoteric, magical, and philosophical belief system centred on devotion to natural energy), for example, the sacred Sanskrit syllable Om — which is a transcendent word charged with cosmological (order-of-the-universe) symbolism — is identified with the feminine counterpart of the god. In its as written form, particularly on Tibetan banners (tankas), the word Om (often corresponding with the feminine counterpart — Tārā — of the patron of Tibet) is considered to be eminently sacred, even more so, in some instances, than an anthropomorphic (human-form) divine effigy.

OM or OMKĀRA

JOHN GARRETT

DIRECTOR of PUBLIC INSTRUCTION IN MYSORE

A combination of letters invested by Hindu mysticism with peculiar sanctity. In the Vedas it is said to comprehend all the gods; and in the Purānas it is directed to be prefixed to many sacred formulas. The syllable Om, says the Pādma Purāna is the leader of all prayers; and to be employed in the beginning of all prayers. According to the same authority one of the mystical imports of the term is the collective enunciation of Vishṇu expressed by A, of Srī, his bride, intimated by U, and of their joint worshipper designated by M. A whole chapter of the Vāyu Purāna is devoted to this term. It is said to typify the three spheres of the world, the three holy fires, the three steps of Vishṇu, &c. It is identified with the supreme undefinable deity, or Brahmā. In the Bhāgavat Gīta it is said "Repeating Om, the monosyllable, which is Brahmā, and calling me to mind;" The form or sensible type of Vesudeva, is considered to be the monosyllable Om. Mr. J. C. Thomson says, a more probable origin of the word is that it is composed of the initials of the three personifications of the triad of elements, which is a much more ancient trinity than that of Brahmā, Vishṇu and Śiva. The A would then represent Agni, or fire; the U Varuna, water; and the M Marut, wind or air. The reverence attached to this monosyllable may be inferred from the fact that some transcribers of MSS. have been afraid to write the awful word itself, and have substituted some other.

Source:

Classical Dictionary of India: Illustrative of the Mythology Philosophy Literature Antiquities Arts Manners Customs &c. of the Hindus. 430-31. Delhi: Oriental Publishers, n.d.



CONTEMPLATION WITH OM

SWAMI SHRADDHANANDA

THE UPANISHADS PRESCRIBE MEDITATION ON *praṇava*, the word-symbol Om. In Vedic days the sacrificial fire would be started by rubbing two pieces of wood together. The Svetasvatara Upanishad uses this process to illustrate a technique for meditating with Om.¹ The body of the meditator is to be considered the lower piece of wood and *praṇava*, the upper one. Repetition of Om with faith and reflection on its meaning is likened to rubbing together the two pieces of wood. This repetition raises the mind to subtler and subtler levels of consciousness until it gradually comprehends the indwelling pure Consciousness — our own true Self. Self-knowledge is the fire kindled by the friction of the wood.

According to the Upanishads, all sounds spring from the ultimate primal sound — *praṇava*, or Om. Om pervades all possible sounds and words. Brahman is the totality of all existence; anything that exists is in Brahman. Since any segment of existence can be symbolized by a word, the totality of existence can be represented by Om, the origin and support of all words. Om is regarded as the word-symbol of Brahman. While repeating Om the meditator should think that the Self hidden in the body is like the latent energy of heat in the wood. By the practice of repeating Om, the fire of Self-knowledge is ignited.

During the process of this meditation, the mind goes from the gross to the subtle until eventually everything merges in Om. No longer will the horn of a car disturb us as the noise of a car; it will be Om. Even the tremendous noise of a jet plane merges into Om. Whatever thought arises in the mind will at once disappear into Om. All experience will become Om. The mind will be perfectly calm. There will be only Om, the anahata (unstruck) primal spiritual vibration. Finally, that vibration also merges into the indescribable silence of the Self. By the repetition of Om, the pure Consciousness that is latent in every part of the body and mind emerges as a tangible experience. Our true Self is the other name for Brahman, the Supreme Reality.

This particular technique of meditation is analogous to Pascal's law of hydrostatics: When pressure is applied to a body of water in an enclosed vessel, that pressure will exert an equal force in all directions. Using this analogy, during japa we should think that the holy sound Om is reverberating through every fiber, every cell of the body; it is exerting its force on every nerve, every muscle, every organ, every breath.

Direct the word-symbol Om to every thought and every emotion, and those thoughts and emotions will become purified. The meditator should remember that this great mantra, Om, is a spiritual power that transforms every part of the body and mind. All thoughts become divine thoughts. All experience is transformed into divine experience. Such is the effect of this meditation. Eventually the Self — now hidden — becomes manifest, and that manifestation is the fire of knowledge.

An equally powerful meditation is described in the Muṇḍaka Upanishad. Here the imagery concerns shooting at a target with a bow and arrow, In meditation visualize Om as a bow, and your mind as an arrow. Just as an archer fixes the arrow in the bow and aims at the target, in meditation place your mind in the bow of the Om and aim the mind at the target, Brahman. Meditation is the act of shooting. The mind is aimed by the repetition of Om. As a result one-pointedness is achieved. The one-pointed mind meditates on Brahman as pure Consciousness. Through meditation the mind becomes unified with pure Consciousness which is revealed as the meditator's true Self.

In ancient India there were many different uses of Om in daily life. These practices gave a spiritual value to all actions. Some of these uses are found in the Taittirīya Upanishad.² Sometimes Om was used to communicate approval; it meant, "I have understood."

One should feel that every action is an offering to the Divine, every action is spiritual. If one is eating, one should say, "Om, let me eat." Before opening a book, one can say, "Om, let me begin the study." If we introduce Om into our secular activities, the mind becomes pure and holy.

The Māṇḍūkya Upanishad divides the sound of Om into four mātrās, or constituents — A, U, M, and amātra, or the silent portion. The first three represent the three states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep, respectively. The amātra stands for the seer of the three states; namely, the Self. The Self can never be designated by a word because words relate to objective reality. The amātra indicates the eternal Subject. The Taittirīya Upanishad declares: "When a Vedic teacher wishes to obtain Brahman he utters Om; thus desiring Brahman, he verily obtains Brahman."³

The Upanishad reminds the student that Om is Brahman, the highest Reality, and Om is all that exists. This is a matter of experience, and this experience does not come all at once. First this solid external reality has to be seen as ideas, and then all ideas have to be seen as words. Later, all words merge into Om. When this experience is attained, the aspirant realizes that everything comes from the ultimate sound, Om.

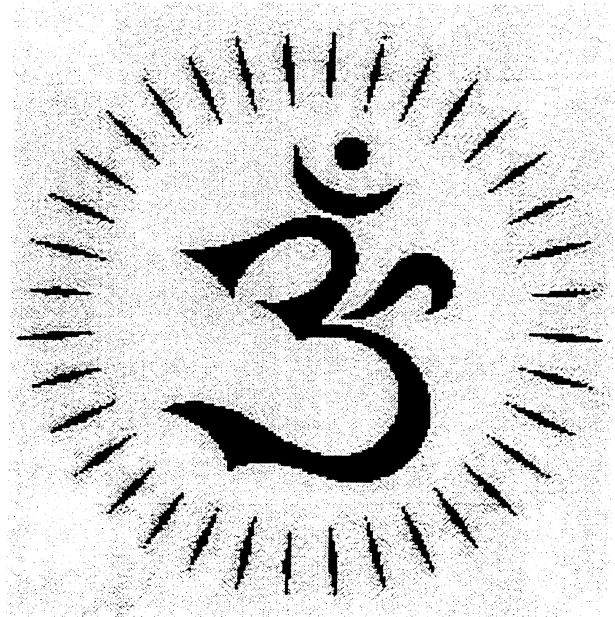
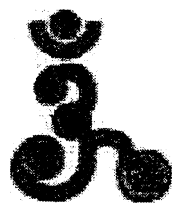
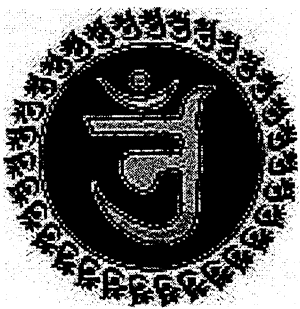
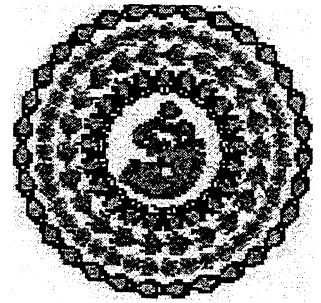
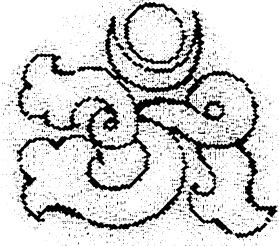
Source:

Shraddhananda, Swami. "*Contemplation with Om.*" In *Seeing God Everywhere*. 175-77. Hollywood: Vedanta Press, n.d.

¹ 1.12.13.

² 1.8.

³ Ibid.



OM, OM̄ or AUM¹

MARGARET and JAMES STUTLEY

A sacred syllable which first appears in the Upaniṣads as a mystic monosyllable, regarded by some as the basis or 'seed' (*bīja*) of all *mantras*.² It is the root-syllable of origination and dissolution. Thus *AUM* is the one eternal syllable of which all that exists is but the development. The past, present, and future are all included in this one sound, and all that exists beyond the three forms of time is also implied in it (*Māṇḍūkya Up.*, 1,1).³

The *Chān. Up.* (2.23,2-3) and *Tait. Up.* (1,8) assign the origin of language to Prajāpati, from whose meditation on the three worlds arose the threefold knowledge (the three Vedas); from his meditation on them emerged the syllables, *bhur*, *bhuvah* and *sva* (representing earth, atmosphere and sky); and from his meditation on these originated the syllable *Om*, which co-ordinates all speech and represents the totality of the world.⁴ The three constituents of *Om* also represent the deities of the Hindu triad (*trimūrti*); Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva respectively.

But Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism define *Om* according to their respective theological notions. Thus Vaiṣṇavas identify the sound-form of *Om* with Viṣṇu (*AGP.*, 215,1f.), whilst Śaivas claim that Śiva in his form of Nādatanu, i.e., 'consisting of sound', 'is the syllable *Om* from whose five mouths have come forth the notes of the "octave", *sa ri, ga, ma pa, dha, and ni*'.⁵ Thus by the sound produced from his drum (*damaru*) Śiva successively recreates the world. To the Vedāntins *Om* is the sound-form of the *ātman*, i.e., Absolute Sound (*Maitri Up.*, 6,5; *Māṇḍūkya Up.*, 1.12). The composition, meaning and efficacy of *Om* are expounded by Dattātreya in the *Mārka P.* (Canto XLII) which states that everything — existent and non-existent — can be grasped by uttering the sacred syllable, the 'Supreme *Om*'.

The *Chān. Up.* (I.4,1-5) states that initially only Agni was immortal, and that the other gods, fearing that Death would ultimately destroy them, took refuge in the sound of *Om* which, being immortal and without fear, conferred these qualities on them. Hence the epithet of *Om*, 'Slayer of Death'.

The psycho-therapeutic efficacy of *Om* is regarded as limitless, and its utterance at the beginning and end of a lesson on the Veda ensures that the student will retain the knowledge gained. Its utterance also counteracts errors in the performance of a sacrifice, and protects the devotee against misfortune. Meditation on this sacred syllable satisfies every need and finally leads to liberation (*Kaṭha Up.*, 2,16-17; *Praśna Up.*, 5,7). Its sound is thus more important than all Vedic rites, oblations and sacrifices, for it alone is imperishable (*Manu*, II.84).

The sound of *Om* is said to have emotional effects too subtle to be defined, so that its utterance is regarded as a very personal act. Thus wherever it is uttered, in temple or home, it must be *sotto voce* lest it should be heard by anyone of low caste. But rites once custom-

ary among all devout Hindus have tended to become simplified and are often performed perfunctorily. Nonetheless, prayers and the recital of passages from the Veda⁶ are still prefixed by the utterance of *Om*.⁷

Source:

Harper's Dictionary of Hinduism: Its Mythology, Folklore, Philosophy, Literature, and History. 213-14. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977.

¹ In Sanskrit 'o' is constitutionally a diphthong, contracted from 'a' and 'u' which when pronounced quickly have the sound of 'o', and which combined with 'm' gives to the whole a resonant, humming sound.

² But Bharati (*IT.*, p. 107) states that '*Om* is only a *mantra* by courtesy, and that it becomes a true *mantra* only when it is formally imparted by a *guru* to a disciple in accordance with a particular ritual.' For *Om* in the *Praṇava Up.*, v. Bloomfield, *The Atharvaveda*, pp. 108f.

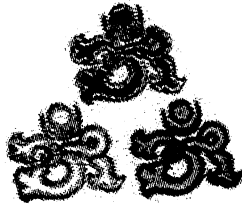
³ v. *HP.*, p. 39.

⁴ v. Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, pp. 372-8; Eliade, *Yoga*, pp. 122-4 and 390.

⁵ A.A. Bake. 'The Appropriation of Siva's Attributes by Devī', *BSOAS.*, 1955, XVII/3, p. 523; v. also Gonda, *VS.*, p. 67.

⁶ Deussen, *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie*, II, pp. 349f.

⁷ It was usually referred to as *praṇava*, but occasionally as *akṣara* or *ekākṣara*, and in later times as *omkāra*.



OM

SWAMI SWAHANANDA

MADRAS : SRI RAMAKRISHNA MATH

The most important mantra is the Praṇava or Om. It represents the undifferentiated Brahman. 'Brahman is one-syllabled Om', says the *Gīta* (8.13). As God, its three letters A, U, M (Aum is the correct spelling) represent His three aspects viz., Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra and their Powers. The vibration of Om is of the sound-Brahman or the first manifestation of the primordial Person. Om is the ground sound and ground movement of nature. Out of Om everything else has evolved. So Om is a symbol of universality. **Swami Vivekananda had an idea of a universal temple where no image would be installed but only 'Om'.** [emphasis added]

The Nātha-yogins had specialized in the worship of Om along with that of Śiva. To them 'Om is the First Sound, the most elementary Sound, the one unproduced, undifferentiated natural Sound, the most spontaneous self-expression of Energy or Power in audible form.'¹ Om is the Name of the Supreme. Every uttered sound is particular, produced from the strokes of the vocal organs, and broken into parts. But Om is an Anahata-nāda, a universal continuous sound behind all broken sounds. It is in the heart, and the search for it is the search for Brahman. As an effective help repetition of Om with steady and lengthened utterance is prescribed. According to the Nāthayogins the heart, the seat of Anahata sound, is not located in any particular part of the body, but it gradually shifts from lower yogic centres to the higher ones and ultimately to the sahasrāra where union of Śakti with Śiva is attained. Om, again, has been identified with the three Guṇas — Sattva, Rajas, Tamas — constituting the world. It is also regarded as the original Bija-akshara syllable source.

Source:

Swahananda, Swami. *Hindu Symbology & Other Essays*. 12-13. Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, n.d.

¹ *Nāthayoga* (p. 62) by Akshaya Kumar Banerjee.

PANTAJALA YOGA APHORISMS

SWAMI VEETAMOHANANDA

GRETZ, FRANCE

...

In verse 27 (of the Yogasūtra, Patanjali says: **Tasya Vācakaḥ praṇavaḥ.**

« The word which expresses Him is OM. »

Let us listen to Yajur-Veda (Kaṭha Upanishad):

« I tell you briefly of that goal which all the Vedas, with one voice, propound; which all the austerities speak. Wishing for which people practice continence — it is AUM (OM). »

The relation between name and form has been a great subject for discussion in philosophy and spiritual practices. Patanjali sees this immediate and practical relation to OM. The repetition of OM is so very soothing, relaxing and brings about complete harmony by continuous expansion of consciousness.

Let us listen to Swami Vivekananda's explanation:

« We must have a word to express each thought, but these words need not necessarily have the same sound. Sounds will vary in different nations. Our commentator says: "Although the relation between thought and word is perfectly natural, yet it does not mean a rigid connection between one sound and one idea." These sounds vary, yet the relation between the sounds and the thoughts is a natural one. The connection between thoughts and sounds is good only if there is a real connection between the thing signified and the symbol; until then, that symbol will never come into general use. A symbol is the manifest of the thing signified and if the thing signified has already an existence, and if, by experience, we know that the symbol has expressed that thing many times, then we are sure that there is a real relation between them. Even if the things are not present, there will be thousands who will know them by their symbols. There must be a natural connection between the symbol and the thing signified; then, when that symbol is pronounced, it recalls the thing signified. The commentator says the manifesting word of God is OM. Why does he emphasize this word? There are hundreds of words for God. One thought is connected with a thousand words; the idea "God" is connected with hundreds of words and each one stands as a symbol for God. Very good! But there must be a generalisation among all these words, some substratum, some common ground of all these symbols and that which is the common symbol will be the best, and will really represent them all. In making a sound, we use the larynx and the palate as a sounding board. Is there any material sound of which all other sounds must be manifestations, one which is the most natural sound? AUM is such a sound, the basis of all sounds. The first letter, "A", is the root sound, the key, pronounced without touching any part of the tongue or palate; "M" represents the last sound in the series, being produced by the close lips and the "U" rolls from the very root to the end of the sounding board of the mouth. Thus, AUM represents the whole phenomena of sound-producing. As such, it must be the natural symbol, the matrix of all the various sounds. It denotes the whole range and possibility of all the words than can be made. Apart from these speculations, we see that around this word AUM are centred all the different

Critical contributions

religious ideas in India; all the various religious ideas of the Vedas have gathered themselves.

The sound vibration of « OM » is propagated through solid medium, liquid medium and gaseous medium. Different kinds of musical instruments produce the same sound « OM ». « OM » sound waves come to us as news transmitted through radio and TV.

Says Patanjali: **Tajjapas tadarthabhāvanam.**

« One should repeat “OM” vocally and mentally and should meditate upon its meaning »

Why? Let us try to understand.

The sound vibration « OM » is a particular manifestation of consciousness, of which the grossest form is the spoken word. It is the meaning conveying power of words. We can not think or communicate without words. Behind every word there is meaning. What is meaning? It is a form of power of consciousness which reveals knowledge and connects the subject with the object. Ancient Indian grammarians called it « sphoṭa » or explosion. So then, behind every word there is a meaning, behind the meaning there is explosion and behind this power there is consciousness. This was one of the great discoveries made in India.

This led to another discovery. If every man gave his own meaning to the words he uses, it would be impossible for us to communicate with one another. This shows that all words, in fact all languages, are based on one common universal meaning. This means that there is one universal explosive power associated with Brahman-Cosmic Consciousness. This universal meaning — conveying power — is known as « sound-Brahman » or « nāda-Brahman » or « OM ». It is because there exists this common universal substratum that it is possible for people all over the world to communicate with and understand one another — sometimes even without words.

How do we know an object? According to the theories of perception, the mind goes out through the senses like a tube and takes the form of the object, while the light of Atman inside the « tube » illumines and reveals that form of the object. But according to ancient Indian grammarians, it is the « sound-Brahman » that reveals the images in the mind and the objects in the external world and furthermore, conveys this knowledge to others through speech. It is this revealing opening, manifesting power of words that is indicated by the term « explosion » or bursting.

The outward opening or revealing movement of « sound-Brahman » takes place in four stages.

In the first stage, knowledge remains an undifferentiated awareness.

In the next stage, knowledge is split into the word (vāk) and its meaning, but these remain unseparated as one unit, like the two halves of a seed. This is the level of intuition, the plane of intellect.

In the third stage, knowledge gets separated into the sound symbol and its meaning, like a bubble enclosing a bit of air. This is the level of ordinary thinking, the plane of manas or mind. Finally, when we speak, the bubble bursts and the meaning con-

tained in the sound symbol is conveyed to the listener. Meditation is the reversal of this outward movement.

Loud chanting of « OM » represents the fourth stage. From this we proceed to the stage when we repeat « OM » mentally and think of its meaning round this word AUM. What has that to do with America and England, or any other country? Simply this, that the word has been retained at every stage of religious growth in India, and it has been manipulated to mean all the various ideas about God. Monists, dualists, monodualists, separatists and even atheists took up this AUM. AUM has become the one symbol for the religious aspirations of the vast majority of human beings. Take, for instance, the English word God. It covers only a limited function and if you go beyond it, you have to add adjectives to make it Personal or Impersonal, or Absolute God. So, with the words for God in every other language; their signification is very small. This word AUM, however, has around it all the various significances. As such, it should be accepted by everyone. »

Let us study a little more. Where does the excellence of « OM » come from? Let us refer to Sri Shankaracharya:

« The primal sound which first issues out of the basic (Mūlādhāra) as Para, enters into the regions of the heart and is there known as Paśyantī — with far subtler powers, more ethereal and more esoteric. From here, it penetrates into individual consciousness, being known in the stage as “Madhyamā” ».

There is nothing higher than mind in the physical plane. But there is in every being some subtler power which induces sound formulation. This mysterious power is known as « OM ». It is the power over our speech, indwelling the canal known as Sushumnā. Repetition of « OM » brings about a consciousness of bright splendour in our subtle inner self. Also, one would feel, within oneself, the orbed figure of rising sun, shedding its rosy splendor all around. This mysterious vibratory power emanating from the heart centre is known as « Sāvitrī » in Sanskrit and also is mentioned in the Gāyatrī Mantra. Thus the aspirant is asked to develop this consciousness until the Real Knowledge of one’s self is realized.

Mere verbal repetition is not enough. It is the ardent visualization of the « M » and the nucleotic point of the effulgent inner orb that renders its recitation efficacious. Why? Says Shankaracharya: « One who has embraced the yoga of self-knowledge should incessantly meditate on the mystic “OM” connected to Bindu (Point). By so meditating, he secures unto himself all that he longs for, nay, liberation itself. I bow reverently before this mighty “OM”. »

The inward light integrates unto itself all the other divine powers, spiritual harmony and beatitude. Let us refer to Sri Shankaracharya: « Just as sulphur binds the restless mercury into rotund whole, the steady wholehearted meditation on “OM” integrates into onepointedness. The aspirant is ever wandering in mind and makes himself lose in the bliss of the infinite. »

The absolute which lies coiled up in the Mūlādhāra plexus, by the repetition of

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« OM », slowly envelops the whole personality. The causal final energy begins to manifest — thus leading one to that Infinity.

How is this sound « OM » interlaced, interwoven and intermixed combination of universal unison? The sound « OM » is a form of unparalleled energy acting as stimulus for hearing. It is the same sound as thunder, blow of horns or conches, zooming of winds and waves, falling of rains, buzzing of bees, rustling of dry leaves — in wave motions caused by the vibrations in air.

We reach the spiritual awakened stage. From then, we are carried forward by the current of sound.

Though « sound-Brahman » is infinite and all pervading, it has two points or centres in every individual: a higher point — [ājñā?] chakra — and a lower point — anahata chakra — situated in the heart. In the science of Mantras, point represents the individual self: The flow of power of consciousness between the two points is called sound. At the lower point, this sound splits into the word and its meaning. As mentioned earlier, this represents spiritually awakened stage. This splitting of the sound, going on unceasingly at the lower point, produces the eternal uncreated or « unstruck » sound called « anahata-dwani », heard by yogis in their hearts. It is not heard by all yogis but only by those whose minds are sensitive to sound vibrations. In their case, spiritual awakening means the awakening of the point in the heart, marked by the awareness of the « unstruck sound » (anahata-dwani). How does this awakening take place? In those aspirants whose minds are more sensitive to sound and are word-oriented, the awakening is brought about by the power of the word. Ordinary words have limited power and refer to physical objects or mental ideas. Their repetition would add nothing more to knowledge. The mantra « OM » refers to supersensuous objects and has the power to reveal spiritual truths, the power to denote, the power to convey Reality.

This power remains dormant when « OM » is repeated without concentration, purity and devotion... To awaken the « meaning conveyer » (vācaka shakti) of « OM », another power is necessary: the power of spiritual practice. Through purification, concentration and devotion, the two side channels of psychic energy known as Iḍā and Piṅgalā, can be made to work harmoniously and rhythmically. When the repetition of « OM » is attuned to his inner rhythm, « OM » slowly becomes awakened. Once « OM » is awakened, its repetition very soon, leads to the awakening of the self.

Awakening of the self is the first function of the repetition of « OM ». Its second and final function is to lead the soul to that state of Reality.



OM

JOHN WOODROFFE

THE ancient Hindus had an aptitude, much to be appreciated in these often verbose days, of saying a great deal in a few words. The Mantra “Om” is an instance. For this short syllable contains a whole philosophy which many volumes would not suffice to state — an Eastern philosophy I may add which is gaining increased support from Western science. These two will be before long reconciled when the latter has cast aside what a friend calls its “habit blinkers.” The beneficial result will, it is hoped, be a science which is religious, and a religion which is scientific.

The Mantra “Om” is composed of three letters — A, U, M,— of which the first two vowels coalesce into O. Over the Om is written the sign Chandrabindu or Nāda and Bindu, shown as a crescent with a dot or point over it. Nāda and Bindu are two of many aspects of That which in India is called the Mother, or great Power, (Mahāshakti), as it was by the near East called Magna Mater and by the Gnostics Megale Dunamis. This is both the efficient and material Cause of the universe which is Its form or body. Nāda, is the Mantra name for the first going forth of Power which gathers itself together in massive strength (Ghanībhūta) as Bindu to create the universe, and which Bindu, as so creating, differentiates into a Trinity of Energies which are symbolized by A, U, M. Nāda and Bindu thus represent the unmanifested “fourth” (Turīya) state, immediately before the manifestation of the world, in which animate life exists in the three conditions of dreamless sleep, dream, and waking. Man always anthropomorphises. In the West he calls the Creator the Father. More aptly Supreme Creative Being in the East and by the Shāktas is called the Mother, for this Power conceives in Its Womb, which is Consciousness, gives birth to and nourishes, the Universe. The first Mantra into which a child is initiated is Mā or Mother, for that is its first word, and Mother is often the last Word on the lips of the dying. Reverence to the natural Mother is reverence to the Mother of all and they who in life and at death drink the milk of that Mother attain to Her. Moreover in the world the Mother-aspect of Her who is Brahman is alone fully manifested. What She is in Herself (Svarūpa) is not known to mind or senses. The Yoginīhrīdaya Tantra says: “What man knows the heart of a woman? Only Shiva knows the Heart of Yoginī.” This is the Cosmic Heart of the universe whose systole and diastole is the going forth and return of millions of worlds. This process Brāhmanism calls Pravritti and Nivritti and Taoism (which is perhaps a Chinese adaptation of the doctrine of the Upanishads) names it Yang and Yinn. Relatively to man’s knowledge the Supreme Power is said to be in Itself Being (Sat), Consciousness (Chit) and Bliss (Ānanda). The Primordial Power or Ādyā Shakti is inconceivably beyond manifested personality, for this is limited experience bedged in by mind and matter. Though not in Itself a Person as we understand that term, It is ever *personalizing* in the form of all individual (Vyāshti) things in the world. It is also a Person as the aggregate (Samāshti) of all such personalities. Whilst infinite, it contains in Itself the sum of all human and other experience. Whilst the Power (Mahāshakti) is in Itself beyond mind and senses in that darkness (as man thinks it to be) which is the body of Mahākālī, its

manifestations are seen. It is with reference to such manifestation inferred to be the Radical Vital Potential which is, as it were, the thread (Sūtrātmā) of the whole series of beings, which form one Vital continuity, a principle on which Indian Monistic philosophy is based. Nothing has an absolute commencement or end. All is transformed. Birth and death are modes thereof. Each existence is as it were a knot tied in an infinite rope which knot is made at birth and untied at death. Something does not come from nothing, and something never becomes nothing. An absolute beginning or end is inconceivable. Particular universes come into being and go. Birth, life and death are modes of the universal transformation governing all organic life “from a blade of grass to Bráhmā Himself.” The divine infinitude is ever such, but appears as limited function and its effects, and as apparently discontinuous, because of the limitation of the senses which perceive its Workings. The whole Fact is never present to consciousness, but only that section to which pragmatic attention is for the moment given, and which therefore appears localized and in succession of time. Nevertheless there is an infinite Vital Continuity stretching from the Radical Potential to its actualization as the crust of matter, which is but an infinitesimal portion of the effect produced by the function of Substance relative to the whole universal efficiency. For ether (Ākāsha) is more continuous than matter which is but the outer crust of the Central Power. Ether is continuous and all pervading and is said to be more than a thousand times denser than gross ponderable matter. The visible earth is therefore but a microscopic point evolved by the Vital Power (Shakti) of substance (Shiva) in the midst of the invisible, perpetually active, but in its own nature (Svarūpa) unaffected Divine Substance pervading all space. Therein nothing truly exists independently of another, but all are transformations of the one Power. And as that Power is Itself vital and creative, its products or rather transformations of Itself are that. As It is Being with the potentialities of all life in form, none of its manifestations are “dead,” though in common parlance we concede “life” only to that which displays evolutionary growth. The search therefore for the origin of life is futile, since life is eternal and had no beginning.

All things are part of the one Mother who is Life itself. It displays itself in innumerable forms, but the vastest generalization of Its working discloses three movements of creative upbuilding, of destructive disintegration and the holding of these two opposing forces in equilibrium. Nāḍabindu differentiates into the Trinity of Will (Ichchhā), knowledge (Jñāna) and Action (Kṛiyā), “Sun,” “Moon,” and “Fire,” and this self-explicating Power manifests in matter in the threefold manner described. These three Powers are A. U. M. or the Devatās Brahmā, Vishnu, Rudra. These are not “Gods.” There is only one God. They are Devas or “Shining ones,” being aspects and specific manifestations of the One Divine Power whose Feet (in the words of Shāstra) even Brahmā, Vishnu and Rudra worship. They are scientific concepts deified, and rightly so, for their content refers to aspects of the Supreme Power which is God. Scientifically they stand for the three functions of Vital Substance. It is incorrect to suppose that God in His aspect as Brahmā created the world some millions of years ago and has since done nothing, or that He in His form as Rudra has as yet had no opportunity of displaying His power of dissolution. Brahmā is always creating and recreating the elements of manifested substance which Rudra is ever breaking down. Throughout Nature there are these twin forces upbuilding and destroying forms, integrating and disintegrating, anabolism and catabolism tending to change and

conservation of tissues and so on. The three aspects A, U, M, of the Primordial Power (Nādabindu) are always operating. Whilst Rudra is, by chemical destruction, breaking down the combinations of matter and thus working towards the final dissolution of things, that is the disintegration of forms into either its more general elements (Mahābhūta) or into the formless substance (Prakriti) the material Cause of all, Brahmā creates it anew by His ever rejuvenescent molecular activity, thus rescuing organized vitality from the processes which are ever at work to consume its forms. Vishnu again is the power which stabilises matter in the midst of these conflicting forces and thus maintains all Existences. Things only possess relative stability. So it is that the Power of Rudra works its purpose at the end. Matter itself is only a relatively stable form of Energy from which as Supreme Will it appears and into which, on the attainment of its terminal state, it again merges. It is Vishnu who holds it together in equilibrium. Again leaving individual existences and looking at the sum total of manifested Energy, Vishnu, the Maintainer, throughout Space and Time, is a theological statement of the general Conservation of Energy. To these intuited laws and truths objective science is giving increasing support. In this sense “OM” is the Pratīka or representative of the Radical Vital Potential of the Universe and of the Trinity of Energies by which It actualizes and materializes Itself as the five forms of “matter” (though Ether is not ponderable matter), namely ethereal (Ākāsha), aerial (Vāyu), fiery (Agni), liquid (Ap) and solid (Prithivī). Through worship of and meditation on this Pratīka, with all its implications, man, according to Advaita Vedānta, realizes himself as the on vital Shakti who is the Mother of all.

Source:

The Garland of Letters (VARNAMĀLĀ): Studies in the Mantra-Shāstra. 217-20. Madras: Ganesh & Co., (Madras) Ltd., 1951.





