

Om: One God Universal
A Garland of Holy Offerings

* * * * *

Viveka Leads To Ānanda

VIVEKĀNANDA KENDRA PATRIKĀ

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Represented By

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Truth is One

God is Truth

.. God is One

Om Shanti Mandiram

Columbia MO

2001

The treasure was lost. We have regained it.

This publication is not fully satisfactory. There is a tremendous scope for its improvement. Then why to publish it? The alternative was to let it get recycled. There is a popular saying in American academic circles: Publish or Perish. The only justification we have is to preserve the valuable contents for posterity.

Yet it is one hundred times better than its original. We have devoted a great deal of our time, money, and energy to improve it. The entire work was recomposed on computer. Figures [pictures] were scanned and inserted. Diacritical marks were provided as far as possible. References to citations were given in certain cases. But when a vessel is already too dirty it is very difficult to clean it even in a dozen attempts.

The original was an assemblage of scattered articles written by specialists in their own field. Some were extracted from publications already published. It was issued as a special number of a journal. It needed a competent editor. Even that too was not adequate unless the editor possessed sufficient knowledge of and full competence in all the subject areas covered. One way to make it correct and complete was to prepare a kind of draft and circulate it among all the writers, or among those who could critically examine a particular paper in their respective field. It is all now an academic talk. It was not done. Those who published it did not care for its revision or improvement at all. We wrote to them twice. But we did not receive even an acknowledgement.

It is hoped that some day someone somewhere will get interested in improving the publication and bringing it out in a better form and content. There is a well-known Sanskrit saying: *Jīvan naro bhadrāśatāni paśyati*= If a man lives he may be able to find hundreds of good things.

May OM: One God Universal inspire someone to improve upon what we have done. We are happy that we saved it from total oblivion. The treasure was lost. We have regained it.

Om Shanti Mandiram, Columbia Missouri. April 1, 2001.

OM

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SYNOPSIS

WE ARE ONE

Eleventh September 1893 would ever be remembered by our countrymen as the day on which the flag of Universal Brotherhood, founded on the irrevocable Vedantic principle of the "solidarity of all life" was unfurled at the Parliament of Religions, Chicago, by Swamī Vivekānanda. Swamijī's exposition of the Vedantic ideals created a dynamic yet harmonious vision of the wholeness of the Universe which the so-called modern intellectuals of his time had not imagined before.

We are One - That is the Truth. Today, more than ever [before], the intellectual giants of modern science are able to comprehend this and are getting convinced that we have to evolve beyond duality into that Oneness sooner or later, so that humankind lives in happiness, peace and brotherhood. Our country, with her centuries old experience of translating the One Truth into the apparently different forms of knowledge, love and action, will have to take the lead in impressing upon the world the universality of this great vision and also of the need for actualizing it in real life. How? This issue of the Kendra Patrikā which would be released coinciding with the Centenary of the Chicago Address in September 1993, may provide some clues.



EDITORIAL

PRAṆAVA - THE ESSENCE OF THE VEDAS

The **Praṇava** or **Aumkāra** has a unique place in the culture and religions of India. It is taken as the essence of the Vedas. To quote the **Kaṭhopanishad (Yajur Veda)**:

**Sarve vedā yat padam āmananti
Tapāṃsi sarvāṇi ca yad vadanti.
Yad icchanto brahmacaryam caranti
Tat te padam sangraheṇa bravīmyomīyetat.**



"I tell you briefly of that goal which all the Vedas with one voice propound, which all the austerities speak, and wishing for which people practice Brahmacharya. It is this, viz.. AUM."

As **Praṇava** is the Brahman itself, the works on Praṇava in Indian literature, Hindu religious scriptures and Buddhist and Sikh scriptures are vast and very widely referred to by all secondary literature.

The entire **Māṇḍūkya Upanishad** is a treatise on **Aumkāra** with its **mātrās** of A, U and M, equating them with the wakeful, dream, and dream-free sleep states of consciousness, the fourth unexpressed standing for the **Turīya**. Gauḍapāda's **Kārikās** and Śaṅkara's com-mentary on the text and the **Kārikās** throw significant light on **Praṇava**.

It is in the **Taittirīya Upanishad** that we find the reference to the **Vyāhṛtis**, namely, **Bhūr, Bhuvah, Svah**, being equated with the A U and M of **Praṇava**, the fourth state being equated with **Maha** [mahar].

The **Chāndogya Upanishad** expatiates on the application of **Praṇava** in Vedic rituals, as one getting the performer of sacrifices both the worldly and spiritual rewards.

Therefore, it is natural that the Vedas themselves should praise **Praṇava** and ask the students to chant it twice for every **mantra**. (Pāṇini-Ashṭādhyāyī).

The **Aitareya Brāhmaṇa** of the Rig Veda, the **Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa** of the **Yajur-veda** and the **Gopatha Brāhmaṇa** of the **Atharva Veda** praise **Praṇava** and describe it as composed of **Vyāhṛtis** churned out of the Vedas themselves.



of



The **Upanishads** invariably describe **Praṇava** as verily the Brahman itself, a fact re-instated by the wonderful summary of the **Upanishads** - the **Bhagavad Gītā**.

The later **Upanishads**, namely, the **Yoga Upanishads**, the **Vaishṇava Upanishads** and the **Śaiva Upanishads** take up the theme and identify **Praṇava** with the ultimate state of consciousness, Vishṇu and Shiva. [?]

Therefore, apart from the main **Upanishads**, namely, **Īśa, Kaṭha, Chāndogya, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍūkya, Praśna and Taittirīya**, the other **Upanishads**, **Dhyānabundu, Nada-**

bindu, Yoga-cūḍāmaṇḍI, Yoga-tattva, Amṛta-nāda Upanishad describe in extenso the beneficial results of meditation on Auṃkāra.

The Praṇavopaniṣad, Atharvaśiras Upaniṣad, Brahmavidyā Upaniṣad, Nārada Parivrājaka Upaniṣad, Akshyupaniṣad, Maitrāyaṇyupaniṣad, Ātmaprabodhupaniṣad, Brahmabindu Upaniṣad, Jabāladarśanopaniṣad, Śāṅḍilyopaniṣad, Parabrahmopaniṣad, Maṇḍalabrahmopaniṣad, Rudrahridayopaniṣad, Nrisimhapūrvatāpinyupaniṣad, Kshurikopaniṣad, Nārāyaṇopaniṣad and Akshamālikopaniṣad give in great detail the procedures of meditating on AUM, the intermediate stages, the experiences and the ultimate spiritual benefits. They form verily the manual of meditation on Auṃkāra.

While all the early Upaniṣads emphasize on the spiritual aspects of Praṇava, the Brāhmaṇas and the Chāndogya Upaniṣad do not exclude the worldly benefits from the totality of human progress. In every sacrifice (yajña) performed, Praṇava has a great role to play, it being the expression of accord and acceptance of instructions, and responses among the priests. The gains of Praṇava Dhyāna cannot be divided into worldly and spiritual. They form the two sides of the same coin.

The relation between a name and the form it stands for is the subject of great discussions in philosophy and all its branches including spiritual philosophy. In Yoga practices this relation is of immediate and practical value. Patañjali, the great Yoga teacher, could see that the relation between a form and the name is closest in Praṇava and has made use of this quality in his method of meditation. Hence his significant sūtra--



Tasya vacakaḥ Praṇavaḥ.

(His manifesting word is AUM).

Once the importance of **Praṇava** is understood along with its philosophical and practical significance, it was only a question of time before the **Purāṇas** took over the task of expounding the relevance of **Praṇava** in a theistic background.

The **Praṇava** is identified with Shiva, Viṣṇu, Shakti, Gaṇeśha and Sūrya. The **Skanda Purāṇa** describes how Kārtikeya tested Brahmā, the creator for his knowledge of the meaning of **Praṇava** and found the latter wanting. Kārtikeya became the teacher of Shiva himself expounding the significance of **Aumkāra**. Hence His name 'Śivaguru'.

Such a symbol standing in close relation with reality would naturally attract the **Dharmāchāryas** who made it a part of the daily worship of all. The **Gāyatrī** mantra, which is the expanded version of **Praṇava**, is a part of the daily prayer in this land as prescribed by all teachers of **Dharma** including Manu.

Later on, when the approach to religion became more intellectual than ritualistic, all the **Āchāryas** / philosophers saw the great relevance of AUM. Shaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Mādhva, Tilaka and Gyāneshwara, and all those who have commented on the **Upanishads** and the **Gītā** had to express on the greatness and the uniqueness of AUM. Later day sages and savants, Sri Rāmākrishna, Swāmi Vivekānanda, Ramana, Rāmatīrtha, Aurobindo, Sāibābā, Dr. Radhakrishnan, Swami Abhedānanda, the theosophists, Taimini and others have glorified AUM.



Tantra Shāstra, the practical science of spirituality has made use of AUM. The letters A, U, M are transposed as U, M, A which denotes Devī and is called Devī Praṇava. In all the methods of worship both in and outside temples AUM plays an important role.



Shaṅkara's system of **Shaṅmata**, calling the one ultimate as Shiva, Viṣṇu, Shakti, Gaṇapati. Sūrya and Kumāra has used AUM as the common factor of all the methods of worship and the link between all deities.

In **Yoga Shāstra**, the role of AUM as a soothing, relaxing and unbroken thought to meditate upon, leading the **sādhaka** from a state of single pointed concentration to a thought-free state, to a state of silence, to a state of '**prapancha upashama**', to a state of **prāṇa-vyavahāra prashamana**', has been given great importance. In all methods of continuous expansion of consciousness, AUM is the object of meditation.

Gāyatrī, the most powerful among the **mantras**, is an expanded version of AUM. Every deity has its own Gāyatrī, the best known being the **Sūrya Gāyatrī**. It is used variously in **Japa, homa**. etc., thus linking the philosophical and spiritual content of AUM with the ritualistic aspect of the Vedas.

While AUM is a representation of Brahman in its sound form, in calligraphy, sculpturing and painting too it finds expression. But it is in music that the glory of **Praṇava** is sung loftily. In Tyāgarāja's **Kritis** and Muthuswami Dikshitar's songs, **Praṇava** is praised as the well-spring of all musical notes and as various deities. For Dikshitar, for example, Gaṇesha is "**Praṇava Svarūpa**".



Being the center of Hindu spiritual and religious consciousness, **Praṇava** is held in equal reverence in regional literature as well. In Tamil, Malayalam and all regional languages, AUM is identified with Brahman and various deities. The songs of Tiru-moolar and Siddhars dwell on the greatness of AUM. **Tirumantiram**, the Tamil text, says that the Vedantic path is to realize the gross and the subtle **Praṇava** with the aid of the spiritual preceptor. **Praṇava** is the bestower of spiritual as well as worldly benefits. **Praṇava** is the originator, resting-place and the form of the five elements. It is through the teaching of **Praṇava** that the mind travels on the right path and gets established in Shiva with the cessation of **Prāṇic** activities. The practitioner of **Praṇava Yoga** crosses over the six basic states and reaches the Ultimate that is beyond the knowable. **Tiruppugazh** never misses an opportunity to link Kārtikeya with AUM. **Gīta Makaranda** in Telugu and **Jñāneshvarī** in Marathi show how Indian regional literature has recognized the usefulness of AUM in spiritual **Sādhana**.

The Indian revivalism in the 18th century created new sects in India some of which took Hinduism to **prepaaurāṇic** "purity". The Ārya Samāja, which would accept no scripture later than the Vedas as authentic, readily accepted AUM as its central object of veneration.

Japujī, the manifesto of Guru Nānaka, the first Sikh Guru, begins "**EK Aumkāra**" and **Aumkāra** has an important place in Sikh prayer. Buddhism has accorded a place of holiness to AUM. In Buddhism the famous meditation on "**AUM Maṇi Padme Hum**" is also very important.


Christianity as '**Amen**' and Islam as '**Ameen**' have marked the positive divine principle. These words may be modified forms of AUM.

Yesudian in his essay 'AUM and Amen' says:

"AUM is the most sacred word in the Vedas, the scriptures of the Hindus, which are the oldest in the world. It is the symbol of the Personal God and the unmanifested formless Absolute God. It is also written as AUM.

"For Christians too the first manifestation of God is Logos erroneously interpreted as the 'word'. In the beginning was Logos. Logos was with God and Logos was God. Though little significance is attached to it in Christianity, the first manifestation of God is sound or Logos and this Logos is Amen.



the  "In Revelation iii 14, Logos, the manifesting spirit says: And unto the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.

"Revelation xix 4: And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne saying, Amen, Alleluia".

Yesudian avers Aum became Amen.

Commenting on AUM as the most appropriate symbol of God, Swami Vivekananda in his commentary on Patañjali's **Sūtra**:

Tasya vācakaḥ Praṇavaḥ (1. 27) says:

"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, "Al-though 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 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 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 re-present 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 closed 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 that can be made.

Apart from these speculations, we see that around this word AUM are centered all the different religious ideas in India: all the various religious ideas of the Vedas have gathered themselves 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 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 AUM, however, has around it all the various significances. As such it should be accepted by every-one.



Emphasizing the role of **Praṇava** in unifying the Hindu people Swamiji says, "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



"AUM" as the symbol, the greatest symbol of any sect. "If there is any sect here, which believes that 'AUM' ought not to be the symbol, it has no 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."

Sri Rāmakrishna speaking on AUM says. "I give the illustration of the sound of a gong 'tom' t-o-m. It is the merging of the **Līlā** in the **Nitya**, the gross, the subtle and the causal merge in the great cause, waking, dream and deep sleep merge in **Turiya**. The striking of the gong is like the falling of a heavy weight into the big ocean. Waves begin to rise. The relative rises from the absolute, the causal, subtle and gross bodies appear out of the great cause; from **Turiya**

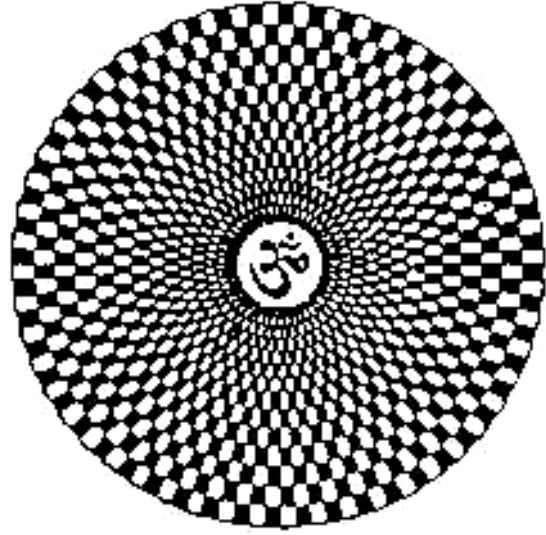
emerge the states of deep sleep, dream and waking. These waves arising from the Great Ocean merge again in the Great Ocean. From the Absolute to the Relative and from the Relative to the Absolute. Therefore I give the illustration of the gongs sound 'tom'. I have clearly perceived all these things. It has been revealed to me that there exists an Ocean of consciousness without limit. From it come all things of the relative plane, and in it they merge again. Millions of **Brahmāṇḍas** rise in that **Chidākāśa** and merge in it again. All this has been revealed to me.

Spirituality is a continuous process of desymbolisation. The symbols chosen for worship or meditation should be such that it will lead the **sādhaka** through continuous expansion of consciousness to the goal of perfection. AUM is such a symbol that lends itself to such continuous process of gaining freedom from symbols.

A lot more work needs to be done on our understanding of AUM. The English translation of literature on AUM from many Indian languages is not available. Experimental work on AUM meditation applying scientific parameters to measure the quantum of relaxation is very sketchy and reports are not readily available. Work on the relation between AUM and Amen on the one hand, and AUM and Ameen on the other will have a great significance in finding common grounds between the various religions of the world. The influence of meditation on the breathing exercises of **Prāṇāyāma** has to be studied.



In this issue of the Vivekananda Kendra Patrika an attempt is made to understand the positive principle of **Praṇava** in all its aspects. Passages reproduced from the works of eminent enlightened souls like Swami Yogeshwarananda, Swami Shivananda, Swami Rāmatirtha and others have instilled life and energy to the theme on hand. A few original contributions seem to have their own merit and relevance. The vastness of the subject has imposed certain limitations on this volume. Still, we hope the reader will be inspired to study for himself / herself the original scriptures including the **Māṇḍūkya Upanishad** and the **Gītā**, and make **praṇava-dhyāna** a part of his / her daily life.



THE LORD SAYS **IN THE GITA**



यदक्षरं वेदविदो वदन्ति
विशन्ति यद् यतयो वीतरागाः ।
यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति
तत् ते पदं सङ्गहेण प्रवक्ष्ये ॥

Yadaḥśaraṃ vedavidō vadanti viśanti yad yatayo vītarāgāḥ.
yadicchanto brahmacaryam caranti tat te padam saṅgahaṇa pravakṣyē.

Persons learned in the Vedas, who utter Omkāra and who are great sages in the renounced order, enter into Brahman. Desiring such perfection, one practices celibacy. I shall now explain to you this process by which one may attain salvation.
(Chap. 8:11)

सर्वद्वाराणि संयम्य मनो हृदि निरुद्ध च ।
मूर्ध्न्याध्यायात्मनः प्राणमास्थितो योगधारणाम् ॥

Sarvadvārāṇi saṃyamya mano hṛdi nīrudhya ca.
Mūrdhnyādhāyātmanāḥ prāṇam āsthito yogadhāraṇām.

The yogic situation is that of detachment from all sensual engagements. Closing all the doors of the senses and fixing the mind on the heart and the life air at the top of the head one establishes himself in yoga.

(Chap. 8:12)

ओमित्येकाक्षरं ब्रह्म व्याहरन् मामनुस्मरन् ।
यः प्रयाति त्यजन्देहं स याति परमां गतिम् ॥

Omityekāśaram Brahma vyāharan mām anusmaran.
Yaḥ prayāti tyajan deham sa yāti paramām gatim.

After being situated in the Yoga practice and vibrating the sacred syllable 'Om' the supreme combination of letters, if one thinks of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and quits his body, he will certainly reach the spiritual planets.

(Chap. 8:13)

AUM

Swāmī Yogeswarananda

This is a very comprehensive article on OM. The swamiji Swami Yogeswarananda has first described the sound-mechanism. Then, with suitable examples, the concept of the Personal and Impersonal God is brought out. The analysis of OM and its significance is very striking. He finally quotes from an Upanishad which says: 'I tell you briefly that which all the Vedas consider as the supreme aim of human life, to make men attain which they enjoin on them the discipline of penance and to realize which disciples live with their masters: It is expressed by AUM.

Editor

Of all the expressions, words, and syllables used in our sacred books to signify the idea of God, none is considered to be so sacred as AUM. Though in these books are found thousands of names of God denoting the various aspects of His nature, yet, to none of them is attached by religious men so much importance as to this short sacred syllable. It is stated that the essence of all speech is in the Vedas, and the essence of the Vedas is in AUM. Lord Krishna says in the **Gītā**: "I am the taste in waters, I am the light in the sun and the moon, I am the Omkāra in the Vedas, the sound-principle in **ākāśa**, the manliness in men".

Before entering into the study of the signification of this syllable 'AUM', let us en-quire a little into its structure.

As in studying the human frame, we learn Anatomy first, and then Physiology (Anatomy deals with the structure of the living body; Physiology with the functions of the various organs of which it is made up). Even so, we should understand first the structure of AUM, the

elementary sounds which [go] to form it before we can understand their functions: the ideas they signify. AUM is made up of three sounds: the sound A, U, and M. Though it is usually pronounced and spelled as OM, Sanskrit grammar allows the fusion of the sounds of A and U into O. Consequently, the latter pronunciation and spelling are often adopted.

Now, let us try to understand the manner in which all speech-sounds are produced. This will help us a great deal in grasping the signification of AUM.

The sound mechanism

Modern physicians and physiologists have made an elaborate study of sound. When we speak, air is driven out from our lungs. The moving air comes in contact with two cords stretched over a box-like organ called the Larynx situated in our throat, and sets them in vibration. Then the vibrations of these cords are communicated to the air of our mouth. The mouth acts as a resonator and deepens the vibrations. As the vibrations of air generated by the trembling reeds of an organ are deepened by its pipes, or as the vibrations of a gramophone diaphragm are deepened by its horn, even so the vibrations of air caused by the vocal cords are deepened by our mouth. The deepened vibrations are communicated by the air of our mouth to the air outside; when the outside air vibrates in unison with the air of the mouth, these vibrations, traveling in waves and ripples, reach the ears of men. Behind each ear of man, there is a cavity covered by a fine membrane. When aerial vibrations reach this membrane, it vibrates, and transmits its tremors through a complicated system of ossicles to certain nerve endings, which in their turn transmit them to the cells of the sensorium of the brain. When brain cells move, there flashes forth almost immediately the consciousness of the sound.

Our ancient philosophers gave in their own way a more or less similar account of the production and perception of speech-sounds. They said that from the body air is expelled by internal heat or energy; then the moving air comes in contact with the throat, palate, lips, and other parts of the mouth, and gives rise to a sound. The sound thus produced travels in the form of waves and ripples (**Vīcī-taraṅga-nyāyena**) and reaches the sense of hearing of the perceiver. Some of those philosophers were of opinion that the sense of hearing, which is a subtle

material body, stretches out to the place where any sound is produced in order to grasp it. The reason for this supposition of theirs was that our hearing can find out, as soon as it perceives any sound, the nearness or remoteness of its source. So, these philosophers thought that if the sense of hearing did not go out to the source of sound, it could not form any idea of its situation in space. Be that as it may, whether sound reaches the sense of hearing or the latter stretches out to receive it, one thing all ancient philosophers taught is that the sound produced by the air of the mouth affects the sense of hearing. When it is thus affected, a report of this fact is communicated by the **Manas** or attentive faculty to the **Buddhi** or the intellect. The **Buddhi** there-by undergoes a change corresponding to the nature of the sound. When this change takes place in the **Buddhi**, it flashes up with the light of **Purusha** or **Ātmá**. This flashing up of the **Buddhi** with the light of **Purusha** is in popular language called perception. Thus our ancient philosophers explained the production of speech-sounds and the subsequent perception of them by persons.

You can see that both the ancient and the modern accounts of the way in which speech sounds are produced are not materially different. **The important facts connected with the production and perception of such sounds to which I wish to draw your attention are that when any sound is produced by man's bodily organs there first arise air vibrations that are inaudible; they are then strengthened and deepened by the apparatus of the mouth so that they become audible; then again, after these vibrations have produced sensation, they gradually become slower and slower, gradually lose the power of affecting our ears, and finally pass into the inaudible state. This last fact is observed not only in the case of speech sounds, but also in the case of sounds produced by means other than our vocal apparatus.** Just carefully listen to the sounds of a church-bell. It begins to toll. Its ding-dong sounds continue for some time. Then, when the ringing stops, the last note of the bell sounds on for sometime, it grows fainter and fainter; then it melts into such subtle vibrations that we hardly feel them: finally, they become inaudible. The same melting into the inaudible state may be observed in the chime of a clock. Though the human voice passes into inaudibility very abruptly, yet it also gives rise to air vibrations too fine to be perceived by our ears. When I utter AUM, I first give rise to air vibrations that are inaudible; then these inaudible airvibrations become audible. The sounds A, U, and M are

heard in succession; then, when the last sound has been produced there go on subtle vibrations imperceptible to us. They are too delicate to be caught by our ears, yet they exist none the less.

So, in uttering AUM as well as other words, we produce two kinds of air-waves, one definable and the other indefinable; the one audible and the other inaudible.

What does AUM signify?

All words made of speech-sounds signify certain ideas or sentiments. Even such exclamatory sounds as Ah! Eh! etc., which men often utter, represent certain sentiments which are stirred in their hearts. As the letters of the written alphabet visibly symbolize the various sounds we utter through our mouth, so all words signify certain ideas or feelings.

What ideas or feelings are signified by this sacred word AUM?

AUM signifies first the ideas of the Impersonal and Personal God.

What do we understand by the expression Impersonal God?

All things In Nature are perpetually changing; nothing is stationary. Gaze up to the sky above, gaze down to the ground below, you will notice change everywhere. The stars are changing; the earth is changing; the seasons are changing; trees, shrubs, and human faces are all undergoing change. But a little thought will bring home to you the fact that for the perception of change in anything, there must be something less changeable.

Change presupposes changelessness

When a train moves away from the platform of a station, we perceive the motion of the train because the platform does not move. Again, we notice the various changes in the platform. After it has been used for sometime, the railway engineer condemns its structure. He gets it dismantled and constructs another platform of a new design. We perceive the reconstruction of the platform because the other parts of the station remain unchanged. Again,

after a time, the whole station is demolished and rebuilt. Then too, we perceive the change because the surroundings of the station remain the same. In course of time, these surroundings undergo material alteration, and they are noted by us because compared with these surroundings, we ourselves remain unchanged. Further, the changes going on in us our childhood, boyhood, youth, etc. are perceived by us because, with the physical changes caused by advancing age, our mind does not change much. In this manner, if we push the reasoning far, we cannot but admit that behind the ceaseless changes going on everywhere in the universe, there must be a principle unchangeable in its nature. **Change is possible, change is perceptible, because that changeless principle exists. This principle not knowing change but making the perception of change possible is the ultimate basis of the universe. It is none other than God.**

If you think over the subject a little more, you will understand that God, the basis of the universe, must be infinite. He cannot be a finite being, for all finite existence are determined by other finite existence. As God is the ultimate principle of the universe, as nothing exists independently of Him, as all things exist in and through Him, so He cannot be limited by any other existence. We see also that all finite things are liable to destruction; God cannot be so; hence, He must be infinite in His nature.

For the same reason, we conclude that God is essentially one, for duality presupposes finitude. If there be two Gods, both will be finite. We should then seek for some other Being higher than them, through whom both of them exist, and then that Being should be regarded as the true God. But as we have said, God is the ultimate principle of the universe, so He cannot but be one.

Again, God must be the source and origin of our consciousness. The ultimate principle of the universe must be the origin of conscious life, wherever that life may be. All things of the universe exist for consciousness. But for consciousness, they would be meaningless entities or nonentities. So God, the ultimate principle of the universe, must be the root of consciousness. Nay, our scriptures say, consciousness is His very nature; It is His glory.

Thus reasoning, we conclude that God is changeless, infinite, essentially one, and the source and origin of conscious life. The conception implied by this conclusion is what we understand by the expression Impersonal God.

You can well understand that the idea of Impersonal God, reached by metaphysical reasoning, is not so attractive to an ordinary religious man. However grand may be this idea of the Impersonal One, yet it produces only a faint impression on his mind. The words changeless, infinite, etc., give rise to no concrete consciousness in Him. So his heart longs for a more definite idea of God, an idea resembling not an outline picture, but a finished piece of art with many lights and shades, with many striking colors. In short, most men require the conception of a Personal God.

The word "Personal" is derived from the word "Persona" which means mask. When we ascribe to God certain attributes not derogatory to His infinitude, when we put on Him as it were a mask of characteristics which enable us to form a concrete picture of Him in our minds, we get the idea of a Personal God. The Incomprehensible Infinite thus becomes to a certain extent comprehensible to us.

What attributes can we ascribe to Him without taking a wrong view of His infinite nature?

All objects of Nature possess three common characteristics, viz., birth, existence in time, and death. All things, all creatures, are born, they exist for sometime and then meet with dissolution. From the minute molecules to the orbs of heaven, from diatom to man, all conform to this rule. As God is the ultimate principle of the universe. as all things exist in and through Him, we shall not be wrong if we regard Him as the Creator, the Preserver, and the Destroyer of the universe. By doing this we shall merely refer the common characteristics of all objects to Him without whom neither they nor any of their traits can exist.

In our ancient sacred books are given three names to these three aspects of God's nature. In them, God the Creator is called Brahma, God the Preserver is called Vishnu. God

the Destroyer is called Rudra. Do not think that Brahmā, Vishṇu, and Rudra are three different personages. Our scriptures explicitly tell us that they are not so, but they are only symbolic representations of the same Being.

"He alone is spoken of as Brahmā, as Śiva, as Indra, as the Supreme Self-shining Eternal: He alone is called Vishṇu, Life [-breath], All-destroying Fire, and the Moon.¹"

Let us now turn to consider the signification of the component sounds of AUM. A (**Akāra**) represents Brahmā; U (**Ukāra**) represents Vishṇu; M (**Makāra**) represents Rudra. And that indefinable and imperceptible sound, those inaudible air waves, symbolize the Infinite Impersonal God whom neither our mind can comprehend nor our speech can describe.

Let us now turn from the contemplation of the objective world, the ceaseless changes of which bespeak the presence of the Changeless One, to the contemplation of the subjective world--the world that exists within us. The great German philosopher Immanuel Kant said that two things excited his wonder, viz., the starry heavens above and the moral law within. It is not merely the moral law within, which is the expression of our spiritual nature that excites our wonder, but all other mental facts, all other mental phenomena, do the same.

During our lifetime, we are in one or [the] other of these three mental states, viz., waking, dreaming, or deep sleep. We are either awake, and so in active relation to the outer world, or we are dreaming, seeing fanciful images with pleasure or pain; or we are in deep sleep, forgetful of our joys and sorrows. The first two states are matters of our daily experience, while deep sleep--sleep free from the disturbance of dreams we get but rarely.

In the waking state, our consciousness is vivid, our senses perform their different functions, and our mind receives impressions from the outer world, stores images corresponding to these impressions and revives them as occasions arise. Whatever we see, hear, touch, taste or smell, as well as whatever emotions we feel, all these objects and feelings

¹ Source: Kaivalyopanishad, Kh. 1.8 and Taittiriyaṛaṇyaka. 13

impress themselves upon the substance of our mind, and after they have thus impressed themselves, our mind retains imprints or images of them for future use.

Modern psychologists have demonstrated that our brain is an organ perpetually receiving various impressions, external and internal, with all our sensations, thoughts, feelings, and volitions. As these impressions are recorded by the living substance of the brain, reproduction of these sensations, thoughts, etc., can easily take place when the records of such sensations, etc., are acted upon by suitable stimuli.

The psychological views of our ancient philosophers were not very different from those of modern psychologists. Our ancient philosophers regarded the mind as a subtle material substance, plastic in nature, capable of receiving various impressions, both external and internal. Whenever any perception rises in us, whenever we think, whenever we experience any feeling, whenever we exert our will in any kind of action, the substance of our mind undergoes complex changes corresponding to our sensations, thoughts, feelings, and actions. When these sensations, thoughts, feelings, and actions are ended, they leave behind in the substance of the mind, certain *Samskāras*, marks, or images, which became the seeds of similar psychic experiences in the future.

Recollection is nothing but the revival of these **Samskāras** by the force of the will. To give an example: I have seen Benares. The crescent course of the Ganges, the numerous beautiful edifices with spires of temples tipped with gold rising from amongst them and shining against the blue sky, have produced complex impressions on my mind. The **samskāras** or images of these objects are lying buried in its depth. If I like, I can revive them, and a picture of Benares more or less vivid can rise up before my mind's eye. I can re-collect Benares because the imprints or images of the objects I saw there exist in my mind; but for these imprints, recollection will not be possible.

To give another illustration: Just observe what a complex activity I am engaged in as I am speaking to you. I am seeing your faces beaming with intelligence. I am turning my eyes from some of you to others. As occasions are arising, the expressions of my face are

changing, and my hands are making some movements. These activities are but the echoes of the greater activities going on within me. I have stored my mind with various images. As I am speaking, I am drawing out of the storehouse of my mind many of these images and making them cross the threshold of consciousness: so they are giving rise to ideas, and ideas are uniting to form thoughts. Mark, as I am speaking to you, I am allowing only those **Samskāras**, those images, those ideas, which are relevant to the subject of my discourse, to revive and enter into the sphere of consciousness; all other images, all other ideas, are kept down by my will. As suitable ideas are rising into my consciousness. I am finding from the same storehouse of my mind proper words to express them. When I shall get down from the platform, that intense activity of the will by which only particular kinds of ideas are being revived in my mind will relax, and then many ideas, many thoughts, unconnected with the subject of this discourse, will again emerge from the dark depths of my mind.

Now, you can well understand that when we think we revive series of images or ideas stocked in our mind--ideas connected with the subject of our thought. And you can well understand also that, as these ideas are revived again and again, they grow in clear-ness, and we do not feel so much effort in reproducing them.

So in the waking state, we either receive impressions from outside, or strengthen the corresponding images by reviving them. In it, the twofold process of storage and revival of images goes on within us. In waking, our will is active, our consciousness is clear as broad daylight, and ideas pass in ordered procession through the mind at the bidding of our will.

But in our dreams things are greatly changed. Vivid consciousness is superseded by hazy consciousness, as if broad daylight gives place to a dubious twilight and in the prevailing obscurity, impressions received in the waking state are reproduced sometimes in phantasmagoric combinations, sometimes in meaningless chaotic confusion, to fill us with the shifting moods of wonder, joy and sorrow. In dreams, what incongruous fanciful images are presented before our mental sight! What joyful or sorrowful words we hear from our friends and acquaintances! In dreams, we see serpents, tigers, lions and other wild animals; we converse with ghosts, we fight with them; we fly through the air like birds; we walk on water

defying gravity; and travel in lands we have never seen. In short, all impossible things appear as facts in dreams. And out of the thousand inconsistencies, how wonderfully a patch of consistent experience, almost as vivid as any experience of the waking state, rises up for awhile, like a firm islet of silt in the midst of a flowing river, to be washed away again by the current of incongruous images.

A man living in a country far from his home goes to bed after a day's toil. Slumber soon makes him oblivious of his surroundings, oblivious of tasks he has undertaken to earn a hard livelihood. He dreams: As if he is flying from some robbers or some mischievous men who are chasing him. He runs through rough and steep roads to escape their clutches. He is very much exhausted and extremely afraid of being overtaken by his pursuers. Then suddenly, the whole scene is washed away by the waters of oblivion. He sleeps soundly for awhile. Again he dreams: As if after a long absence from his wife and children, he is going to meet them in his own country. Slowly he wends his way to his house with his heart agitated with the thought of his dear ones. Now he is before his cottage door. Lo! Who comes out of it but his dear wife. Who can express the joy of such a meeting? Fond greetings and embraces follow. His children come out and clasp his hands, pull him by the clothes, and he kisses them and affectionately pats them on the head. While he is thus bestowing caresses on them, behold the scene changes again! He is not in his home, but in a dense forest, surrounded not by children, but by wild animals, one of which is fiercely staring at him. He starts up in fear.

Such dreams, most of us must have experienced; they are full of consistencies and inconsistencies.

All such dreams are produced by the combination of images stored in our mind in the waking state. In the waking state, when we think, we haul up, by the effort of our will, these images from the depth of our mind and make them cross the threshold of consciousness, and as I told you, we make them appear in order. But in dreams, that higher activity of the mind by which the flow of ideas is controlled, disappears almost entirely; consequently, images of past experience rise into *consciousness* in disorder and confusion. They give rise by their

combination to highly impossible scenes. The mind in the waking state may be likened to a well-ordered school room in which the teacher is present. In such a room, the boys come and go and do their appointed tasks without any noise. But let the schoolmaster be absent for sometime, or fall asleep in his chair. What do we observe? Instead of order there is disorder and confusion. The boys begin to play. One boy bends, another rides on him; a third comes and pulls them down on the floor; others laugh loudly, join in the scuffle and increase the confusion; silence and order fly from the room for the time being. Even so, in dreams, our will, the power that maintains order and harmony in the chamber of our mind, relaxes its activity, and so incongruous combinations of images rise into consciousness. The occasional consistency of dreams is caused by involuntary attention or by a slight activity of the will. Generally, this slight voluntary activity takes the form of expectation. It is expectation that makes us at times ascribe to others words which we ourselves think that they would utter. When these words rise up in our mind, we involuntarily try to utter them, and on account of the illusory character of the dreaming state, they seem to fall from their lips. Thus from the materials stored in the waking state, the grotesque structures of dreams are built by our mind.

In deep sleep, the fanciful incongruous images no longer rise up. Darkness spreads over our soul, and our mental vision is entirely obscured. In waking, Our mind is characterized by vivid consciousness; it is like a well lighted room with its doors and windows thrown open. In dreams, our mind is characterized by hazy consciousness; it is like a room, having mellow subdued light, with heavily screened doors and windows. In deep sleep, darkness reigns in our mind; it then becomes like a room with its doors shut and window blinds drawn fully down. Or to vary the illustration, in deep sleep, as if the magic lantern which shows the vivid many-colored pictures of the waking state, the twilight scenes of dreams is covered up, and its light has no object to shine upon.

In deep sleep though darkness prevails in our mind, yet the light of our self is not put out. With the advent of deep sleep our self, the abode of the light of consciousness, does not disappear, but as there is no activity of the mind and the senses, and as no sense impressions or images are presented to it for illumination, so there is an apparent cessation of consciousness. The light of our self shines on even in deep sleep like the light of the magic

lantern when its lens is capped. For, if our self were put out in deep sleep, we could never say, when we get up from it. "I slept soundly; I had no disturbance." Our philosophers say that such utterance indicating some memory of past experience proves the existence of the self even in deep sleep. It is not that consciousness disappears in that state, but it has darkness for its object. It makes darkness perceptible. And we can well understand that if our self be really put out in deep sleep, we can never remember incidents that happened before we slept. For, owing to the extinction of our self in deep sleep, a new self we must have when we wake up, and this new self can never recognize the experiences of our old self that existed before deep sleep. So our self is not put out, does not die in deep sleep, but shines in Its own light, even when darkness overpowers our mind.

Our self is the golden thread that binds together the states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep--its continuity is never broken. Varying the illustration; we may say, our self is the eternal ground on which are painted at one time the bright pictures of waking, at another time, the hazy scenes of dreams, and at another time, nothing but the dark shadows of deep sleep. Our self shines through the variegated experiences of waking, even as the sun shines through the many colored glasses of a church window; our self shines through the confused hazy experiences of the dream state, even as the same luminary shines through the ground glasses of an art studio; our self shines on even in deep sleep. as the God of day does even when smoked glasses are fitted up in the windows of a house to obscure his light.

Just as God though one, regarded as the Creator, the Preserver, and the Destroyer of the universe, has three aspects, even so, our self though one, regarded from three points of view, has three aspects, viz., the self as shining upon our waking experience, the self as shining upon our dream experience, and the self as shining upon the darkness of our deep sleep. In the technical language of Vedanta, these three aspects of the self are called Viśva, Taijasa and Prājña.

The Analysis

A, U, and M (Akāra, Ukāra. and Makāra) represent these three aspects of the self. A stands for the self as shining upon our waking experience; U stands for the self as shining upon our dreams, and M stands for the self as shining upon the darkness of our deep sleep. And very aptly do these three component sounds of AUM symbolize the three aspects of the self. For, A is the simplest of all sounds. In uttering it, we open our mouth wide, our mouth which acts as a resonator to the sound-vibrations assumes the shape of a funnel. The sound is emitted freely by our throat. When we utter U, we produce the sound in the same way as when we utter A. Only we change the form of the resonator. In uttering U, we make our mouth assume the shape of a bottle with a short neck; this we do by closing up our mouth a little by moving our lips. So the sound of U may be said to be produced out of the sound of A by the changing of the shape of the mouth. Therefore, aptly does U symbolize our self as shining upon our dreams; for, have we not seen that our dreams are created out of the experiences of our waking state? And in dreams, in our mind. comes a twilight of consciousness midway between the clear light of waking and the dark-ness of deep sleep. In uttering AUM, we utter first A with open mouth; we utter U with partially closed mouth; then when we come to utter M, our mouth is closed, and the effort of uttering the syllable is ended. As U, the sound intermediate between A and M, symbolizes our self as shining upon our dreams, dreams in which we experience all things in twilight as it were. So M aptly symbolizes our self as shining upon our deep sleep, deep sleep in which a temporary darkness overpowers our mind, and the activities which characterized it in waking and dreams are ended.

There is a fourth state of mind besides waking, dreaming, and deep sleep, a state in which there exist neither the distractions of waking or dreaming, nor the darkness of deep sleep. It is a state in which our self illuminates our mind with a celestial light, and the mind sees the glory of the self in supreme bliss. The nature of this state cannot be de-scribed by any man. It is a state which a blessed few, the spiritually perfect, attain by meditation; the ineffable joy of such attainment is incommunicable by language. Our great master Sri Ramakrishna used to say: One can never describe the experience of this blessed state, just as a dumb man can never describe his dreams. Though indescribable, it is none the less real; nay, sages and saints speak of it in the highest language, and point it out to us as the goal of

our spiritual endeavors. The self as revealed in this fourth state is symbolized by that indefinable unmanifest sound--those inaudible air-waves, from which the sounds of A, U, and M rise and into which they melt away.

We have seen that when we contemplate the objective world--the visible universe and the changes going on everywhere in it--we conclude that there is God, the one Immutable Being, behind these changes, that He may be called the Creator, the Preserver, and the Destroyer of the Universe; and that AUM symbolizes the impersonal as well as these three personal aspects of the Deity. We have seen also that when we contemplate the subjective world--the various states of our mind--we find that before our self are presented three ordinary states, viz., waking, dreaming and deep sleep, and a fourth one called Turīya in which the real nature of the self is realized by our mind, and that the different aspects of the self as revealed in these states are symbolized by AUM. Now, there naturally rises a question as to the relation existing between God and our self, between the principle underlying the outer universe of nature and the principle underlying the inner universe of our mental experiences, between the basis of the macrocosm and the basis of the microcosm. Are God and our self two independent beings? Or, is there any connection between them? Or are they really one?

A philosophic system that claims to give us an Insight into the nature of the ultimate reality must answer these questions.

Vedanta says, our self has no existence apart from God. God and our self are really one. The identity of God and our self, Vedanta expresses by various formulae of which the one commonly used is SOHAM--"I Am That." AUM symbolizes also the important doctrine of Vedanta embodied in this formula.

Soham

I told you that AUM may be spelt as OM. O is a long vowel which is formed by the union of A and U, according to the rules of Sanskrit grammar. OM or AUM is derived from

SOHAM. If you remove S (Sakāra) and HA (Hakāra and Akāra) from SOHAM we get OM. So OM or AUM is a contracted form of SOHAM. Such derivation by contraction is in harmony with the genius of the Sanskrit language. **So when we utter AUM, not only do we signify God, not only do we signify our self, but we signify also the identity of God and our self.**

But many will ask, how can this doctrine of Vedanta--the doctrine of the identity of God and man--be accepted by sane persons? "I am That!" "I am God!" How can man, a tiny creature, crawling, as it were, in the corner of this globe, whose magnitude is as that of a bubble compared with the vast sea of the universe in which it exists--how can man, in soundness of mind, identify himself with God, the source of universe? Helpless in childhood, restrained by superiors in boyhood, slave of passion in youth, weak and subject to ailments in old age, can man assert his unity with the Highest? God is Omnipotent: by his command the spheres of heaven smoothly move in their orbits; the sun and the moon rise and set at their appointed hours; the seasons roll and trees bear flowers and fruits; the rivers bring water from the hidden stores of the mountains; man receives these and count-less other blessings at God's hands. Should he, forgetting his insignificance, his entire dependence on God for these blessings, for his life and happiness, fill himself with an unnatural pride, and blasphemously assert his oneness with Him? God is Omniscient--at one glance He sees the secrets of all hearts; what is the range of man's knowledge? For centuries he blunders on, and then discovering some fact of nature, forms a theory of certain things for his guidance. After that, he sits down in satisfaction, thinking that he has found out a truth and built a correct theory. Lo, after sometime, another fact forces itself upon his notice, and his old fondly-cherished theory is exploded! In this way, falling again and again to errors, he is somehow groping his way to towards Truth. How can man be one with Omniscient Being? God is perfectly just, infinitely merciful; man's notion of justice, man's compassion are so undeveloped that he deprives even his brother of his due, and reduces even his near relations to beggary. All vices noticeable in this world, all crimes committed in it, owe their origin to man's injustice and hard-heartedness. Could there be war, could there be theft and robbery, could there be drunkenness and prostitution, if man's moral sense were highly developed? Ignorant, highly selfish, with all brutal instincts still raging in his breast, man often shows his

likeness more to a devil than to a God. Can man, whose nature is so imperfect, so full of vile proclivities, say, without falling into the grossest delusions, that he is one with God? "I am That!" One must be a megalomaniac to say so.

Logical and plausible though these remarks may at first appear to us, yet, on close examination, they turn out to be pointless, for they are based upon a total misconception of the doctrine of Vedanta.

When Vedanta teaches the identity of God and man's self by such expressions as "SOHAM, AHAM BRAHMĀSMI"--"I am That," or "TAT TVAM ASI" -- "Thou art That," you should not take their literal but implied signification. In our everyday life, we are very cautious not to construe always literally the words and phrases used by others. Much more should we be cautious in interpreting the language of philosophy in this way.

Expressions and Impressions

If any Sanskrit word or expression refuses to bear literal interpretation, we arrive at its implied meaning by following one or other of the three methods pointed out by Sanskrit grammarians. Let me give you three examples to illustrate these three methods: (1) When anyone says, "**Gaṅgāyām Ghoṣaḥ**," the village of milkmen is situated in the Ganges, we do not take the literal meaning of these words. For, no village can actually exist on the waters of the Ganges. By the word "Ganges", we do not understand the watercourse, but either of the banks of the river. Thus, in this example, the word "Ganges" is used to denote something quite different from It. (2) When a man gives an order to his servant saying, "**Kākebhyo Dadhi Rakshet**," "Protect the curds from the crows,"-- the servant takes only the implied meaning of his master's words. If he, literally construing his master's language, prevents only crows from eating away the curds, but allows cats and other animals to consume them, he is considered a fool. By the word "crows" he should understand not only crows, but also other animals likely to eat off the curds. Thus in this second example, to the word "crows" is given a more extended signification than it usually bears. (3) On meeting a certain man, when I say, "**So'yam Devadattaḥ**"-- "This is that Devadatta whom I saw before. In strict logic, I identify

two individuals. For, I saw Devadatta sometime ago in a town, say, Madras, different from Bangalore, where I meet him now. His dress, the weight of his body, the expression of his countenance, the thoughts and feelings of his mind, at the present moment, are quite different from these traits of his when he was in Madras. Then he was dressed in European style; he weighed 150 lbs; there was laughter in his face; his heart was full of joy, and he was forming projects of engaging in lucrative business. Now, he has put on poor Indian dress, he weighs 120 lbs., deep gloom has settled on his countenance, his heart is full of misery, and thoughts of his poverty are gnawing at it day and night; how can the Devadatta of Madras be one with the Devadatta of Bangalore? Logically speaking these are different men; yet your common sense says that they are one. Your common sense rejects from the complex idea of the Devadatta as seen then in Madras, as, all ideas of his dress, weight, expression of face, temporary thoughts and feelings. It rejects also in the same manner from the complex idea of the Devadatta as seen now in Bangalore, similar ideas about his dress, weight, expression of face, thoughts and feelings; and taking merely the personality of the Devadatta into consideration, concludes that the Devadatta of Madras and the Devadatta of Bangalore are really one. Behind so many changes, so many accidents, your common sense grasps the unity, the unchanging features of body and mind which form the personality of the Devadatta. Therefore when I say, "This is that Devadatta whom I saw before," you take the implied meaning of my expression. You reject the variable traits of the Devadatta seen on two occasions and take only the invariable traits, and so arrive at the true meaning of my words.

Adopting the mode of interpretation illustrated by this third example, you should interpret such Vedantic expressions as 'I am That,' 'Thou art That,' "I am God," Thou art God."

What ideas have you of God and of your own self? Whatever those ideas may be, they are surely not simple, but highly complex. Analyze those complex ideas, find out what elementary ideas go to form them; trace those elementary ideas to their causes; and thus see whether those ideas have real connection with the nature of God and of your own self.

You think God to be all-powerful. But I ask you, have you not arrived at this idea of God by ascribing to Him some human attributes? You have an idea of your own power, as you are capable of moving various bodies and overcoming obstacles that may rise in the path of your activity; you magnify this characteristic of yours infinitely in your mind and characterize God by it; and so you call God all-powerful. You regard God as Omniscient. You know only a few things of the universe. Your sphere of knowledge is limited. The sphere of the unknown which lies beyond it always excites your wonder. Aware of the limited powers of your mind, you picture to yourself a mind that can know everything, near and remote, past and present, and ascribing such a mind to God, you call Him Omniscient. You regard God as a perfectly just, a perfectly merciful Being. I ask you, how have you got your ideas of justice and mercy? Have you not got them from your own human experience? Are they not based upon human relations? In the social relations of mankind, these virtues are immensely valued. But for justice and mercy our life would be unbearable. In this world, we too often come across instances of injustice and hard-heartedness. So our heart longs for perfect justice and perfect mercy. Not finding the perfection of these virtues in men, we ascribe them in perfection to God and regard God as a perfectly just and a perfectly merciful Being. Thus, on examining your idea of God, you will find that you think of Him in terms derived from human experience.

However necessary this complex idea of God as an Omnipotent, Omniscient, perfectly just and perfectly merciful Being may be for the spiritual development of man, yet it cannot be denied that this idea is reached by a kind of subtle anthropomorphism. God is immutable, infinite; His nature is indescribable; He is the Absolute; nothing exists besides Him. The epithets borrowed either from human experience, such as the perfectly just and the perfectly merciful, or from the observation of the phenomenal universe, such as the creator, the preserver, the destroyer, etc., can never represent God as He really is. They tincture the pure idea of God with the colors of human life and the changeable world in which that life is manifested.

Analyze now the idea of your self. Your idea of your self is a very complex one. You think yourself to be the son of certain parents, a native of a certain country: you regard

yourself as rich or poor, occupying a high or a low place in society; you think that you are stout or lean, strong or weak, with sound or unsound physical organs, educated or uneducated. So ideas of the circumstances of your birth of your wealth, rank, state of body, state of mind, and thousand other similar ideas go to form the complex notion of your self. But a little thought will reveal to you the fact that these ideas which are constituents of the complex notion you have of your self have no real connection with you. You are neither one with your body, nor one with your senses, nor one with your mind, nor in any way connected with your external circumstances. It is not that you are the son of such and such parents, but your body was born as the fruit of their wedlock; it is not that you are stout or lean, but stoutness or leanness is noticeable in your body; it is not that you are keen-sighted or short-sighted, but your eyes are strong or weak; it is not that you are educated or uneducated, but your intellect is developed or undeveloped; it is not that you are rich or poor, but your wealth is large or small. Your nature is pure simple consciousness. Ascribing to yourself the characteristics of your body, senses, and mind, you have constructed a complex idea. The constituents of this idea owe their origin to things unconnected with yourself and obscure your real nature. Buried under a mountain of foreign ideas, your real nature rarely attracts your notice.

Remove, therefore, from the complex notion you have of God, all such ideas as you have borrowed from human experience such ideas as God is Omnipotent, Omniscient, perfectly just and perfectly merciful, etc., and also such as God is the Creator, the Preserver, and the Destroyer of the universe, etc. Seek the real nature of the Deity overlooking these attributes imported from the world and human life; you will find that God is essentially one; He is Infinite, Immutable, the Eternal Abode of consciousness.

Remove in the same way from the notion you have of your self all extraneous ideas -- ideas derived from your body, senses and mind, and bodily surroundings; seek your true nature; you will find that your self is pure simple consciousness remaining unchanged in the midst of countless changes taking place in your body, senses, and mind; shining uninterruptedly upon the vivid, variegated experiences of waking, upon the phantasmagoric scenes of dreams, and making the darkness of deep sleep perceptible. This unchangeable pure simple consciousness, free from all accidents of thoughts, feelings, and volitions caused by

the changes of your mind, this consciousness, which is your true nature, is essentially divine. It is God's nature that is manifesting as consciousness through the aggregate of body, mind, and senses you call your own. As you are identical neither with your body nor with your senses, nor with your mind, nor even with the aggregate of them, as the very essence of your nature is consciousness, so you are one with God. "That thou art." "Thou art God." There is only the Immutable Infinite God behind your body, senses and mind.

To use an illustration of our great master Sri Ramakrishna, when you peel off layer after layer the skins of an onion with a view to get at its core, you find nothing but a little ether-filled space, which is one with the infinite space existing everywhere. Even so, when you get at the core of your Being by mental analysis, removing all extraneous ideas which obscure it, you find God; God who is within you and outside you, who is the Infinite Eternal Abode of consciousness, and in whom all things live, move, and have their being. AUM, as I have told you signifies this important teaching of Vedanta about the essential identity of God and man's self.

So, when you shall pronounce AUM, there will be rise [!] in your mind the idea of God, the immutable principle underlying Nature, the idea of your self, the immutable basis of your mental experiences, and the idea of the identity of God and your self. Thus the idea of the All-pervading Infinite God will be vividly brought to your mind by the utterance of this sacred syllable. Utter therefore AUM repeatedly while you worship. While you utter it, let your mind, filled with the ideas implied by it, fix itself in rapture on HIM who is within you and outside you, and who is your true self. You can find no greater Mantra, no better speech symbol of the Supreme Being. So one of the Upanishads, in its inimitable language declares:

'I tell you briefly that which all the Vedas consider as the supreme aim of human life, to make men attain which they enjoin on them the discipline of penance, and to realize which disciples live with their masters: It is expressed by AUM'.

Source: *Whispers of the soul and other discourses*. (Published 1927), Sri Ramakrishna Mutt, Ulsoor, Sanoalore.

Indeed, this syllable OM, is Brahman. This syllable is also the highest. Having known this syllable, one attains whatever one desires.

This support is the best, this support is the highest. Knowing this support, one is adored in the world of brahmaloka.

Kaṭhopanishad.

Om̐kāra

Swamiī Sivann̐da

OM is your real birthright. It is the property and spiritual heritage of all people Throughout the world.

It is the word of power. When chanted with faith and rhythm, it fills one with spiritual Strength, new vigor and energy.

OM is everything. It is the name or symbol of God, Ishwara or Brahman. OM is your real name. It covers the threefold experience of man and stands for the phenomenal worlds also. This sense-universe has been projected from OM. The world exists and dissolves in OM.

OM is formed of the letters A, U and M. The letter A represents the physical plane; U represents the mental and astral planes, the world of spirits and all heavens; and M represents the deep sleep state and the waking state [?], and even all that is unknown and beyond the reach of the intellect. The sacred. monosyllable therefore represents every-thing.

OM is the basis of life, thought and intelligence. All words that denote objects are centered in OM. Hence, the whole world. has come from OM, rests in OM and dissolves in OM. As soon as you sit for meditation. chant OM loudly, three, six or twelve times. This will drive away all worldly thoughts and remove the tossing of the mind. Then repeat it mentally.

Neophytes on the path of **Jñāna Yoga** should do **Trāṭaka** on OM with open eyes in the beginning for about three months. Then they should visualize OM with closed eyes. Visualization of OM means calling up a clear mental image of it by closing the eyes. They should repeat it mentally with feeling and meaning, and make the ear listen to the sound so that the mind may not run outside to hear other sounds.

Place a picture of OM in front of you in your meditation room. Concentrate on it. Do Tratak with open eyes, steadily gazing at it without winking, until tears flow profusely. Associate the ideas of infinity, eternity and immortality with the symbol of OM. This is both Saguna and Nirguna meditation--meditation with and without attributes. Always keep a picture of Om before your mind and worship it. Burn incense and camphor and offer flowers. This is a suitable practice for modern educated people.

The hum of bees, the sweet song of the bird, the seven musical notes, the sound of the flute, lute and kettle-drum, the roar of a lion, the song of a lover, the neigh of a horse, the hiss of a cobra, the cry of a baby, and the clap of an audience--all these are only emanations of Omkāra. OM is the embodiment of the Vedas.



The **Śaṅḍilya Upanishad** declares: “One should meditate on that monosyllable, the Supreme Light. The Praṇava is the origin of these three letters--A, U, and M. Drawing up the air through the **Iḍā** or the left nostril for a count of sixteen units, the aspirant should meditate on the letter A during that time; retaining the inspired air for a count for sixty-four units, he should meditate on the letter U; he should then exhale the inspired air for a count of thirty-two units, meditating on the letter M. He should practice this in the above order over and over again. This practice will bestow great peace and inner strength. The Kuṇḍalinī will be awakened and the practicing will soon enter into **Nirvikalpa Samādhi**.”

Those who do Japa of OM go to Brahman; it turns their vision upwards and so it is significantly termed Omkāra. By prostration to OM or Brahman the aspirants are taken to Para Brahman. OM is therefore called Praṇava.

The student on the path of Vedanta should do Japa of OM till the end of his life. The pronunciation of OM is of three kinds—short, long and elongated with three separate units. Through the short repetition all sins are destroyed; through the long one liberation is attained; through the elongated one all psychic powers are obtained.

The **Gītā** says: "Uttering the monosyllable OM, the Brahman, Remembering Me, he who goeth forth, abandoning the body, he attains the Supreme Goal

The **Māṇḍūkya Upanishad** starts with these words 'OM is the word; all this is an explanation of Its meaning and power, of its past, present and future. All indeed is OM, even all that is beyond the triple concept of time.'

In the **Dhyānabindu Upanishad** you will find: "Having made Ātmā, the lower sacrificial wood and Praṇava the upper, one should behold God in secret through the practice of churning, which is meditation"

Having taken the bow supplied by the sacred Upanishads (the great weapon) and fixed the arrow sharpened by incessant meditation and, having drawn it with the mind fixed on Brahman, hit O gentle youth, at the mark, the immortal Brahman!

The Dhyānabindu Upanishad of Sāma Veda

The letter OM should be contemplated upon as Brahman by all who aspire for emancipation. Earth, fire, the Rig Veda, the earth plane and Brahmā the creator, are all absorbed when the first letter A, the first part of the Praṇava OM, becomes absorbed. The sky, the Yajur Veda, air, the astral plane and Vishṇu the preserver, are absorbed when the middle letter U, the second part of the Praṇava, becomes absorbed. Dyur, the sun, the Sāma Veda, offerings to God, and Shiva, the destroyer are all absorbed when the unit M, the third part of the Praṇava, becomes absorbed

Oṃkāra is the cause of the Vedas. It is the cause of the three worlds with all the elements of that which is stationary and that which moves. The short accent of OM burns all sins; the long one is decayless and the bestower of prosperity. United with the half-metre [mātrā?] of OM, the Praṇava becomes the bestower of salvation. He is a knower of the Vedas who knows that the end, the **Ardhamātrā** of the Praṇava, should be worshiped (or recited) as uninterruptedly as the flow of oil and resounding as the sound of a bell.

One should contemplate on Oṃkāra as Īshvara, resembling an unshaken light, like the pericarp of the lotus of the heart. Taking in air through the left nostril and filling the lungs with it, one should deeply contemplate on Oṃkāra as being in the middle of the body, surrounded by encircling flames. Brahmā is said to be the inspiration of breath, Vishṇu its cessation, and Rudra its expiration. These are the deities of **Prāṇāyāma**.

One should practice restraint of breath as much as lies within one's capacity, along with the chanting of Oṃkāra, until it ceases completely. Those who look upon OM as the form of the Lord in all, shining like crores of suns, being alone, never going and coming, and being devoid of motion, are at last freed from sin. The thinking faculty, which is the author of such actions as creation, preservation and destruction of the three worlds, is then absorbed in the Supreme One. This is the highest state of Vishṇu.

Importance of OM

Praṇava or OM is the greatest of all mantras. It bestows direct liberation. All mantras begin with OM. It is their very life and soul. It precedes the Pañcākshara-Mantra, OM Namaḥ Śivāya, and the Ashtākshara, OM Namō Nārāyaṇāya. Every hymn and every Upanishad begins with OM. The Gāyatrī begins with OM. The oblations offered to the various Gods are preceded by the chanting of OM.

The greatness and glory of Oṃkāra cannot be adequately described. Even Ādiśeṣa, Pārvatī and eminent sages failed to describe the greatness of the Praṇava.

OM exists in every sound. All languages and sounds come from OM. The essence of the four Vedas is OM only. A, U and M cover the entire range of sound vibrations. A starts from the root of the tongue; U proceeds from the middle, and M comes from the end through the closing of the lips. He who chants or repeats OM actually repeats the sacred books of the whole world. OM is the source, the womb of all the religions and scriptures throughout the world. OM, Amen and Amin are all one. They represent Truth or Brahman, the one Existence.

Worship cannot be performed without OM. OM is both Saguṇa and Nirguṇa, and also Sākāra (with form), and Nirākāra (without form).

The Place of OM in Incantations

The Pañcha Shānti refers to the five kinds of incantations, each ending with the word Shānti (peace). Before each Shānti is the word OM. As such, OM bestows peace, calmness, tranquility and serenity. This symbol encompasses the entire universe and all within it, and it means something more. A is the first letter of the alphabet in any language; MA is the last syllable in Sanskrit. Thus, it means everything from A to Z, the alpha and omega of everything. It represents everything from beginning to end and, as there are other parts, it includes everything we can imagine and something more too. As such, it is a fit symbol to be meditated upon. No other symbol can span so much in its embrace.

Composition of PRAṆAVA

The Māṇḍūkya Upanishad speaks of the Praṇava as made up of A, U, M and the Ardha-mātrā. When applied to Prakriti and Purusha these become eight in number. Another Upanishad makes it sixteen through the application of the four stages-- gross, subtle, the seed, and superconscious state. These become thirty-two through the application of Prakriti and Purusha, but the number 128 (and then 256) denotes the parts of Praṇava. Of these, the first 96 include the 96 elements. These are composed of the five vital currents [?], the five organs of knowledge and action, the five sounds [?], mind, intelligence, the five great elements, the

three bodies, Lae [the?] three states of consciousness, the six energies of man (passions), the elements of the body, the three guṇas (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas) and so on.

The primary meaning of the sacred Praṇava is the Supreme One, whose nature is undivided existence, knowledge and bliss Absolute (Sat Chit Ānanda). The Praṇava helps man to reach the other shore of the ocean of Saṃsāra.

Sixteen States of Consciousness

There are sixteen states of consciousness. They are made up by inter-combining the four primary states of Consciousness--Jāgrat (waking state), Svapna (dream state), Sushupti (deep sleep state), and Turīya (superconscious state) with one another to get six-teen states. These are: Jāgrat-Jāgrat (waking in waking), Jāgrat-Svapna (waking in dream), Jāgrat-Sushupti (waking in deep sleep), Jāgrat-Turīya (waking in super-conscious state), and so on. The sixteen states, through further differentiation, become 256. The 256, through the differentiation of the phenomenal and noumenal, become 512. To realize these 512 states of consciousness is very difficult and not possible for everyone. Some can attain only a few. The attainment of the last state of consciousness is complete freedom.

Jāgrat-Jāgrat is 'that state in which there are no such thoughts as "this" and "mine" regarding visible things. In Jāgrat-Svapna all ideas of name and form are relinquished. This is preceded by the realization of the nature of Satchidānda. In Jāgrat-Sushupti, there is no idea except that of Self knowledge. In Jāgrat-Turīya, the conviction becomes firm that the three states (gross, subtle and causal) are false.

In Svapna Jāgrat, there comes the conviction "that even the activities proceeding from the astral plane, owing to causes set in motion prior to the action, do not bind the Self, when awareness of the physical plane is destroyed." In Svapna-Svapna, there is no seer, seen and sight when ignorance is destroyed. In Svapna-Sushupti state, by the process of intense subtle thinking, the modifications of one's mind become merged in pure know-ledge. In Svapna-Turīya, the innate bliss pertaining to the individual self is lost through the attainment of

universal bliss. That state is called Sushupti-Jāgrat, in which the experience of Self-bliss takes the shape of universal intelligence through the rising of the modifications of the mind. In Sushupti-Svapna one identifies oneself with the modifications of the mind, long immersed in the experience of internal bliss. When one acquires perfect oneness of knowledge, which is above these mental modifications and above the realization of the abstract condition of God, one is said to be in Sushupti-Sushupti. In Sushupti-Turīya, the one pure, undivided Essence manifests of Its own accord. When the enjoyment of this is natural in the waking state, one is said to be in Turīya-Jāgrat. Turīya-Svapna is difficult of attainment. It is a state in which the enjoyment of the Essence becomes natural even in dream. The higher state of Turīya-Sushupti is still more difficult of attainment. In this state, even in deep sleep, the undivided Essence clearly manifests itself to the Yogi. The highest state is Turīya-Turīya, where even the idea of the Essence disappears. This state is beyond cognizance.

These sixteen states are difficult of attainment, but the attempt has to be made. The sixteen parts of AUM are acknowledged as forms of the universal Brahmic Consciousness; they represent the sixteen states of consciousness mentioned above. The 112 remaining (out of 128) are only subdivisions of the seven stages of knowledge and represent the seven shades of each of these sixteen. Here, the 128 states, pertain to Nirguṇa Brahman (Brahman without form) and not to Saṅguṇa Brahman (Brahman with form).

You may not attain the sixteen states. Yet, you can attempt a few.

Purpose of the Sacred

Monosyllable

This sacred monosyllable is thus the means of liberation from the bonds of matter and leads one stage by stage to the highest level of bliss. That is why so much importance is attached to it, and why every mantra commences with it. The concentrated essence of Hinduism is manifest in this great monosyllable. It is suitable for the lowest as well as the highest and most advanced intellect, for the celibate as well as the sanyāsin.

One may raise the question as to why women are prohibited from uttering this mantra. Women are highly emotional and their intellect cannot grasp subtle truths. Further, most Hindu women marry; they do not remain single. The scriptures maintain that the merits of the husband are divided equally between himself and his wife, but his sins do not affect her. Thus, the scriptures have given her a high place. She can attain salvation without any difficulty simply by following her husband. So, these difficult practices are not prescribed for her. Nevertheless, if a woman has a highly developed intellect, she may also take up such practices. She can also repeat the Praṇava. An example of such a woman was Chudalai². The prohibition is only for an ordinary woman who benefits from her husband's merit.

OM is your real birthright. It is the property and spiritual heritage of all people throughout the world. It is the word of power. When chanted with faith and rhythm, it fills one with spiritual strength, new vigor and energy. It brings inspiration and intuition and elevates the mind to spiritual heights of ineffable splendor and glory. OM is your spiritual food and tonic. It is filled with divine potency. It is your constant companion and savior. Meditate on OM regularly. Live in OM. Inhale and exhale OM. Rest peacefully in OM. Take shelter in OM. May OM guide and protect you!

Meditation on OM

Retire into your meditation room. Sit in Padmāsana, Siddhāsana, Svastikāsana or Sukhāsana. Relax your body and mind and close your eyes. Concentrate your gaze in the space between your eyebrows. Repeat OM mentally with the attitude that you are the one Self of all beings. This mental attitude and feeling is very important. Silence your mind and repeat mentally:

All pervading ocean of light, I am OM, OM, OM.

Infinity I am OM. OM. OM.

All-pervading infinite light. I am OM, OM, OM.

² Cūḍālā of Yogavāsīṣṭha?

Brahman, I am OM. OM, OM.
Omnipotent, I am OM, OM. OM.
Omniscient, I am OM, OM. OM.
All bliss, I am OM. OM. OM.
Satchidānanda. I am OM, OM. OM.
All purity, I am OM, OM, OM.

All superimposed ideas will dissolve. The knots of ignorance will be rent asunder. The thin veil will be pierced. You will rest in the Satchidānanda state. You will attain the highest knowledge, bliss, realization and the goal of life.

It is not at all difficult to have realization of Brahman. You can have it within the twinkling of an eye as Rājā Janaka had. If you practice earnestly, intensely and constantly, you are bound to succeed in two or three years.

Today, there are many "talking Brahmins". Such flowery talk cannot turn one into Brahman. Only constant, intense and earnest **sādhana** can give one direct Brahmic realization in which Brahman can be perceived as clearly as one sees a solid, white wall.

Fruit of Meditation on OM

In the **Kaṭha Upanishad**, Yama says to Nachiketā: "The goal (word) which all the Vedas speak of (praise), which all penances proclaim and, desiring which one leads the life of a Brahmachārī--that goal (word) I will briefly tell thee: It is OM.

"This word is verily Brahman. This word is verily the highest; he who knows this word verily obtains whatever he desires.

"This word is the manifested Brahman. This word is also the highest Brahman. This word is a substitute for both of them. Whoever worships this word as Brahman attains the manifested or the unmanifested Brahman".

In the **Praśna Upanishad**, Satyakāma, the son of Śibi, questions Pippalāda: “Oh, Bhagavan! If someone among men meditates here until death on the monosyllable OM, what world does he obtain by that?”

Pippalāda replies to him: “Oh, Satyakama! OM is the higher and the lower Brahman. Therefore, he who knows it by this means attains either of them.

“If he meditates on the Mātrā A, then, being enlightened by that, he comes quickly to earth. The Rig Veda verses lead him to the world of men and, being endowed there with austerity, celibacy and faith, he enjoys greatness.

“But he who meditates on its second Mātrā only, he becomes one with the mind. He is led up by the Yajur Veda verses to the sky, the world of the moon. Having enjoyed greatness there, he again returns.

“But if he again meditates on the highest Purusha with this syllable OM of three Mātrās, he becomes united with the bright sun. As a snake is freed from its skin, so is he freed from sin. He is led up by the Sāma Veda verses to the world of Brahman, and from Him, full of life, he learns to see the all-pervading Highest Person. When applied separately the three Mātrās are mortal; but connected with one another, they are not wrongly employed. When properly employed in all the internal, external and middle functions, the knower trembles not.”

The sacred word is the bow; the mind is the arrow; and Brahman is the target. Brahman is to be hit by one whose thoughts are concentrated. Then he will enter the target. He will become of the nature of Brahman. Just as a lump of ice becomes one with the water of the pail, so also he will

*Source: Science of Yoga,
Divine Life Society, 570,
Hills, Durban, South Africa.*



become one with Brahman.

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Potencies of sound and of vāc

The potencies of sound and of vāc, the human voice, have nowhere else been so profoundly investigated as in India. The Aum vibration that reverberates throughout the universe (the "Word" or "voice of many waters" of the Bible) has three manifestations or guṇas, those of creation, preservation, and destruction (Taittirīya Upanishad 1:8). Each time a man utters a word he puts into operation one of the three qualities of Aum. This is the lawful reason behind the injunction of all scriptures that man should speak the truth.

Paramahaṃsa Yogānanda

THE SYMBOLISM OF OM.

Swami Mukhyananda

**If one knows the symbolism of Om,
and all the ideas it represents,
to him is open all the Divine knowledge,
which he may realize with the help of a Guru.**

OM is primarily an auditory or sound symbol. It represents in a nutshell all the four planes (**Jāgrat, Svapna. Sushupti and Turīya**) of the supreme infinite divine Reality both macrocosmically and microcosmically, for purposes of meditation to help visualize and realize their unity in life. The symbolism is explained here briefly.

All our experiences of entities and ideas in all the states of consciousness are represented by words, and they are so fused together that we cannot recall or think of any entity or idea without words. Words are made up of unit sounds, such as are denoted by A to z of the alphabet in English. With these sounds, we form all our words and concepts. So, A to Z can be in a way a symbol of the knowledge of the whole of Reality. For example: we say, 'He knows from A to Z of a particular thing'. But the Roman alphabet is incomplete and defective. For, in this alphabet system, the same letter represents different sounds in different contexts, and more than one letter is used to represent certain sounds. Its arrangement too is casual and unscientific, and its pronunciation and use in words is erratic.

In Sanskrit, each unit sound is represented by a single definite letter. And the pronunciation and spelling of the letters are always the same. For example, in Sanskrit, the con-sonant 'K' (hal k in Devanagari) with the vowel 'a' (in original) added (as in Karma) is

pronounced as 'Ka' and spelt also as 'Ka' (in original) only. But in English we pronounce it as 'Ka' and spell it as Kay-Ye. The Sanskrit alphabet is arranged in accordance with the order of origination of sounds in the vocal system, commencing from the larynx with the opening of the mouth, passing through the throat and ending with the closing of the lips, by the contact of the different parts of the mouth with the tongue. Between the opening and closing of the mouth, we produce all the words which represent all our experiences and concepts. When we open the mouth, we utter 'a' (pronounced like 'o' in come) and when we close the lips, we utter 'm' (again like 'm' in come). Thus, between 'a' and 'm' come all the other sounds and words that are uttered. Inserting in the middle, the vowel 'u' (like 'u' in full), which rolls through the throat over the whole tongue, we cover the entire beginning, middle, and end of all words symbolically. In Sanskrit when 'a' and 'u' are combined, it gives us the sound 'o' as in go, and adding 'm' to it we get the 'OM'. Now, the 'a', 'u', 'm', known as mātrās (phonetic constituents) of 'OM', are symbolic not only of the beginning, middle, and end of all the words, and of the entities and concepts represented by them, but of all the worlds (**Lokas**) as well for purposes of meditation. They represent the three planes of **Bhūḥ**, **Bhuvah**, and **Svah** and the corresponding microcosmic states. When 'OM' is uttered mystically, the inarticulate humming sound that lingers as after a gong is sounded), designated as the **Ardha-mātrā** or **amātra** (half or non-**Mātrā**), known also as the **Anāhata-dhvani** (Unstruck sound or the Eternal **Nāda**), represents the Absolute beyond the worlds (**Lokottara**) or the Fourth Plane (**Turiya**). Thus, 'AUM' is symbolic of entire existence, phenomenal as well as the noumenal, Macro-cosmic as well as Microcosmic, Personal **Ísvara** as well as Impersonal or Transpersonal Brahman **Ātman**. Hence, 'OM', called also as **Praṇava**, is considered as the fitting designation or signifier of the infinite supreme Divine Reality (**Tasya vācakaḥ Praṇavaḥ**), and is held to be the holiest universal Name. Hence, 'OM' is also characterized as the **Śabda Brahman** (Sound Brahman or Brahman in the form of Sound or the Word). 'OM' being the universal cosmic sound (the Logos), the totality of all sounds, it is called **Praṇava** (the primordial reverberating sound which fills the Universe), from which, modified as the **Ākāsha** (Space/Matter), the subtle and gross universe with all its entities and beings, evolves in stages. Often, 'OM Tat Sat' (OM that Existence or Reality) is uttered to indicate the transcendental aspect of Divine Existence. (Cf. **OM—Tat sad iti nirdeśo Brahmanas trividhaḥ smrtaḥ. Gītā--XVII.23**).

The OM (AUM) as an Audio visual symbol

The figure of 'OM' given on the cover-page of this issue is a graphic symbol of it for ritualistic purposes and to indicate its correct utterance in Mantra combinations as **Bījākshara**. In literary usage, 'OM' is written in one of these two forms: $_ \ast _$ or $_ \ast _$. The symbolic form of it is: $_ \ast _$.³ In this, the front two curves, one above and the other below in the figure, represent 'a' and 'u', the **Bhūr Loka** (the gross plane), and the **Bhuvar Loka** (the subtle plane) respectively. The curve projecting from their middle resembling the trunk of an elephant represents 'm', the **Suvar loka** (the causal plane), whence the Praṇava (the Logos) issues forth reverberating, as if from the trunk of an elephant. The small curve with the dot above the curved trunk, known as the Chandra bindu, signifying in Sanskrit the semi-nasal sound, represents the inarticulate lingering sound, when 'OM' is pronounced mystically as prescribed. It is just like the lingering sound after a gong is sounded. It stands for the Absolute Words, and the 'Worlds', which are their concretised aspects, issue forth unceasingly from the cosmic 'Omkāra' (Sound 'OM') like waves in the sea.

This graphic symbol of 'OM' was, in course of time, further concretised and personified for purposes of **Upāsana** into the figure of the Deity Gajānana (The Elephant-Faced Deity: **Gaja**--elephant, **Ānana**--face) or Gaṇeśa (The Lord of all Bhūta-gaṇas or Cosmic Elements: Īśa: Lord or Ruler of the Bhūtas or elements, Gaṇa group). All the holy and auspicious attributes and functions that were associated with 'Om' from the Vedic times were transferred to Him. His figure is a philosophic symbol to which suitable mythology was later added to explain His figure popularly. We shall not go into the details of this highly interesting and profound cosmic symbolism here, but only hint at the fact that His pot-belly signifies that the whole **Brahmāṇḍa** is within Him and He stands transcending it. The similarity of the elephant face and the figure of the 'OM' is quite evident. He easily rides or controls the troublesome **Māyā**, represented by the small but mischievous mouse, His mount. All this is in keeping with the Hindu tradition of symbolically concretising and personifying abstract entities as already mentioned. Gaṇeśa is often referred to as **Omkārasvarūpa** (of the

form of 'OM'). We may also note here that in the Hindu pantheon, all the Deities have animals as their vehicles, signifying divine powers controlling animal tendencies.

AUM and Spiritual Practice

To help in spiritual practice (**Upāsana**), AUM, the phonetic constituents of 'OM', are identified with different types of Cosmic Triads, from the theistic to the philosophic and the mystic levels, for meditation purposes according to the need and development of the aspirant. Further, 'OM' being the **Praṇava** (Cosmic Sound), the Logos in the Divine Mind, it is from It that all the concepts of the universe and its entities arise and take shape as existent entities. By the mystic repetition of the 'OM', one attunes oneself to the Cosmic Mind and is lifted up spiritually. By connecting oneself mentally to the cosmic reservoir through **Upāsana**, one's mind becomes a conduit for the flow of inspiration from the Cosmic Mind. Hence, it is considered the holiest **Mantra** (mystic formula) for **Japa** (sacred repetition) and is, therefore, added at the beginning of all other **Mantras** used for **Japa**.

Let us take two examples to see how the symbolism works psychologically,

1. The script we use for any language is nothing but an artificially contrived arbitrary device—a set of symbols to record sounds. Still, it helps us to store knowledge, which in itself is non-material, in books. One who knows a language well and has learnt the particular script, to him is opened all the knowledge stored in all the books in that language, though he may still need the help of the learned. Similarly, if one knows, the symbolism of 'Om', and all the ideas it represents, to him is open all the Divine Knowledge, which he may realize with the help of a Guru.

2. Suppose we have forgotten the name of a person about whom we want to communicate to a friend. We begin to give various details and descriptions; still, it may not give an adequate or correct idea of the person. The friend's mind being in doubt, he does not feel any attraction to him. On the other hand, suppose we utter the name of a person, say, Sri

³ Blank spaces indicate letters in Devanāgarī. Sometimes we have put an * to denote the original script.

Ramakrishna or Jesus Christ, immediately in the mind of a person who has intimate knowledge about him, the cumulative effect of all his knowledge brings about a sense of love and reverence. Then, if the context needs, he may begin to recount all the details of that great life. Similarly, if a person has learnt all about the infinite supreme Divinity from the scriptures and the Guru and that 'OM' is Its designation, as soon as he utters 'OM', all the greatness of that Divinity and Its wonderful manifestations come to his mind with a cumulative force and uplifts him. Then he may begin to contemplate on the details intensely and intimately associating himself with It at all levels. This intimate in-tense contemplation is called Upāsana, which literally means 'sitting or placing oneself mentally near' to the object of meditation. The psychological law is **Yat dhyāyati tat bhavati** (whatever one contemplates or meditates upon intensely, that he becomes). The more one recalls the name of a person, whom he loves, the nearer one feels to him and clearer he visualizes him. Similarly, the more one repeats 'OM' with the requisite attitude, the more one recalls the infinite Supreme Divinity, and feels close to it. Ultimately, he realizes his essential identity with It, since he is, as we saw, potentially the microcosmic counterpart of It.

In ritualistic worship, the identification of the macrocosm and microcosm is mentally visualized by a process called **Nyāsa** which consists of touching the different parts of the body while uttering the words of the cosmic counterparts. In **Mānasa Pūjā** or Mental worship too symbolic identification is mentally contemplated.

Source: OM, Gāyatrī and Sandhyā

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AUM IN KREMLIN.

A week--long conference of the Global Forum of Spiritual Leaders and Parliamentarians on Human Survival was held at Moscow in January 1989. The world conference had a unique beginning with the chanting of AUM by a Hindu Swami from India and all others present on the occasion joined him in the Universal Prayer. It is all the more significant to note that AUM become the first religious chanting to be allowed at a conference attended by the Head of the State after about seventy years during which public practice of religion was suppressed in Soviet Russia. ED



PRAᅇAVA

(Om or Aum)

Swāmī Harshānanda

All sounds are included in Om. Hence the entire creation which proceeds from Vedic words or sounds, proceeds from the basic matrix of all sounds, viz., Om. Since God is the origin of this universe, Om and God are identical. Or, at least, Om is the best symbol of God.

The Author.

Praᅇava or OM is the universally accepted symbol of Hinduism. All sections, cults and groups honor this and use this. Even Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism have adopted this. It is both an auricular and a visual symbol for Brahman, the Absolute of Hindu philosophy and God of Hindu religion.

Literally, the word '**Praᅇava**' means 'that by which God is effectively praised'. It also means 'that which is ever new'. The word 'OM' is derived from the Sanskrit root 'ava', which has nineteen different senses. From these, it is possible to construe that OM represents that power which (1) is Omniscient; (2) rules over the entire universe; (3) protects one from the evils of life; (4) fulfills the cherished desires of its devotees and (5) destroys ignorance and gives enlightenment.

Praᅇava has been extolled highly in the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gītā as also in other scriptures. The **Gopathabrāhmaᅇa** of the Atharva Veda relates a story according to which Lord 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 recourse to the repetition of OM. The Yajur Veda exhorts us to try to realize Brahman through repeating and remembering OM. The Kaᅇhupanishad declares that OM is Parabrahman itself. The Muᅇᅇakopanishad advises the spiritual aspirant to meditate on the unity of the Ātman (the self) with Brahman (God) using OM for Japa. Sri Krishna avers in the Gātā that He is OM

among words and that all religious rites are started with the repetition of OM. Not only that, if anyone succeeds in reciting the word OM at the time of his death, simultaneously thinking of God, he will attain the highest Truth. The Yogasūtrars of Patañjali declare that Praṇava is the symbol of God and that one can get **samādhi** on Him by its repetition, and meditation on Him.

Actually, OM comprises three independent letters A, U and M, each of which has its own meaning and significance. The letter 'A' represents 'beginning' (ādimatva); 'U' represents 'progress' (utkarṣa); M represents 'limit or dissolution' [miti]. Hence, the word OM represents that power responsible for creation, development, and dissolution of this universe, i.e., God Himself.

Swami Vivekananda has given a very simple but interesting and instructive explanation of the three letters comprising OM, thereby bringing out the uniqueness of this great symbol: The first letter 'A' is the root sound, the key, pronounced without touching any part of the tongue or the palate; 'M' represents the last sound in the series, being produced by 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 phenomenon 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'.

The full significance of this statement becomes unfolded only when we understand the Hindu theory of creation as mentioned in the Vedas and other scriptures. This theory can be summed up as follows: (1) Creation is not a linear process, beginning and ending at particular points of time. but it is a cyclic process going on eternally; (2) God creates this universe out of Himself by Himself. To put it in a technical language, He is both the material cause and the efficient cause; (3) Before beginning any particular cycle of creation, He utters the Vedic words denoting the various classes of beings and objects; conceives of the corresponding forms (remembering them from the previous cycles of creation) and creates them.

Contrary to the general understanding, this means that forms (**rūpa**) are preceded by names (**nāma**). Names are composed of letters which are sounds. All sounds are included in

OM. Hence, the entire creation which proceeds from Vedic words or sounds, proceeds from the basic matrix of all sounds, viz. OM. Since God is the origin of this universe, OM and God are identical. Or, at least, OM is the best symbol of God.

God is one. Sages call Him by various names. Though these various names differ from one another, all of them have sprung up from the same basic source of all sounds, viz. OM. Hence, OM represents all names of God; or, it is the best name of God

Source: Principal symbols of World Religions, Sri Ramakrishna Math. Mylapore, Madras-4

OM IS THE ONE: OM IS THE MANY



Swāmī Chinmayananda

The silence between two successive Oms 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 within and from without; One second of a human life is all that is needed to peep over the veils of ignorance and realize for ourselves eternally thereafter the True Nature of the Self, the Godhood.

Swami Chinmayananda.

Sri [OM] iti Brahma.

Om itīdam Sarvam.

The sacred sound OM is Brahman. All this is the syllable OM.

The mystic syllable OM is 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 idea-idol to worship in the inner temple.**

Life is a constant flow of experiences and these experiences, when observed, are found to fall in three 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 planes 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 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 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 inner world of dream, and experiences subtle objects of imagination as a 'dreamer'.

When again, the very same entity becomes forgetful of the 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 'nothing-ness', 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 us that we can remember, on our waking, all about our experiences during our last waking

state, yesterday night's early dreams' and also the 'peaceful sleep' that we had after-wards. From these observations the Rishis continued their bold and adventurous 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 this '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 three planes.

To make it clear, let us suppose that we have one idle afternoon, a friend in our drawing room who starts revealing 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 despairs of Madras are different from the disasters in Madurai and both these sets of experience 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 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 in 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 different planes of consciousness we have been describing so far, viz., the 'waking', 'dream' and 'deep-sleep'. The process of superimposition is the same as the principle underlying all idol worship... the technique by which the Mighty is seen or imagined in the meagre; Śiva-Tattva in the Śivaliṅga; the Divine Mother of Knowledge in the River Gaṅgā; Śrī Nārāyaṇa, in the Śāligrāma; 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 intensity of his pursuit, purity of his life and his intelligent sense of detachment.

Even the 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 super-impositions 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 equipment.

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 OMs 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 within and from without; one second of a human life, is all that is needed to peep over the veils of ignorance and realize for ourselves eternally thereafter the True Nature of the Self, the Godhood.

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 colors, 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 all 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.

Courtesy:

Tapovan Prasad, January 1992.

There is a verse in the Vedas: "Prajāpatir vai idam agra āsīt". (In the beginning was Prajapati, the Brahmā. "Tasya vāk dvitīyā āsīt." (With whom was the Word. "Vāg vai Paramam Brabma" (And the Word was verily the Supreme Brabman). 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". This Sphoṭa has its symbol in the word OM. Thus, in the Maitrāyaṇa Upanisad 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.

Swami Cbinmayananda



SIGNIFICANCE OF 'OM' IN MĀṆḌŪKYA UPANISHAD

Thoyajakshi Devendra

OM - the word is all this Universe

The Upanishadic seers by a process of complete elimination of their ego through the divine method of sublimation reached the Realm of Truth. This Realm of Perfection indeed is the state of consciousness by reaching which one enjoys the supreme bliss. When the seers got themselves established in this palace of Truth and experienced the intoxicating bliss they tried to express the topography of this Realm beyond, to the seekers of Truth to reach it. They chose "Om̐kāra," the mystic syllable, and the verbal symbol to convey the profound significance of the Supreme Being.

The all-comprehensiveness of "OM" is explained in the **Māṇḍūkyaopanishad** as "OM, the word is all this (all this universe)." A clear explanation of it is the following. All that is past, present and future, indeed is OM. That which is beyond the three divisions of time is also verily OM.

The syllable OM is accepted as one with God and also as the medium connecting man with God. In the words of Pūjya Gurudeva H.H. Swami Chinmayananda, "OM represents the manifested world, the unmanifest, and also that which lies beyond both the manifest and the unmanifest. Just as in every piece of music there are three facets-- the meaning of the song, the laws of music and the sound of the song, similarly there are three aspects of OM. The first is the mere sound, the **mantra**, as pronounced by the mouth. The second is the meaning of the syllable, which is to be realized through reflection, and the third is the application of OM to your character, singing it in your acts and so through your life."

The Upanishad refers to OM as the word. What is the word? **Rig Veda** declares '**Vāk** (word) is Brahman. **Vāk** is coextensive with Brahman.' The word (**Vāk**) is the creative idea of God which is inseparable from God. Acharya Shankara observes that all the scriptural texts of the world originate from the word (**Shabda**) and the thought conveyed by it is inseparable from it. OM is the cosmic ideation, God's thought of creation, the matrix of all ideas. In the words of 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."

The word is the first manifestation of the Lord's Omniscience. As an expression of thought each word is a form of consciousness. Thus, OM is the embodiment of cosmic consciousness that appears as the diversified universe of names and forms. Is it not that everything we experience in this phenomenal world is expressed in names and forms? Whenever we think of an object, we first remember its name and then visualize its form, because, the name represents the subtle and the form the gross aspect of the object. Thus, the syllable OM represents the all-pervasive consciousness, the Supreme Self and also the manifested pluralistic world of names and forms. It represents Brahman, Transcendent (without attributes) and Brahman Immanent (with attributes). Acharya Shankara says that the **Nāmin** is not different from the **Nāma**, because the God principle is the common denominator of all the pluralistic world experienced by us outside.

The Upanishad declares, "All that is past, present and future, verily is OM'. The entire world of matter perceived in the past by our forefathers, now seen by us as the pre-sent and that shall be cognised by the posterity in future has one substratum which remains unchanged in all the three periods of time. The all-pervading Reality, Eternal, Immortal and Infinite in its delusory identification with the layers of matter such as the body, mind and intellect creates a separate personality in its own delusion and suffers the ideas of mortality, egoism and other vanities. The Vedantic analogy of the limited and the unlimited space serves us well to understand this concept. Space is unlimited and is not available for any limitations imposed upon it by bricks and mortar raised as walls. Yet, in our every day experience we feel the room space is different from the total space, the separative idea, as the room space is only a delusory notion created by the total space identifying itself with the four walls, ceiling

and flooring of the room. In fact, the space was one (room space) with the entire space before the walls were built around, and the space will be found to be "one with the entire space" again where the walls are broken down. The room space is the total space and was never away from it.

Now, the concept of time. Where there is no mind the time concept does not exist there. The mind, by itself, is inert matter. When the divine spark of life identifies with the matter vestures (body, mind and intellect) it assumes itself the ideas of egoism and mortality. The Reality which though ever undivided and indivisible, has come to manifest itself very clearly within the locus of the body. Thus, the Self is fundamentally traceable to a single and persistent seed-thought which seems to be inextricably bound up with an unending series of thoughts that in their totality is called the mind. Being involved in an activity of constant mental movement, one normally never has the opportunity to regard the self-thought apart from this movement.

The idea of time is inseparably connected with the idea of motion. There is a movement of concepts and precepts within the mind, one succeeding the other. It is this inherence in a succession of mental impressions, physical sensation and events, as they pass through consciousness that creates one's sense of time. It is this eternal sinking of attention in thoughts other than "I" thought which prevents one coming face to face with one's Real Self. Therefore, as long as one is unable to free one's attention from these thoughts so long one would be held captive by the sense of the passage of time.

Here is a simple analogy to explain this concept of time. A traveler ascending a mountain may perceive something which is still above his head, but which is quite invisible to the plain-dweller below, yet the same traveler may perceive the plain which he left behind if he just turns his gaze downward. So, from the standpoint of an unthinking man, time is an undeniable reality. For an evolved thinker it might be revealed as a mere idea that exists within the mind. Time is clearly a projection on the external world of conditioning, existing within oneself and therefore only relative. Thus, time is the creation of the human mind. It may be called a mental concept or a by-product of thought, etc. But without the collaboration

of consciousness it obviously can never exist. As long as one wrongly identifies with the physical body, mind and ego, memories, so long one exists as a creature of time, a captive of past memories, present happenings and future hopes and fears. If by right introspection, one realizes the true content of one's innermost self, he transcends time. That self can never be affected again by whatever belongs to time, even though the ego may continue to function within it.

Further, the Upanishad presents us with an equation as "OM = All Brahman = Ātman". The concept of OM is universal and if understood it rightly lifts it to that realm of experience from where the entire play of consciousness is understood.

The utterance of OM covers the whole process of articulation OM (AUM) - the first letter 'A' (_*_) is the root sound, pronounced without touching any Part Of the tongue or palate; 'M' (_*) represents the last sound in the series being pronounced with closed lips and 'U' (*_) rolls from the very root to the end of the sounding board of the mouth. In Sanskrit language, 'A' plus 'U' becomes 'O'; so, AUM becomes OM. The entire world is nothing but names, and all names are nothing but word.

The three letters, A, U, M, each have a meaning. They represent respectively the gross, the subtle and the causal aspects of the cosmic and individual being. The silence ensuing from the pronouncement of OM represents Pure Consciousness, underlying the three aspects which is partless, the transcendental non-dual self, which has no limits and is all bliss. When the chant of OM is over what remains is silence. This silence represents the attributeless Brahman. From the silence alone sound is produced and when the sound ends what remains is silence. In the background of silence alone sound is heard. So, we realize silence is there all the time before and after OM is uttered. This silence is known as the state of **Turīya**.

"This Ātman is Brahman", declares the Upanishad. The seers in their enquiries in the inner world, as a logical sequence came to recognize "the three facets of life," the waking, the dream, and the deep sleep. In these three planes of consciousness man acts so differently as if

they are three different entities. The divine spark of life identified with the physical body seeing through the ignorance of its own real nature perceives the world of sense objects and deluded by its own false perception experiences the waking state and in this state of consciousness acts as a definite personality.

The same life force withdrawing from its operations in the external world identifies itself with the subtle body and creates a distinct personality called the dreamer. The dream world is nothing but a mental creation of the dreamer himself. The mental impressions, gathered by the mind in the waking state, are replayed in sleep and the dreamer enjoys the subtle world of objects because he is conscious only of the inner world.

Sleep is a state of homogeneous consciousness without the distinction of the seer and the seen. The mind and intellect totally retire in sleep. The Self as pure bliss is identified with Brahman and it is this identity which the individual experiences during deep sleep. Since ignorance is present in sleep, though in a latent state, the Brahman bliss is not directly experienced but is enjoyed only as a reflection of it.

The syllable OM (AUM) symbolizes the three states, of consciousness, A representing the waking state, U the dream state, and M the deep sleep. **Viśva (Vaiśvārana), Taijasa and Prājña** are the three names by which the Self is known in these states of consciousness from the individual standpoint or **Vyashṭi**. From the standpoint of Totality (**Samashṭi**) A is called the **Virāṭ**, U is known as **Hiraṇyagarbha** and M is called **Īśvara**.

The life-force identifying with the body, mind and intellect creates a cocoon around it and coils in the web created by its imaginations and interacts with the world outside. The Upanishad explains that the life spark is Brahman, the individual ego is the total ego, the limited Self is the universal Self and so the microcosm is the macrocosm. The consciousness in us is certainly the womb of all things. If consciousness were not in us, neither the world of objects nor the world of ideas would have been existent for us.

So, from the standpoint of the Absolute, there is no duality. There is nothing finite or non-eternal. Duality is mere illusion and non-duality is the Supreme Truth.

The world of waking is in many respects similar to that of a dream. Just as the dream objects are experienced in dream alone, neither before nor after, even so the objects of the waking are experienced in the state of waking alone. The difference between the two states cannot be argued on the ground that while the objects experienced in the waking state are practical, those in the dream-state are not; for even the objects of waking experience are useful only in that state and not in dream. It is true that dream water cannot quench the actual thirst so too the so-called actual waters too cannot quench the dream thirst either.

By this subjective analysis we find that the reality of our self is Pure Conscious-ness. Consciousness is not an attribute to Self, because we find that while all our experience of the three states depend on consciousness, consciousness itself is not dependent on anything. It shines in its own glory. Thus the Self is consciousness itself and not that it has consciousness.



THE NATURE of Pranava

Prof. Sadhurangarajan

In the beginning was Prajāpati, the Brahman; with whom was the word. And the word was verily the Supreme Brahman.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say: "The Veda loses itself in Gāyatrī. Gāyatrī loses itself in Praṇava (OM), and Praṇava loses itself in **Samādhi**, the superconscious state." **Śiva-yogadīpikā** of Paramaśiva Yogīndra says: "When sages see that light which is of the form of the sound "OM" which is essentially of the nature of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, and which is calm, to them that itself is the highest empyrean [?] of Viṣṇu". Annie Besant points out that AUM in the first symbolizes the Nirguṇa Brahman, Brahman unmanifest; in the second, the Saguṇa Brahman, Brahman manifested with three qualities of Sat-Cit-Ananda".

Of all the **mantras**, the most powerful and the significant one is this single syllabled incantation called Praṇava. It 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 perceptible universe is the form behind which stands the eternal inexpressible, the **sphoṭa**, manifested as Logos or word. This Eternal **sphoṭa**, the essential material basis for all ideas or names, is the power through which God creates the

Universe. There is a verse in the Vedas: "**Prajāpatir vai Idam agra āsīt**" (an the be-ginning was prajapati, the Brahmā): "**Tasya Vāk dvitāyā āsīt**" (with whom was the word); "**Vāg Vai Paramam Brahmā**" (And the word was verily the Supreme Brahman). This idea is found repeated in the New Testament: 'In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. This **sphoṭa** has its symbol in the word OM. In the **Maitryāyaṇa [?] Upanishad**, after it has been said that there is one Brahman without words and a second, a word-Brahmā, we are told that the word is the syllable 'OM'.

The sound of 'OM' is also called 'Praṇava,' meaning that it pervades life or runs through **prāṇa** or breath.

Basis on Scriptures

The very central theme of **Māṇḍūkya Upanishad** is the syllable 'OM' through which the mystery of Brahman is gathered to a point. The text of this 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,' thus transporting us beyond the typical Upanishadic sphere into that of the later 'Classic Advaita Vedanta". Speaking of OM, the **Tai-ttirīya Upanishad** says: "The **praṇava** (OM) which is the head of whole Veda, which is of the form of the universe, and which was born as essence out of immortality, from amidst the Veda--may that Supreme Praṇava gratify me with knowledge, so that I may become the bearer of the wisdom that gives Immortality. May my body be efficient; my tongue the sweetest; with my ears, let me hear amply (the spiritual teachings); O Praṇava, thou art the casket of the gem of the Supreme Spirit, covered with the lid of Intellect; guard my learning." (**Taitt**, I-4). **Kāthopanishad** (II: 15) says: "The word (or goal) which all the Vedas declare, that which all penances proclaim and desiring which people lead an austere life, that word (or goal) I tell thee in brief-- It is OM"

The **Muṇḍakopanishad** (II : 2 : 4) says: 'Praṇava-AUM is the bow. Soul, Ātmā is the arrow. Its mark is Brahman. The marksman must be one with the arrow-mark and then aim. Absorbed concentration and meditation alone can attain Brahman.'

The fifth question of the **Praśnopanishad** relates to the meditation on OM as a means to the realization of the higher and lower Brahman, i.e., the unconditioned Brahman and the Brahman as conditioned. It is stated there that the wise one arrives at the highest, which is quiescent, and free from decay, death and fear, by means of Omkāra. The use of **Praṇava-dhyāna** or meditation on OM is thus, well-recognized in the Upanishads.

Praṇava in Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad

The **Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad** starts by saying that its object is to expound the significance of Omkāra, and sketches the method of identifying the components of the sound 'OM' with the aspects of the self, and thereby realizing the truth of non-duality. There are four **mātrās** or morae of OM, corresponding to the four **pādas** of the self. The four **mātrās** are a, u, m, and the fourth which is really **amātra** or morales part which is represented by the point (**bindu**) of the **anusvāra**. The **pādas** of the self are **Viśva, Taijasa, Prājña and Turīya**, the first three standing respectively for the self in waking, dream and sleep, the fourth being the self per se. The principle of meditation on OM is to equate the **mātrās** with the **pādas**. Gauḍapāda calls the knowledge or equation '**mātrā sampratipatti**' (i.e. knowledge of the **mātrās** as identical with the **pādas**) and '**Omkāra-asya pādaśo vidyā**' (Knowledge of the morae Om as the pādas of the self).

Identity of mātrās and pādas

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 superimposed on the 'A' sound because it is first of the three states of consciousness, and so is 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 the order of sounds and also it being in between 'A' and 'M' it is treated as representing the dream state.

On the 'M sound of 'AUM' is superimposed 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 OMs. On this silence is superimposed 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 syllables, A, U, and M are called **Mātrās** or forms. There is also a common principle, **Amātra**, which signifies the 'thing-in-itself, running through and pervading in the threefold phenomena of waking, dream and deep-sleep. As we can remember all our experiences in all the three different states, there must be a single common factor, which is a witness of all happenings in all the three states. A-the waking, U-the dream, M-the deep-sleep and **Turīya**-the silence, all the four together comprise the totality of this manifestation of Ātman-Brahman as a syllable.

Meditation on OM

Patañjali in his **Yoga Aphorisms** (27, 28 and 29) says: "The word which expresses Him is OM. This word must be repeated with meditation upon its meaning. Hence comes knowledge of the Ātman and destruction of the obstacles to that knowledge. Swami Vivekananda answers the question why OM should be the word representative of the thought out of which the universe has become manifested:

Now, as every word symbol intended to express the inexpressible **sphoṭa** will so particularise it that it will no longer be the **sphoṭa**. That symbol which particularizes it the least and at the same time most approximately expresses the nature, will be the OM, and the OM only; because these three letters, 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. 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 and continues 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 **sphoṭa** which is the real meaning of the OM. And as the symbol can never be separated from the thing signified, the OM and **sphoṭa** are one. And as the **sphoṭa**, being the finer side of the manifested universe, is nearest to God and is indeed the first manifestation of Divine Wisdom, this OM is truly symbolic of God."

Fruits of meditation

The **Māṇḍūkya Upanishad** eulogizes the meditation on the identity of the **mātrās** and **pādas** by specifying the fruit which each state in meditation yields. He who knows **Vaiśvānara** (i.e. **Viśva**) as 'A', says the Upanishad, obtains all desires and becomes first among the great. He who knows the identity of **Taijasa** with 'U' exalts or increases the continuity of knowledge and becomes equal or of the same attitude towards all and in his family, none, he does not know Brahma, is born. He who knows the oneness of **Prājña** and 'M' measures the whole world (i.e. he becomes the self which is the cause of the universe). He who knows Omkāra in its fullness as signifying the **Turiya** realizes the self and does not return to empirical life.

Leaving the eulogistic part of the **Māṇḍūkya** passages unexplained, for it requires no explanation, Gauḍapāda points out what is of real value in the meditation on Om. He says that 'A' leads to **Viśva**, "U" to **Taijasa**, 'M' to **Prājña** and that there is no leading to or attainment of anything in the **Amātra**. Ānandagiri explains Gauḍapāda's statement thus: He who meditates on Omkāra as being predominantly of the form of 'A' attains **Vaiśvānara**. He who meditates on Om as being predominantly of the form of 'U' attains **Taijasa-Hiraṇyagarbha**. He who meditates on Om as being predominantly of the form of 'M' attains **Prājña-Avyakta**. The gross universe, waking state and **Viśva**--these three are 'A', the subtle universe, dream state and **Taijasa**--these are the 'U', the cause of the two worlds, deep-sleep and **Prājña**--these three are 'M'. Here also each earlier factor attains the nature of that which succeeds it. The purpose of this meditation is to lead the aspirant from the grosser to the subtler, till that stage is reached where all duality is removed and the journey comes to an end. In the **Turiya**-self there is not the distinction of the attainer, object to be attained and

attainment. That is why Āchārya-Gauḍapāda says that there is no movement or process in **Amātra**.

Table of Equations

The following table gives an account of the equations found in the Māṇḍūkya Upanishad and the Kārikā:

<i>MATRAs of Om</i>	<i>Padas of Self (individual)</i>	<i>Padas of Self (Cosmic)</i>	<i>State (avastha)</i>	<i>Consciousness (Prājñā)</i>	<i>Enjoyment (Bhoga)</i>	<i>Content-Ment. (Tripti)</i>	<i>Place for Meditation</i>
A	Vaisvanara Visva (with 19 mouths)	Vaisvanara Visva (with 7 limbs)	Waking	Outer	Gross	Gross	Right eye
U	Taijasa (with 19 mouths)	Taijasa (with 7 limbs)	Dream	Inner	Subtle	Subtle	Manas
M	Prajna (with Intelligence as mouth)	Sarveś-vara.	Sleep	Enmassed Consciousness	Happiness	Happiness	Either of the heart

Amātra-Turīya-Ātman-Brahman.

Conclusion

Praṇava or Omkāra has the pride of place among the symbols of the invisible spirit. Gauḍapāda concludes his exposition of Praṇava-yoga by praising it and those who practice it. The mind should be yoked to praṇava for praṇava is Brahman in which there is no fear. For him who is ever united with Praṇava, there is no fear anywhere. Praṇava is the lower Brahman; it is higher as well. It has no cause; there is nothing besides it; nothing outside it. Nor is there anything that follows from it. Praṇava is the immutable. It is the beginning, middle and end of all. He who knows praṇava thus attains the self. OM is to be known as the Lord present in the heart of all. Having understood the all-pervading OM, the wise one does not grieve. Omkāra is without measure (**amātra**) and its measure is **limitless (anantamātra)**; it is that in which all duality ceases; it is bliss. He who knows it thus is a saint, and no other. Rig Veda symbolically represents AUM by presenting the 'Kāla Haṃsaka: 'The syllable A is considered to be its right wing; U its left; 'M` its tail; and the

Ardhamātrā (or **amātra**) is said to be its head." AUM is considered to be a **Mahāvākya**. It is the universal **mantra** of divinity, the AUM--IN (AMIN) of Muslims and AUM-EN (AMEN) of Christians. It is I M, Aham of Vedantins. It is ŚI-AUM (ŚIVAM) of Siddhantins. God is OM-nipotent, OM-niverous. OM-niscient. It is the Hamsa Soham of Brahmajñānis. 'AUM Maṇi Padme Hum' is the **mantra** of Buddhism. The Jains find AUM in their Panchanamaskāra to Arhats, Siddha, Ayuria, Upadhyaya and Sadhus. In the words of Swarni Shraddhananda: "OM was the truest and most comprehensive name for Godhead among the Hindus. It was a spiritual formula which, when expanded by **sūtras** relating to It, gave us all the names and attributes of God. Its place in the spiritual discipline of the Hindu was supreme. God without OM was unthinkable and could not be worshipped.....OM appeared as a letter with a portion remotely resembling an elephant's trunk The worship of Gaṇeśa is fixed for the 4th day of the bright half of the month of Bhādrapada. The purpose was the attainment of the fourth state of the mind (The **Turīya** condition of subliminal and super conscious state also called **Samādhi**)"

To conclude, in the words of Sri Ramakriahna: "The sacred syllable OM is explained in the scriptures as a combination of the sounds A. U. M. representing creation, preservation and dissolution respectively. I compare the sound of OM to the sound of a bell that dissolves in silence. The relative universe dissolves in the imperishable absolute--the great silence. The gross, the subtle, the causal--everything visible and invisible dissolves in the great cause. Waking, dreaming, and dreamless sleep--the three states of consciousness-- are dissolved in the **Turīya**, the transcendental. Once more the bell rings. The sound of OM is heard and as it were a heavy weight falls on the bosom of the calm, infinite ocean; immediately the ocean becomes agitated. From the bosom of the absolute rises the relative, from the great cause issues forth the causal, the subtle, the gross universe; from the transcendental come the three stages of consciousness-waking, dreaming, deep sleep. Again the waves dissolve in the ocean, and there is the great calm. From the absolute comes the relative and into the absolute the relative dissolves. I have experienced this infinite ocean of bliss and consciousness; and Mother has shown me how innumerable worlds issue from the ocean and go back into it. I do not know, of course, what is written in books of philosophy".



Saint Ramdas on OM and Rāmanāma

It is said rightly, that 'Rāma' is equal in power to the sacred syllable 'OM'. For the devotee Who strives to reach God through His Saguṇa or personal aspect, 'Rāma' is valuable also as the name of an incarnation of God. For these reasons, Ramdas thinks that Rāmnāma is more widely popular in India than any other name.

Sri Samarth Rāmdās assures the aspirant that if he takes "Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram" thirteen crores of times, he will have the vision of Sri Rama. The mantra mentioned by Samarth Ramdas is without 'OM'. The mantra Ramdas gives you is "OM Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram". 'OM' has untold spiritual power. Hence, Ramdas, from his own experience, tells you that by repeating this mantra with 'OM' six crores of times, you will attain salvation. Repeat the mantra at all times until the target is reached. You need not keep count of the mantra. When it reaches six crores you will automatically realize Rāma - the Supreme Self. Chanting His name is the way to make Him manifest Himself in you. The meaning of "OM Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram" is as follows:

OM Impersonal Truth

Sri Divine Power

Rāma God who is both Truth and Power, both personal and impersonal

Rāma represents the Purushottama of the Gita who is at once Purusha and Prakriti and Also the supreme, transcendent One beyond both.

Jai Ram Victory to God

Jai Jai Ram Victory, Victory to God

"God who is at once Truth and Power, Impersonal and Personal! Victory to Thee; victory, victory to Thee!"

When God is victorious in your heart, all darkness born of ego-sense disappears. There is then nothing but a feast of immortal joy and peace for you.

Source : Thus Speaks Ramdas. Anandashram, Kenhangad 670 531.

OM and Amen

Selvaraj Yesudian

The repetition of Om and thinking of its meaning are the same as 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 its meaning too.

The Author.

Om is the most sacred word in the Vedas, the scriptures of the Hindus, which are the oldest in the world. It is a symbol of the Personal God and the Unmanifested, formless Absolute God. It is also written as **Aum**. For Christians too, the first manifestation of God is **Logos**, erroneously interpreted as 'the word'. 'In the beginning was **Logos**. **Logos** was with God and **Logos** was God'. Though little significance is attached to it in Christianity today, nevertheless the first manifestation of God is sound or **Logos** and this **Logos is Amen**.

In Revelation iii, 14 **Logos**, the manifesting Spirit says: And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: "These things sayeth the **Amen**, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God."

In Revelation xix. 4: And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, **Amen**; Alleluia.

If Physics proves the laws of matter, Metaphysics proves the laws of the cause of matter. Metaphysics is by no means an abstract science based on mental speculation. It is within the reach of everyone to experience Truth, though *it* is beyond the reach of the mind and the five senses. If this physical world is perceived by the senses and considered as a manifestation of God through form, then Metaphysics is the science which enables us to experience the cause of everything which has a form by experiencing the cause of our own

being as our spirit – as our Self. Knowing our own Self, we know the Self of everything created, and thus we know All, for the Self is All. The means of knowing the source of our Self is through meditation or conscious identification with our ‘I’, the all-dominating, nameless, formless, limitless Self. During the process of meditation, as in sleep, we become detached from the body, the mind and the senses, until finally we become aware of our Self and become one with the Self. From time immemorial, enlightened Sages and Yogis have said that when the mind transcends the body, the senses and finally itself, the heartbeat of the manifested universe is heard, which they call the **Anāhata śabdām** (sound). This is not heard with the ears, but in the same way as we hear our inner voice or conscience. This first of all sounds is **Om**. Like an ocean, which produces ripples, surges and gigantic waves, **Om** is the ocean of God or Spirit, from which the manifested universe takes its origin and form.

When the Aryans invaded India,⁴ they came in contact with the Dravidians, a highly cultured race. Under the pressure of their new rulers, some of these left the land for distant countries. Others who had enjoyed the highest civilization of their times settled down on the banks of the Nile in Egypt, blending their culture with that of the last remnants of the legendary Atlantis. The symbol of the Personal and Absolute God was adapted to the new circumstances with a slight change. Thus **Om or Aum** became **Amen**. A Pharaoh who had realized God was given the respectful title of **Amen**, which came before his name. He was not only the rightful ruler of the people but also the rightful, enlightened religious teacher. As in India in ancient times, so also in ancient Egypt. there were many kings who were philosophers and philosophers who were kings.

Patañjali Yogi was the author of the Yoga system, one of the six systems of orthodox Hindu philosophy, which deals with concentration and control of the mind as one of the means of realizing God. In his work, 'Rāja Yoga', which has become one of the religious classics of the world, Swami Vivekananda gives a wonderful, enlightened commentary on the aphorisms of the Sage Patanjali. Sunk in the depths of meditation, he spoke, and one of his American devotees wrote down the inspired interpretations of the Master. Sometimes a commentary was born at once, sometimes the devotee had to wait for ten minutes to receive

⁴ An old fairy tale. Or Grandma’s sleep time stories.

the words that fell from the lips of the teacher, and sometimes again silence reigned for a full hour before the answer came. The messenger of God dived to the bottom of the ocean of bliss, to emerge with precious wisdom.

Some of the aphorisms of Patañjali explain the significance of **Om** from which the word **Amen** was born. Vivekananda's commentary runs as follows:

"The word that manifests Him is **Om**. Every thought that you have in the mind, has a counterpart in a word; the word and the thought are inseparable. The external part of a thing is what we call word, and the internal part of that same thing is what we call thought. No man can by analysis separate thought from word. The idea that language was created, men, certain men sitting together and deciding upon words, created language has been proved to be wrong. So long as man has existed there have been words and language.

What is the connection between a thought and a word? Although we see that there must always be a word with a thought. It is not necessarily true 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. Sounds will vary in different nations. A commentator says: 'Although the relation between thought and word is perfectly natural, yet it does not mean a rigid connection between a thought and a sound. The sounds vary, yet the relation between the sounds and the thoughts is a natural one. The connection 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. The symbol is the manifestor of the thing signified and if the thing signified is already existing 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 thing is not present, there will be thousands who will know it by its symbol. There must be a

natural connection between the symbol and the things signified; then, when that symbol is pronounced, it recalls the thing signified.

“Patañjali says that the word that manifests God is **Om**. Why does he emphasize this word? There are hundreds of words for God. One thought is connected with a great many words; the idea of God is connected with hundreds of words and each one stands as a symbol for God. Very good. But there must be 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 articulate sound of which all other sounds are 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 with 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 phenomenon of sound production. 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 uttered.

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 around this word. 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 has been manipulated to mean all the various ideas about God. Monists, dualists, mono-dualists and separatists have taken 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 the Personal or Impersonal or Absolute God. So with the words for God in every other language; their signification is very limited. This word Om, however, has around it all the various significances. As such, everyone should accept it.

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 **samskāras**: that the sum total of impressions lives in the mind. They may become more and more latent, but they remain there, and as soon as they get the right stimulus, they come out. Atomic 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 **citta** subside, its atomic vibrations go on; and when they get the impulse, they come out again.

We can now understand what is meant by repetition. It is the greatest stimulus that can be given to the spiritual **samskāras**. 'One moment of company with the holy builds a ship to cross this ocean of life' --such is the power of association. So this repetition of **Om** and thinking of its meaning are the same as 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 necessary to call them out. In the same way we are told that good company will call out the good impressions which are in us, but 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.

From that is gained introspection and the destruction of the obstacles. The first effect of repetition and thinking of Om is that the introspective power will manifest itself more and more; all the mental and physical obstacles will begin to vanish. What are the obstacles for the **Yogi**?

Disease, mental laziness, doubt, lack of enthusiasm, lethargy, clinging to sense enjoyments, false perception, non-attaining of concentration, and failing away from concentration when obtained -- these are obstructing distractions.

Disease: This body is the boat, which will carry us to the other shore of the ocean of life. It must be taken care of. Unhealthy persons cannot be **Yogis**. Mental laziness makes us lose all lively interest in the subject without which there will be neither the will nor the energy to practice. Doubts will arise in the mind about the truth of the science of Yoga, however strong one's intellectual conviction may be, until certain peculiar psychic experiences come, such as hearing or seeing at a distance. These glimpses strengthen the mind and make the student persevere, falling away from concentration when attained. Some days or weeks, when you are practicing, the mind will be calm and easily concentrated and you will find yourself progressing fast. All of a sudden, one day the progress will stop and you will find yourself, as it were, stranded. But persevere. All progress proceeds by such rise and fall.

Grief, mental distress, tremor of the body, and irregular breathing accompany non-retention of concentration.

Concentration will bring perfect repose to the mind and body every time it is practiced. When the practice has been misdirected or the mind not well controlled, these disturbances come. Repetition of Om and self-surrender to the Lord will strengthen the mind and bring fresh energy.

I remember when I was a boy of twelve. Whenever doubt drove me to despair, I went to church and spoke to God. The Bishop of Madras conducted the church services once or twice a year at St. Mathia's church where I was a choirboy. He personified some wonderful qualities, which I felt were genuine in him. He finished the service with a song of benediction, which consisted of only the word Amen, which was repeated at least a dozen times. His deep voice invoked God, whom I tangibly felt around me and within my being. An ecstatic joy flooded my heart and tears rolled down my cheeks. I could not sing with the choir, for I was unable to utter a single word.

Personal Glimpses

Twenty-five years later, I was wandering about in Egypt as a tourist. The magic of this ancient land casts a spell on those who tread her soil beseeching them not to run hither and thither, but to stand and **Be Still**. I received her message and stood before that majestic Sphinx which had several times silently watched the rise and fall of the world during thousands of years. I paid homage to this sentinel of time and bent my head to receive her unspoken benediction. She blessed me as she had blessed those she had spiritually nourished in the past, and permitted me to enter into the great pyramid, stand in the presence of God and speak to Him. The last tourist crawled out of its darkness while I stood at the entrance excited and eager to enter and be blessed by the peace that ruled within the pyramid. I greeted the friendly guard with the familiar words, "Salam Alleikum" for the seventh time that week. It was my day of parting and he granted my request to pray to Allah at the close of the day. He kept watch for about an hour and saw that no visitor entered the king's chamber as it is called. It had always been a place of initiation, but never a royal tomb where mummies were buried. There was a large sarcophagus of stone in which initiates of the past had been laid and helped by the high priest to leave the body and behold the lifeless frame they had left behind. Thus they learnt that it was only the body which can die, but the spirit was deathless, boundless and ever free. After the experience of the immortality of the spirit, the changing nature of the body did not affect or influence them any more. The chamber was black as night. Not a streak of light could enter the middle of this biggest of man-made monuments. I sat in one corner of the chamber with just one intention. Could I too invoke the living God as the ancient Egyptians had done? If God and His name are one, let me now as a child of Egypt call Him by His name. I entered the closet of my heart, and from the chamber of my Self I called God as a child would call his mother. The peace, which reigned about me, was the same as the peace within me. In a monotonous tone my lips sounded the sacred name **Amen** with each outgoing breath, with the same melody as I had heard from the Bishop of Madras when he pronounced his benediction on his congregation. The sense of time was blotted out and one moment of eternity became eternity itself. No greater reality existed for me than the reality of Being. Time stood still. I had no need to obliterate the world, for now I was oblivious of it. I had no need to call aloud the name of God, for He heard me and kept me company within my heart. **Be Still And Know That I am God** was

what David commanded. I too had no other choice than **To Be Still And Know That My 'I' Was God.**

My days of wandering once brought me to the famous cemetery of Genoa in Italy. Its statues are renowned for their exquisite beauty, for, famous sculptors have made mute stones to speak the silent language. Of pain and parting. I too had drunk my fill of these things and soon after sought some peace in the cemetery chapel, which was empty. I sat before the altar and plunged into the depths of my Self, all the while invoking God by singing His name **Amen** aloud. The same ecstatic joy flooded my heart as when I was a child of twelve and the same ocean of peace engulfed me as once in the pyramids. The acoustics of the dome were unique, for my voice sounded and resounded each time I called on God. The name **Amen** vibrated and reverberated in the room, which I felt was filled with a holiness in which I was immersed. Whether it was for a few minutes, an hour or even more, I do not know. When consciousness returned to my physical frame and I opened my eyes, I realized that I was in the midst of a crowd of Italians who silently partook of my heavenly joys. I was in no way abashed by the tears that rolled down my cheeks unchecked, for when I beheld the faces of those around me they too were bathed in tears they had shed for God.

As a child calls his father, so did I call God. I called Him in the days of my tribulation and I remembered Him in the days of my joy. When I was a student at the Medical College of Budapest, Hungary, my source of strength was Vivekananda and his serene Master Ramakrishna. Born in the Christian faith, I remained in it and endeavored to be a better Christian. Though my ancestors were Hindus and I an Indian, belonging to the Dravidian stock, the all-liberating teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda gave me the universality in my outlook that allowed me to appreciate my Christian faith as one of the many paths that led to the same goal, to the same God.

I had heard the Truth. I had seen its dazzling peak, which I had yet to climb, and now an irresistible urge possessed me to realize the Truth. I preferred this kind of madness to that of running after a mere reflection - this phenomenal world. If my days on this earth are numbered, let me no longer linger in ignorance, I thought, but act in the days of my youth.

If God is in everything created as its life and breath, God is also in me, I argued. If Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda realized God within themselves, then I can and must find God within. If the first manifestation of God is the sound Brahman – Om, Aum, or **Amen** - then the repetition of His name will help me attain God. The form of the name of God depends on the surroundings in which one finds oneself. In Genoa I had the urge to call God **Amen**, but later in days of great danger, I felt the urge to call God as my Hindu fellow men do, as Om.

Hitler's Germany dragged Hungary into war. Mrs. Elizabeth Haich, who became my spiritual guide, gave me shelter after I got to know her in 1940. Enemy bombs rained over the beautiful city of Budapest and the Haich villa crumbled like a pack of cards. The small cellar still gave shelter to twenty-six members of the family. We lived in total dark-ness for full seven weeks, until that part of the city fell under the onslaught of the Russians.

We all felt the scarcity of food acutely, and the lack of proper sleep due to the detonation of the bombs day in and day out compelled me to choose the one way of escape and that was through meditation. I crossed my legs, sat upright and mentally repeated the holy syllable **Om**. My presence of mind was generally alert and alive, which was in itself a meditation of deep intensity. Every bomb that fell caused the animal instinct of self-preservation to react a thousand times more strongly. Under such circumstances meditation was my only retreat, which gradually became natural, accompanied by a total absence of desire. Like a vibration **Om** resounded from the depths of my being each time I uttered it and served as a bridge across the river of fear, anguish, care, worry; even death. I had never known Mrs. Haich know fear, nor fear of death. We were seated in the cellar next to each other. We were both aware of Life in its true sense. My body became oblivious to the shrieks of a hungry newborn baby, whose mother had no milk to offer. Should death at any time take its toll, I thought, let me be prepared for it. While I repeated **Om**, veil after veil of darkness was rent and a horizon of inestimable grandeur receded before my widening consciousness. I saw the visage of silence and I stood still. Casting myself at its feet. I clung to them saying, 'I shall not let thee go till thou dost bless me'. Wave after wave of peace flooded my heart. There was no past nor future, but only the eternal present - the eternal present, which is even Now

and Here. I was never so near to God as then in the cellar. It was as though the sound of **Om** had filled the heavens and the earth. It came from all sides, from within, from without, from above, from below, penetrating every particle of my being and pervading the very air I breathed. **Om** was the holiest of holies. It was Brahman, and I found it sacrilegious even to breathe. In that State, I cast myself upon the ground, prostrate before the living God, who was in and around me, who was name-less, whose form filled every particle of space. 'The sound rang with the melody of heaven in all voices, blending from deep bass to ethereal soprano. It was sounding in the air, and just as the fiery lava which the volcano casts out bursts like rockets again and again, so too one **Om** gave birth to hundreds, nay thousands. My human lips had long stopped uttering the holy syllable **OM**. Never before did I know that God is and always was so near to me. To him who calleth shall I come', promised the Lord to His servant David. I did not call and yet He came, to His servant. I did not know that God and His holy name were one and the same. Did my visible form, which uttered the Lord's name bear witness to what I saw and passed through alone? No. I was not alone. Om is the name of God. The very mention of It filled the air, which vibrated and reverberated, invoking the presence of the hosts of heaven. They too joined me in this symphony, which knew no beginning, no end. Oh, my Lord, I have reached Thine ocean of grace. May I stay in it and be with Thee forever?

"Death, where is thy sting, and grave, thy victory?" Whether I breathed or not I do not know. I could not remain in that state forever, for. In the deep recesses of my being, a voice spoke, saying: 'My son, arise. I am with thee. Fear not. Forget not thy promise of serving those in distress. Stand up and serve. I thy Lord and thy God am always with thee'. Again, I cast myself before my unseen God, saying: 'Speak Lord and thy servant heareth. Command, Lord, and thy servant obeyeth'. Again and again I cast myself before my God and worshipped Him. Equipped with the strength to go through life, I arose. My earthly eyes opened to the darkness, which enveloped me, and my ears again heard the shattering bombs that fell near and far. I was equipped with strength, for the Lord in His mercy had touched me.

Later, the Russians took all the male members of our group as prisoners, and I was one of them. A period of physical hardship, which everyone passed through, was also my share. I survived the ordeal and came out whole. The hell I passed was a purgatory, which cleansed me pure. I accepted it as a decree of heaven and realized that during this period I was being prepared for the task that lay before me.

Like the symphonies of Beethoven, who wrote for posterity, capturing the songs of life and death, so do my days reflect the struggles and victories of life. When I first uttered Om, the name of the Lord, I did not realize that I had become dedicated to doing His will. I have none of my own, for, I, the servant, have no right to question my master. Even today I say: **'Thy Will Be Done. As It Is In Heaven, So Also Here On Earth.**

Courtesy : Brahmavādin.

Om, tad brahma. Om, tad vāyuḥ. Om, tad ātmā.

Om, tat satyam. Om, tat sarvam. Om, tat puror[pūr Om?]namah.

Meaning

Om that is Brahma. Om that is Vāyu. Om that is the finite self. Om that is the Supreme Truth.

Om that is the multitude of citadels (the bodies of creatures). Salutations to Him.

Mahānārāyaṇa Upanishad.

Aum is Universal

Dr. Umesh Patri

Here the author brings out the universality of the monosyllable OM, by comparing it with the Judean-Christian sound Amen, and the Kuranic syllable ALM. This is rich food for thought and assimilation. Call it OM or Amen or ALM, the primordial sound is essentially one and the same.

Aum is the original name of God, who is both manifested and unmanifested with three attributes of **Sat-Cit-Ānanda**. If we summarize the whole Vedic literature in one word it will be only **AUM**. V. Rangarajan quoting Ramakrishna says: “The Veda loses itself in Gāyatrī; Gāyatrī itself in Praṇava, i.e. Aum, and Praṇava loses itself in **Samādhi**, the super-conscious state.”

Māṇḍūkya Upanishad speaks of the universality of **Aum** as an imperishable syllable:

*Aum is the **akshara** or imperishable syllable. **Aum** is the Universe, and this is the exposition of **Aum**. The past, the present, and the future, all that was, all that is, all that will be, is **Aum**. Likewise, all else that may exist beyond the bounds of time, that too is **Aum**.*

The universality of **Aum** can be seen in almost all the far-east countries including Cambodia, Mongolia, Tibet, Thailand, Java, and Bali. In the Cambodian iconographic art the symbol of **Aum** is often used. The national flag of Mongolia bears the testimony of **Chandrabindu** and **nāda** of **Aum**. The Mongolian Buddhist collection known as **Kanjur** imprints like Oriya **Aum**.



In Tibet ‘Aum Maṇipadme Hum’ is recited before any religious rites. In Thailand the king’s command is called **Aumkāra**. In the Changal inscription of Java in 732 A.D. we find the phrase: “Aum Avighnam astu.” **Aum** is inscribed like:



In Bali **Aum** is used as a symbol of strength.

Aum in Indian Scriptures

Patañjali says: “The word which expresses Him is **Aum**. The word must be repeated with meditation upon its meaning. Hence comes knowledge of the Self and destruction of the obstacles to that knowledge.” (**Yoga Aphorism** 27, 28, 29).

First and foremost law-giver of the world, Manu, tells about the importance of **Aum** in the following few lines:

*A Brāhmaṇa, beginning and ending a lecture on the Veda, must always pronounce to himself the syllable **Aum**; for, unless the syllable Aum precedes his learning will slip away from him; and, unless it follows, nothing will be long retained.*

Brahmā milked out, as it were, from the three Vedas, the letter A, the letter U, and the letter M, which form, by their coalition, the trilateral monosyllable, together with three mysterious words, Bhūr, Bhuvaḥ, Svaḥ, or Earth, Atmosphere, Heaven.

*All rites ordained in the Veda, oblations to fire, and solemn sacrifices, pass away; but that which passes not away, is declared to be the syllable **Aum**, thence called **Akshara**; since it is a symbol of God, the Lord of created beings, the act of repeating*

His Holy Name is ten times better than the appointed sacrifice; a hundred times better, when it is heard by no man; and a thousand times better, when it is purely mental.

(Manu Smṛiti 2:74, 76, 84-85)

As **Aum** is pre-eminent in Vedic literature so it is in the Upanishads. There are a number of passages in the Upanishads where the importance of **Aum** is felt. Both in the **Taittirīya** and **Kaṭha** Upanishads, in the invocation, the teacher and the student pray for the prevalence of a better sense:

*May He protect us both; may we be pleased with us both; may we work together with vigour; may our study make us illuminated; may there be no dislike between us. **Aum**, peace, peace, peace.*

Muṇḍaka Upanishad has used the image of a bow and an arrow to explain the importance of **Aum**:

*The syllable Aum is the bow; one's self, indeed, is the arrow. **Brahman** is spoken of as the target of that. It is to be hit without making a mistake. Thus one becomes united with it as the arrow.*

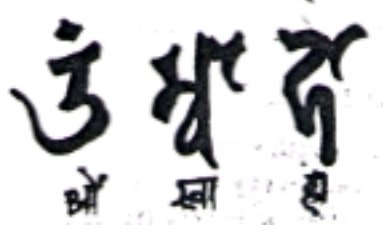
In the Bhagavadgītā Śrī Krishna identifies [?] himself with **Aum** when he said: 'I am the **Aum** in all the Vedas.' (7:8). Further he said, in Chapter 8, Verse 11 to 13 as:

*In glad peace possesseth to Purusha's heaven. The place which they who read the Vedas name **Aksharam**, 'Ultimate;' whereto have striven Saints and ascetics—their road is the same. That way--the highest way—goes he who shuts the gates of all his senses, locks desire safe in his heart, centers the vital airs upon his parting thought, steadfastly set. And murmuring OM, the sacred syllable—Emblem of Brahma dies, meditating on Me. [Not very clear to our ordinary mind]*

Sound Mechanism of Aum

The trilateral monosyllable a u m **Aum** or आ उ म a u m has come from three

ॐ व म



distinctive letters a, u, and m. English pronouncers can easily pronounce a as they pronounce it in legal or verbal, u as in push or put and m as in sum or fame. The pronunciation of Aum creates vibration in the heart, earth and ether when a comes from the throat, u from the rolling forward of the tongue and m at the closing lip sound. It is an astounding fact that AUM in Chinese ideogram pronounced as Om Svā hā which is a dancing form of Nagari script.

Table of Equations

The following is the comparative statement of similarities found in Hindu, Christian and Islamic creeds:

[The table should come here]

In order to understand the above table of equations both Islamic and Judo-Christian literatures have to be reviewed.

Aum in Islam

In the entire twenty-nine chapters of the **Koran** every chapter starts with a certain letter of letters (**Mokattiat**) of the alphabet which is believed to conceal several profound mysteries passed between God and the prophet. The first verse of the second chapter begins with these three letters, A.L.M., i.e. **alif lam mim**. It is claimed by the Islamic scholars that nobody knows the meaning of it except Allah or the prophet. In spite of such a wide claim, **Ak'sir-I-Azam** explains that the prophet was in the habit of spending the greater part of his time in meditation and saying his prayers. It is possible that Gabriel was directed to **utter**

these single letters (Mokattiat) to him to draw his attention to enable him to hear attentively the words of God that were about to be communicated to him.

Again, Ahmad, the son of Yahya, holds a different view. According to him, the people of Arabia, while ending one subject and starting another, were in the habit of using some such letters as it had no connection at all with the subject that ended or the one that began.

The introduction to Sale's translation of the **Koran** refers to a view on the pronunciation of A.L.M. which seems to me no different from the pronunciation of **A.U.M.** "That as the letter A belongs to the lower part of the throat, the first of the organs of speech; L to the palate, the middle organ; and M to the lips, which is the last organ; so these letters signify that God is the beginning, middle, and end or ought to be praised in the beginning, middle, and end of all our words and actions."

Besides pronunciation, ALM fulfills all the conditions to be the best name for God as it is in case of **AUM**. As the best possible name of God, **AUM** needs repetition in order to "hear attentively the words of God," and it is used at the end and the beginning of the subject. N. Narayan shows similarities between **AUM** and ALM from a linguistic point of view.

In A.L.M. the mysterious letters of the Koran, **alif** (A) and **Mim** (M) are the same as the Sanskrit (A) and (M). The LAM (L) is used for the Sanskrit (U). The Arabic 'L' has sometimes a sound of 'U' when preceded by 'Alif' as, for instance, 'Karam-al-din' is pronounced as Karam-ud-din. To make the mystery more mysterious, the letter 'L' has been used for 'U.' But there is no doubt that at the time when Koran was written, the people of Arabia knew what these letters signified. Had it not been so, there might have been a good deal of criticism as to their use, and we should not have been able to get all the comments on the exposition of these letters that we now have.

Aum in Judean-Christian Tradition

St. John opens his gospel with the words: “In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.” The ‘word’ is a Greek translation of “Logos” which means in classical Greek and neo-Platonic philosophy, the cosmic reason giving order, purpose, and intelligibility to the world. But it is used in a quasi-technical sense as a title of Christ in the Johannine writings. It cannot be denied that the term is used in the wisdom literature as the creative wisdom of God. Highly influenced by the Hellenic thought and Old Testament Philo too used the term “Logos” in order to give it a central place in his theological literature. But **The New Bible Dictionary** Inter-varsity Press admits that logos is identified “with the name of God.” As the Christian God is a God of three, i.e. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so the word or logos is also used for Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity. St. John did not reveal the “word” who was in the beginning, who was with God and who was God till his final revelation, where John Confesses. “These things say the **Amen**, the faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the Creation of God (3:14).

The Jewish scripture used the word ‘Amen’ as a substitute for God. Isaiah had revealed “God of Amen” (65:16) in the sense that Amen is God, though the meaning of Amen is ‘so be it.’ Amen is used before or after taking an oath (Nu5:22; Dt.26:15; Ne. 5:13; Je.9:5) or welcoming a prophecy of good (1 ke.1:35; Je.27:6), or as an expression with a doxology or benediction (1 Ch. 16: 36) or as a part of synagogue worship (1 Cor. 4:16). So Jews, Christians, and Muslims use the word **Amen** in Hebrew, Greek, Latin and in all other Western or Eastern languages without reducing it in any form irrespective of the language they use.

Like Amen, **Aum** has been used by almost all denominations of the Hindus before taking an oath, before and after a prayer, at the time of blessing or during their worship. I very much doubt that the Hebrew word Aameen having its so-called Indo-European root, must have been taken from **Aum** through Zoroastrian literature. As an offspring of Judaism both Christians and Muslims freely use it in their prayer. There is little doubt to disbelieve the fact that the culture of India being the oldest, leaves its imprints on the sands of the entire Western civilization.



OM and Conch-Shell

The conch-shell represents **Nāda**, which forms the very basis of manifestation as it is through its agency that all kinds of forces can be generated and changes of form can be brought about. The Praṇava (the syllable OM) is the outermost expression of **Nāda** or that all-embracing subtle vibration from which the infinite variety of vibrations in the manifested universe are derived as the infinite number of colors are derived from white light. It is the **vācaka** (word) of Īśvara. This means not only that through its instrumentality the consciousness of the individual **Jīvātmā** (individual soul) can be made to merge with the consciousness of the **Paramātmā** (universal soul) but also that through its use all kinds of forces and powers can be invoked by those who have the necessary knowledge and purity of mind. It is really an expression on the physical plane of that fundamental natural power through which the natural functions of Īśvara are exercised and the necessary changes in the working of the universe brought about. Anyone who has heard the sound produced by a conch-shell and observed its resemblance to Praṇava will see at once the appropriateness of the common object as a symbol of the power which resides in **Nāda**. It is to invoke this primary divine power that the conch-shell is sounded in all Hindu ceremonies and the **Praṇava** is intoned before **saṅkalpa**, the resolve made at the beginning of every ceremony. In fact, all Vedic **Mantras** of high spiritual significance begin with the syllable OM.

Source: An Introduction to Hindu Symbolism by I. K. Taimni.

Published by: The Theosophical Publishing House, Madras.

Meditation Leading to Realisation of 'OM' (Heart of Śrī Gāyatrī)

By Subbaraya Sharma

This article makes a fascinating reading inasmuch as the author dwells on the meditation of Goddess Gāyatrī through 'Om̐kāra.' He speaks of the grace of Mother Gāyatrī. He takes the reader through the stages of spiritual unfoldment leading to the realisation of the Mother Supreme--Gāyatrī Devī. But let not the reader-aspirant rest contained with theoretical knowledge. He should do sādhanā and progress in spiritual life if he wants to experience the spiritual states talked about in the article. May Gāyatrī, the Mother of the Vedas, enlighten us all.

Let us look a little into the rationale of the foregoing. **Gāna** (music) means sound. There are different kinds of intonation--**parā**, **paśyantī**, **madhyamā** and **vaikharī**. To sing aloud the praises of the Gods or to utter His prayers equally aloud is known as **Vaikharī**. If Gāyatrī is recited piously even in this mode, the Devī graciously bestows Her favours on the reciter in a measure to suit his stage. The next higher stage is **Madhyamā** wherein the prayer consists in silent conscious recital of the **mantra**. The reward the Devī grants to Her devotee in this stage is of a higher kind, as a kind of divine illumination enlightens his soul. It is hard for ordinary devotees to aspire to the third higher stage. **Paśyantī** prayer, higher than inner recitation, exists not in the sphere of the physical plane. But **Paśyantī** is higher, we have said. Where does its excellence come from? This issue of supreme importance has to be faced. We have now to deal with far subtler powers and more ethereal, more esoteric paths. Since the Great Mother is known as Gāyatrī because she blesses those who sing to Her, we must try to unfold the mystery involved. Let us proceed on this task aided therein by Her special grace.

Referring to the four modes of intonation, Sri Sankaracharya states as follows in his ‘Prapañcasāra’:

Mūlādhārāt prathamam udito yas tu bhāvaḥ parākhyah.

Paścāt paśyantyatha hṛdayago buddhiyuñ madhyamākhyah

Purport: The primal sound which first issues out of the basic **Mūlādhāra** as **Parā** enters into the regions of the heart and is there known as **Paśyantī**. From here it penetrates into individual consciousness being known in this stage as **Madhyamā**. Says the **śruti**

Vaikharīśaktiniṣpattiḥ madhyamā śrutigocarā.

Dyotitārthā tu Paśyantī sūkṣmavāganadācinī.⁵

Purport: The subtle **Parāśakti** condenses into radiant definiteness as **Paśyantī** and still further into additional **Madhyamā** hardening still further into the gross **Vaikharī**.

We know that in the physical plane there is nothing higher than mental meditation. But there must be in every being some power subtler than the mind which induces the latter to formulate sound and express it. This power is the mysterious ‘Om̐kāra’ identical with Sri Sarasvatī or Śabdabrahman, the primordial sound itself, but a counterpart of the supreme Gāyatrī Devī. It is this Sarasvatī Devī who presides over speech also. This single Śabdabrahman erupts into seven different Mother Śakti’s known as Brāhmī, Māheśvarī, and so on. The fifty letters of the Sanskrit alphabet are comprised within these seven powers. Primarily, our speech is derived from the causal nexus of the ‘Om̐kāra’ in-dwelling the **suṣumnā nāḍī** or the central subtle nerve. It is the drawing out of this ethereal ‘Om’ that gives us the **Paśyantī** mode. The distinct pronouncement of the letters of the ‘Om̐kāra’ is indispensable in our ultimate realisation of the essence of the latter. In other words, constant repetition of the syllable of ‘Om’ is essential for our grasping the secret of the **Paśyantī** mode. From **Paśyantī** we ascend to the **Kalā** stage or the stage standing for the **Parā** mode. It is from this **parā** sounding board that we should finally vault into the serene regions where the Great

Gāyatī Devī reigns Supreme. If one has reached this stage, he has attained the final goal of absolute absorption. If only one keeps up his faith steadily during all these stages, he may be sure that the gracious Gāyatrī Devī forsakes him not but upholds him right up to the end. That is termed ‘**Om̐kāra-varṇo-ccāraṇe** [a?] where the **anusvāram** is added to any letter one pleases [?] before he pronounces it. But instead of conjoining ‘M’ to every letter, if only a devotee confines it to ‘O,’ visualises the resultant ‘Om’ standing upright in the middle of the forehead with its base between the eyebrows, and then concentrates its meditation with the inner vision fixed on this crucial point, he has set about his **Japa** well. If one persists in this exercise, then, in course of time, his inmost self will pulsate with the subtle rhythm of the mystic ‘Om.’

But even the ‘**nāmoccāraṇe**’ of ‘Om’ is of the **Madhyama** order. Why? The subtle self-audition of ‘Om̐kāra’ is **paśyantī**. Ere one ascends to this he has to practise the constant silent repetition of the syllable form ‘Om.’ Therefore, this silent repetition is in the middle between the subtle self-audition and the open **vaikharī** or repetition aloud. The **Madhyamā** stage is thus in contact with **Paśyantī** on one side and the **Vaikharī** on the other. Hence the repetition of the syllable form ‘Om’ state is known as only the **Madhya-ma** stage.

Let us now glance at the **modus operandi** of the Devī’s grace as it descends to save the devotee engaged in silent repetition of ‘Om̐kāra.’ If one is to succeed in realising the splendour of ‘Om’ as it blazes upward from between the eyebrows, one has perforce to master the **Kumbhaka** mentioned by sage Patañjali in the practice of **Prāṇāyāma**. He should, in addition, have mastered the several qualifications resulting from the preparatory rites leading up to Gāyatrī before he arrives at ‘**Om̐kāra dhyāna**’ as for example, **Virakti** (non-attachment), **Pavitrata** (purity of mind and body) and also the purity of the whole system through regulated **sāttvika** dieting, realising that he is not the body but a spiritual counterpart of the ‘self’ (**Paramātmā**), the intense concentration sealing up all the avenues of sense-data and so on. Evidently, the Omniscient Rishis have so construed the **Sandhyā Karma** that no one should take up any part of it as independent of the other and proceed: he must begin from the bottom of the ladder and ascend every step after thoroughly mastering it. It follows from

⁵ Not very clear. “Says the Śruti” ! How to know which one, where, etc.

this that none would find it of any practical use to proceed with the stages outlined further on if he has not acquired competency by performing the several rites mentioned from the beginning.

The intense cogitation on ‘Om’ as it blazes erect from between the eyebrows brings about a consciousness of bright splendour in our subtle inner self. If one dwells steadily on this perception, it assumes shortly the orbed figure of the rising Sun shedding its rosy splendour all around. This is the mysterious entity known to esoterists as **bindu-nāda** with its central nucleus of the thousand radiant rays. The central nucleus of **bindu** of a rosy sphere, shooting for [?] the brilliant rays all round even as the core from the heart of a diamond does, is Sūrya or the Sun. It is the power of this Sūrya that is known as Sāvitrī –who in turn is none else but the counterpart of Devī Gāyatrī. The devotee must exalt himself into the contemplation of this effulgence as proceeding from his own inmost self, nay, as himself. If one fails in this identifying himself with this Jyoti – then he has failed to enter into the arena of the spirit and wanders disconsolate in the outer precincts. His cursed illusory sense-data have triumphed and have prevented his inmost soul from energizing and steadying the fleeting glimpse of the infinite splendour hovering on his vision. The real work of the **Jñāna** or right knowledge he may have won till then begins from this crucial point in consonance with the scriptural citation ‘**Jñānān mokṣaḥ.**’ When once one realizes that he is not the body or the senses, it follows inevitably that his ego should be something else. If at this stage he identifies himself with the shimmering sheen dancing before his inward eye and persists in meditation, the great Gāyatrī Devī steps in and puts to rout the thousand and one sense-impulses eager to win him back. She causes the splendour of realisation to grow stronger till it reaches its meridian, and she enables the subtlest part of his subtle self to give heed to the mystic ‘Om’ which is naught else but the primordial buzz before active manifestation begins. Mere repetition of the verbal ‘Om’ takes one nowhere. It is the ardent visualisation of the ‘M,’ the **anusvāra** and the nucleotic point of the effulgent inner orb that renders the silent recitation of ‘Om’ efficacious. Says Sri Sankara here:

Om̐kāram bindusaṃyuktam nityam dhyāyanti yoginaḥ.

Kāmadam mokṣadam tasmād om̐kārya namo namaḥ.

Purport: One who has embraced the path of **Brahmavidyā** (soul-knowledge) should incessantly meditate on the mystic ‘Om’ connected to Bindu. By so meditating he secures unto himself all that he longs for, nay, **Moksha** itself. I bow reverently before this mighty ‘Om.’

It is clear, therefore, how the intense one-pointed meditation on the sacred ‘Om’ as it stands for the inward light confers on one the abundant grace of Śrī Gāyatrī Devī. This inward light or causal **Bindu** integrates unto itself all the other divine powers. The hollowed Śāligrāma stone but typifies the mystic point of piercing glow. The līṅga or phallus is but the physical counterpart of this peerless point (**Bindu**), this point being but a point devoid of beginning and end. The microcosm is this **Bindu**. **Hiraṇyagarbha**, the golden-wombed is only this **Bindu**. Even if it dwindles into the tiniest dot imaginable yet it persists. One must persevere in its contemplation till the mystic buzz of the ‘Om’ is heard by the enthused and infused inmost soul. This is the esoteric rationale of the **Madhyamā** mode.

What now is the nature of the **Paśyantī** mode? If the silent meditation of ‘Om’ leads one up gradually to the psychic audition of its mystic hum, then is **Paśyantī** reached. At its rise, this hum sounds hazy and undefined but as it proceeds the tinkling of tiny golden bells, the mellow flute’s sweet-drawn pliants, and the harmonic whisperings of the Vīṅā are heard. It is the identifying of one’s self with this **nāda** or spiritual harmony that is meant by the mantric invocation **Sarasvatīm āvāhayāmi**. It is the presiding divinity of this ‘Om̐kāra’ that we know of as Sarasvatī, who is Śrī Gāyatrī reincarnate. The freeing of a devotee of his shackles imposed by illusion while immersed in the subtle music of Her meditation is stated as the fact the Gāyatrī Devī saves those who pray Her for aid. This ‘Om̐kāra’ music is beloved of the Devī. The sacred texts declare that it is beyond the power of anyone to describe adequately the bliss enjoyed by a devotee while engaged in his ‘Om̐kāra’ **nāda** meditation just as a stag in the last throes of his death is said to expire to the sound of sweet music. The worldly self of a **Bhakta** lost in meditation of the celestial ‘Om,’ feels snared, bound, and pierced to death and expires in proportion as the real self bursts into the illimitable heaven of perfect realisation. Sri Sankara refers to the same truth as follows:

Baddham vimuktacāñcalyam nādagandhakacāraṇāt.

Manaḥpāradam āpnoti nirālabākhyakheṭanam.

Purport: Just as sulphur binds the restless mercury into a round whole, the steady, wholehearted meditation on ‘Om’ integrates into one-pointedness. The devotee is ever wandering in mind and makes it lose itself in the bliss of the infinite. That ‘Om’ with its subtle soul-stirring music, is verily Devī Sarasvatī Herself and is referred to in the Śruti as follows:

Akṣaram paramo nādaḥ śabdabrahmeti kathyate.

Mūlādhāragatā śaktiḥ svādhārā bindurūpiṇī.

Tasyām utpadyate nādaḥ sūkṣmabījād ivāñkuraḥ.

Eṣā Sarasvatī Devī sarvabhūtaguhāśrayā.

Uccārayet parāśaktim brahmarandhranivāsiniṃ.

Purport: Verily, the pronouncing of the letters of the heavenly Sanskrit yields celestial sounds. The absolute which lies coiled up in the **Mūlādhara** plexus under the aspects of Devī Kuṇḍalini or Sandhyā Devī, at times integrates into the primordial which in fact is the source of its manifestation. Just as the Vitamin inside the seed is ever ready to sprout into stems and leaves, the original hum that precedes creation is ever ready to sprout into the sacred ‘Om’. It is this casual tonal energy that sits enshrined in the loftiest nuclear knot of our brain as the mighty Devī Sarasvatī. One should worship this Devī in all sincerity. In other words, one should ceaselessly recite and meditate on the sacred ‘Om’. It is this profoundly mystic stage in which one’s soul listens in utter joy to the sound of the spiritual ‘Om’ that is known as the **Paśyantī**. They who adore the Supreme Gāyatrī Devī with chastened hearts are ever led by into the blessed paths of eternal salvation.

Only **Parā** remains to be explained by us out of the four modes of tonal expression. The Upanishads have it that **Parā** is

Adhamātra parāśayo [?] tata ūrdhvam parāt param.

Nādo yāvan manas tāvan nādānte tu manonmanī.

Meaning that that is **parā** which is in the form of **ardhamātrā** or split syllable. What do we mean by split syllable? Everyone knows of the golden aftertone that ekes out the sound of a bell after its ringing stops. You must imagine an ‘im’ (?) a thousand times subtler than the above, nay, a long-drawn sigh so faint that one knows it not apart from the twinkle of the cosmic silence. It is this mysterious tone that is termed by adepts as **parā** or **kalā**. As the devotee goes on repeating within himself the sacred ‘Om’ he reaches a stage when he knows that the intonation has almost vanished. He has become nil, and that his energy has almost vanished. He has become so limp and listless that he does not know on whom to meditate upon and what for to meditate. It is at this stage when his physical vitality is at the lowest ebb, that his spiritual ego vaults at one bound into the haven of truth and he realises that what till then he knew of as his ‘self’ was nought else but the Absolute and that there reigned in the cosmos but one power and that power- –Sri Gāyatrī Devī. This is the occult exegesis of the **mantra Gāyatrīm āvāhayāmi**. There is no other course open to him at this stage except this ‘**Gāyatrīm Āvāhayāmi**’ which is exactly the same as ‘**Aham Brahmā’smi**’, ‘**Acyuto’ham**’, ‘**Śivo’ham**’ and so on. It is a truism that the transcendent is incorporeal, that is, pure spirit. If one believes to the contrary, that is, that the supreme power is organic built, a devotee may as well seek his **summum bonam** in the manifested cosmic precincts and need not face utmost travail in the lone regions of the subtly spiritual.

They whose utmost concern is to escape for ever from struggling in the riotous stream of life and death and who for this engage themselves steadily in the performance of all mandatory rites and keep to the path of righteousness will, if they at the particular stage of their meditation denoted by the vanishing point of their phenomenal ego, keep enough spiritual grip on themselves to plunge into the sea of ‘**Aham Brahmāsmi**’ unflinchingly reach the serene sphere of **Vaikuṇṭha**. Here looms the mysterious line that divides off the dualists (**dvaitins**) and the non-dualists (**advaitins**). The key to non-duality lies in this identical crisis of the spirit. What now is the lock to be opened and how to open it? The non-dualist also

(who unlike the dualist believes in the spirit alone and not matter) makes his leap at this stage from the springboard ‘**Aham Brahmāsmi,**’ but he is keen enough to soon shed off ‘**aham**’ from his **dhyāna** and soars to a stage when perfect oblivion of one’s ego supervenes and there reigns nought but one transcendent consciousness. The fruition of the long lesson taught by his Guru on ‘**Tat tvam asi**’, and ‘**Aham Brahmāsmi**’ and so on is here reached. Here is reached the highest and the holiest reward which it is in the power of Śrī Devī Gāyatrī to bestow upon Her beloved who has heroically pared away the I-ness in his meditation and blissfully realizes that he has no self of his own but that only one, transcendent consciousness reigns supreme as has already been said.

The attainment of the foregoing is what is known as ‘**parama puruṣārtha**’ or the highest end one’s soul has to seek. It is this end that is envisaged in such mantras ‘**Omity-ekākṣaram Brahma, Gāyatrīm āvāhayāmi**’ and in **Prāṇāyāma**. Though sectarian **bhaktas** fix their meditation during Gāyatrī Japa on Śiva, Viṣṇu, Devī and so on, yet all of them must admit that the finite verb of the whole **mantra** is ‘**dhīmahi**’ which means ‘we meditate.’ In other words, this denotes that the real work begins with **dhyāna**. All our exegesis on this great **mantra** till now has pivoted around **dhyāna** and its mode. The deities one prays to may be of any aspect. The fact remains that all of them are appealed to for only one reward, self-realisation. Self-realisation leads to identification with the one alone that reigns without a second. Whatever name and shape one may attribute to this single reality, it is inevitable that during meditation there looms only one royal road, viz., that through the realisation of the **bindu, nāda, kalā**. Proceeding along this road, one invariably arrives at the awareness that his individual ego is nowhere and that is but a reflection of the Supreme soul in the infinite splendour of universal consciousness which blazes and illuminates his soul. One may identify this splendour with Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Sūrya, Nārāyaṇa or with the plane on which Devī Gāyatrī moves. But it is mandatory on a **Dvija** to concentrate solely on Śrī Gāyatrī and not on any other form or name. It is only through Her specific worship one must ascend to the spiritual realisation of one Absolute self. This end attained, everything has been attained. The eternal aids of right knowledge, right ritual piety, and devotion are essential to one about to enter into meditation. It is conceivable that the aforesaid virtues would lead one into salvation in ways distinct from and peculiar to each whether one follows in his worship

Vedāntic, Mīmāṃsīc or Bhakti paths, he at length arrives at his goal which is the goal for all with the help of the spiritual strength derived from all the three modes in combination. Need we say that this goal is self-realization than which nothing higher can be conceived or imagined. **Dhyāna** stands for Yoga, that is, union or identification. They who believe that the goal of existence can be reached otherwise than through Yoga are like the frogs in a little well illuding themselves into the faith that there can be no other stretch of water more huge than theirs. Verbal quibbles and torturing may help some to pile up treatises enough to fill the universe, but all these will blaze away into a handful of ashes through the fire lit by a single axiom expressing hard-won practical truth. To tread the path of the esoteric adepts and come face to face with the light that was never on land or sea and to hear the sound that only the still small voice within can hear, to descend at the time of meditation into the lowest depths of phenomenal ego and rise proportionately higher into the spiritual realisation of ‘**Aham Brahmāsmi**’ and gradually to get rid entirely of the ‘**Aham**’ revel, self-oblivious in the nectarine waves of supreme consciousness (**dhyānavismṛtiḥ samādhiḥ**, say the **Śrutis**) these are hard, matter of fact experiences felt by the practical Yogi alone and never by any airy theorist or formalist. It is to suit such actual experiences that the eternal seers have laid down sayings like “**Tat tvam asi,**’ ‘**Aham Brahmāsmi**’, etc. Any amount of scholastic brilliance devoid of experimentation is like the beating of one’s in-effectual wings in the void. If one does not during his meditation identify himself completely with the object meditated upon, he cannot advance a single step along the path. This is a truth attested to not only by the **Śāstras**, but also by the hard self-experience and consequent self-realisation of innumerable enlightened souls.

The worship of Śrī Gāyatrī Devī is indispensable for both **Jñāna** and **Karma** modes of attaining the goal. The Vedas have enjoined that one should do **Japa** with only the three-divisional Gāyatrī Mantra. The fourth **pada** ‘**Parorajasi savathom**’ is entirely concerned with the awful mystery of the reflected Īśvara alone and deals with His threefold function in the phenomenal universe and His final rebound to shine alone as the secondless absolute.

A few **Dvijās** pronounce the **mantra** ‘**Sumukham Sampuṭam caiva,**’ which is a **mudrā** rubric before commencing their Gāyatrī Japa. **Mudrā** means that which binds or

limits. Do we not put under strong lock and key our treasures? This is **mudrā**. This **mudrā mantra** is for safeguarding our spiritual treasure. **Mudrā** may also mean imprisoning or putting under restraint undesirable persons. The forces of ignorance are constantly dragging our organs of sense and volitional impulses towards perishable passion ridden interests. Mudras are intended to aid our mental power to overcome these impulses of willful passion and to assume in all earnestness a feeling of pious devotion to the deities on whom we meditate. Among all the four and twenty **mudrās** of Gāyatrī, that which is termed **Sumukha** is the first one. **Sumukha** means a smiling face. Whether one is about to commence his **Sandhyā** or is about to enter into meditation, a smiling face is the prime requisite. By wearing a happy face one displays a firm resolve to put down all disturbing or distracting thoughts. A very adequate similitude exists between the occult poses of the hand required in **Sandhyā** (posture of hands showing the symbols of **mudras**) and the muscular posturing inculcated in the **Yoga Śāstra**. To fold together both the palms with fingers close and upright as when worshipping is called **Sumukha** pose. This kind of pose is conducive to a smiling face. To turn the joined palms backwards with the fingertips pointing to the chest and then to depress the fingers slightly till a small hollow is formed in the middle is known as ‘**Sampuṭa**.’

If now one brings down the fingers to touch the base of either palm, each set of five fingers encloses a hollow while the fists themselves remain bound together. This is a pose peculiar to **Karanyāsa**. In **Yoga Śāstra** this pose is termed ‘**mūlabandha**.’ This **mūlabandha**’ is the prime agent in helping the psychic current to flow along the central **Brahmarandhra** or **Suṣumnā nāḍī** closing at the same time the **iḍā** and **piṅgalā** plexuses. This process helps meditation considerably. That the fists are held close together while hollows are formed on either palm typifies both the closure of the **iḍā** and **piṅgalā**, and the opening of the **Suṣumnā**. The word ‘**sampuṭa**’ means binding together. It brings together various factors and then fuses them into a single whole and hence it is known as ‘**sampuṭa**.’ By performing the ‘**mūlabandha**’ pose one effects two results. One, in warding off all evil influences due to **tamogūṇa** and the other, the herding together of all these disturbing tendencies and the binding them together to be a corner.

To expatiate on all the **mudrās** would mean enlarging unduly this book. **Mudrās** are of vast help to one who practises meditation. If those who desire to know more of the subject and a history of all the four and twenty **mudrās** confine themselves to the four important poses mentioned in our **Ramāyaṇa Anthartha** [?], viz. **mūla**, **jalandhara**, **uddyāna** and **shanmukhī** and learn the secret of these from their religious preceptors, it would serve their purpose amply.

Source: The Spiritual Significance of Sandhyākarma (Rituals).

Raso'ham apsu Kaunteya prabhā'smi śāśisūryayoḥ.

Praṇavaḥ sarvavedeṣu śabdaḥ khe pauruṣam nṛṣu.

O son of Kunti (Arjuna), I am the taste of [in] water, the light of [in]the sun and the moon, the syllable 'Om' in the Vedic mantras, I am the sound in ether and ability [manliness?] in man.

--(Gītā: Ch. 7:8).



Realisation of ‘Om’ is the Aim of Meditation

Y. Subbaraya Sharma

The legend under reads:

**Om̐kāra and Gāyatrī are one and the
same in essence**

**Om ityekākṣaram Brahma.
Agnir Devatā.
Brahmā ityārṣam.
Gāyatram chandas.
Paramātmā svarūpam.
Sāyujyam viniyogaḥ.**⁶

The single letter ‘Om’ is the only existent Self. Agni is its deity. The four-faced Brahmā is its Ṛṣi. Gāyatrī is the metre. It is the supreme soul itself. Realisation is its purpose.

Om’ ityekākṣaram Brahma.’ ‘Om’ is synonymous with the supreme power. From the scriptural point of view, ‘Om’ is synonymous with the supreme power [sic]. Om is built out of the letters A, U, M. In other words, the syllable is the integrate of the three sounds-- Akāra, Ukāra and Makāra. ‘A’ combines with ‘U’ to form ‘O’, and ‘O’ combines with ‘M’ to form ‘Om̐kāra.’ This is the **Turīya** or the highest of sounds. Why? Because when we talk our lips play a part. But when we pronounce ‘Om’ our lips get closed. It is only when we pronounce ‘Om’ and stop there with that we realize how ‘Om’ is the supermost of single sounds in consonance with the mantra **‘Om’ ityekākṣaram Brahma.’** This post ‘Om’ state is styled the ‘state of realisation’ for it is attained only after the complete subdual of all

⁶ Sanskrit form is terribly wrong.

phenomenal illusion. The mere recital once of the syllable 'Om' does not transport us to the state. It is only when we meditate profoundly on its inner significance and repeat it continually within our heart that it helps us to realize why 'Om' is '**ityekākṣaram brahma**'. One who by intense meditation knows how to enter into **samādhi** should contemplate on parallel lines the merging of the three states of **Jāgrat** (waking state), Svapna (dreaming state), and **Suṣupti** (dreamless sleep state) into that of **Turīya**, highest ecstatic union with the supreme bliss, and the merging of the three letters A.U.M. into the eternal silence of realisation. Only then he would come to know intuitively the real significance of this great syllable. It is then that he feels in his inmost soul how 'Om' is "**itye-kāsharam brahma**". This is the state known as "**Nirvikalpa Samādhi**," or unclouded union with the supreme. The truth underlying 'Om̐kāra' pertains to eternal verities. Om is the substrate that persists in all the three phases of time, past, present, and future and in the eternity which embraces all these partial phases as its limbs. 'O' is the primeval source from which Vedic sounds have emerged. '**Om**' is the storehouse of all celestial powers. It is the holiest of holies. To be brief, the aptness of meditating on the mantra '**Om, ityekāksharam brahma**' will find fulfillment only when one realises thereby the state of bliss absolute of final liberation deep in his own spiritual self.

"**Agnir Devatā.**" This mantra means that the immanent deity of 'Om', "**ityekāksharam brahma**" is Agni, what does this signify? The sages define Agni as the power which unveils or displays in brilliant light the truth. Here, the God of fire enables the meditator to realize the full force of the mantra '**Om ityekāksharam brahma**'; so He is styled the Devatā of the **mantra**. Not only does Agni dispel the gloom of the spiritual darkness of the **sādhaka** and enable him to realise the supreme bliss, but also makes it plain to others how the **kartā** is for the time being submerged in the ocean of supreme felicity.

What is the exact state of the particular **jīvātmā** lost in **samādhi** by inwardly meditating on 'Om'? He remains deaf to the blowing of conches and the blare of trumpets. All the avenues of perception are closed. The manifold activities of his restless mind whether brought forth by will or arising at random, all reflections on the deeds he has wrought--these vanish away absolutely. The distinction between self and non-self totally disappears. By not

the least sign does he betray his being alive; nor does he feel that he slumbers--in short, he has ceased to feel. Death dost not approach the region he hath entered into. There is no trace of self-conscious breathing. The body, rigid as an upright log, maintains its erect position for any length of time without bending. This is the state of supreme blessedness or ecstatic yogic slumber brought on by true inward realisation of the sacred 'Om̐kāra'.

Both 'Om̐kāra' and 'Prajāna' mean one and the same thing. The Vedas define 'Prajāna' as '**prāṇān[an?]taḥ sarvān paramātmani prāṇāmayatītyetasmāt Prajānaḥ [?]**'⁷--in other words, 'Om̐kāra' is known as 'Prajāna' because while one is sunk in its realisation all his psychophysical activities are withdrawn into the bosom of the supreme self. It is due to this withdrawal that one who is seated in the **samādhi** posture resembles more a rock than a living being liable to movements of his limbs.

The State of the Samādhi

What then does differentiate the body of a **samādhi** from that of a carcass? It is the undiminished warmth of the body. No one has as yet heard of a corpse retaining warmth in its trunk or limbs. A **samādhi** on the other hand possesses in his normal state life, awareness of the mind and movement, of the limbs though all these for the time being are indrawn into quiescence in the supreme bliss which he is enjoying through the contemplation of the 'Om̐kāra'. A corpse generally lies around the body of a **samādhi** and never unbends towards the ground. A corpse as we said before has no warmth. But since the fire of realization burns bright in the spirit of the **samādhi** his body displays wholesome warmth. Not only this; no expression of any kind is discernible in the features of a corpse. Look on the other hand at the countenance of a man lost in **samadhi**. Since spiritual perception of the highest order reigns in this inmost soul the rays of divine affluence radiate from his features. These are the main differences that separate a lifeless corpse from the body of a **Sādhi** in **Samādhi**.

⁷ The original Sanskrit is terribly defective in rendering. Or, we don't understand. Here the text reads: Pranānthsarvan! Of course there are no diacritical marks anywhere.

It is clear therefore that it is the radiant life-giving warmth, in other words Agni, that reveals to one's own self or to other selves the induction or realisation in one brought on by meditation on the sacred 'Om'. Others cannot visualize the total integration of the psycho-physical activities of a **samādhin** in the light of lights. That which enables them to guess that such may be the case is the existence of warmth in his body due to the presence of God Agni, the sole witness. Just as a Judge decides cases brought before him with the help of witnesses, so also do we decide that the **kartā** who has sought spiritual union in **samādhi** has attained his object from the warmth of the fire of realization glowing in his frame. This fire of realization is known to initiate under several names in the Upanishads such as **Samvartāgni, Cijjyoti, Jaljyoti** [?], **Brahmāgni, Jñānadīpa, Svayamprabhe** (spiritual afflatus in the shape of a circle), **Vidyuddīpa** (lightning cutting asunder sense-fed darkness arising in the regions of the ether of consciousness or **Cidākāśa**), **Paratara-jyoti** or transcendental light and so on.

Vidyuddīpa is that which burning bright in our heart of hearts glows as the Supreme Fire of realization destroying root and branch all kinds of illusory selfishness or spiritual ignorance. The Lord of the Gīā has also alluded to this fire in his "**Jñānāgnis sarvakarmāṇi bhasmasāt kurute Arjuna**". It is clear therefore that the fire which bursts before the soul of one drowned in deep meditation on the sacred 'Om' and helps him to attain **Sāyujya** is none other than the God Agni.

The Self –OM—the Supreme

Brahmā Ityārsham. This reference to Brahmā as the Rishi of the **mantra** is due to the fact that this four-faced First-born Lord of creation meditated for himself on the Transcendent secret of 'Om' and then gave out for the benefit of the Universe the great **mantra**. He stands as the Rishi (seer) of this **mantra**. The Rishi of a **mantra** is further defined thus: "**Jñānasya parāgamāt Ṛṣiḥ,**" that is, he is the Rishi of mantra who has first realized in his own soul the supreme bliss of it. It may also be stated that Brahmā has been associated with the sacred syllable to denote the esoteric truth that the greatness of 'Om' is synonymous with the mystery of creation itself.

**Statement Showing the Immanent Spiritual Import of
The Three Digits of the Sacred Om**

AKĀRA	UKĀRA	MAKĀRA ⁸
Virāt Svarūpa (Cosmic whole)	Hiraṇyagarbha (the Cosmic Bindu)	Isvara (Lord of Creation)
Viśva (All-spreading)	Taijasa (Universal Power)	Prājña (All knower)
Jāgrat (Ever Awake)	Svapna (Dream)	Sushupti (Quiescent)
Caturmukha Brahmā (Four-faced Brahmā, the creator)	Vishṇu (maintainer)	Rudra (the withdrawer)
Bindu (point)	Nāda (Sound)	Kalā (Vibration)
Hrasva (low)	Dīrgha (high tone)	Pluta (cadence)
Sṛṣṭi (Unveiling of Cosmos)	Sthiti (upholding)	Laya (integration)
Bhūmi (central world)	Antariksha (firmament)	Svarga (Heavenly abode)
Rig Veda (knowledge)	Yajur Veda (Karma)	Sāma Veda (moksha)
Gārhapatyāgni (household sacrifice)	Dakṣiṇāgni (Sacrifice to pitṛs)	Āhavanīya (Sacrifice to gods)
Prātaḥkāla (morning)	Madhyāhna (Midday)	Sāyaṃkāla (evening)
Rajoguṇa (restless activity)	Satvaguṇa (self-possessed discrimination)	Tamoguṇa (indifference to the world)

Note: One more column each to the left and right is missing in the above chart. ***
Explain what is missing.**

Gāyatram Chandas. The metre (**Chandas**) of this 'Om̐kāra' **mantra** is known as the Gāyatṛī. The metre governing a verse lays down the number of letters in a line, the quantity of syllables, euphony, etc., with a view to rendering the spoken sound well-knit and harmonious. The Gāyatṛī invocation is a three-divisioned one; so also is the mighty 'Om' a

⁸ There is one more column (the fourth) giving Om̐kāra as the heading but no other detail. Maybe some cut and paste will have to be done. The initial nos. 1 to 12 do not appear here.

three-lettered one. The Immanent spiritual import of the three digits of the sacred 'Om' is given in the Statement.

'Om̐kāra' and the **mantra** of Gayatri are one and the same in essence.

'**Paramātmā Svarūpam.**' Om̐kāra' is of the same essence as that of the Supreme Soul. One who is lost in the bliss of contemplation of 'Om' is for that period the one Absolute Self itself. This **mantra** proves beyond the shadow of doubt that even **Savingānubhava** (enjoyment of fruits of good action in higher worlds) is temporal and that the state of absolute realization of oneness is possible to a true meditator on 'Om̐kāra' in this life itself.

Sāyujyam Viniyogaḥ. In consonance with the Vedic dictum '**Omityevam dhyāyatha ātmānam. Svasti vaḥ pārāya tamaṣaḥ parastāt**' the end and aim of meditation on 'Om̐kāra' is final realization (**moksha**) even if it be for a short while in this present body of ours. This **mantra** proves to the hilt the truth that both the **Jīvātmā** and the **Paramātmā** are one and the same.

In brief, the heart of the heart of Gāyatrī consists in this: **Moksha** is that state of the soul when through absorption of the self in 'Om̐kāra' one realizes the core without a second. Further, this **mantra** emphasises the truth that liberation is not a state of post-mortem blessedness in another worlds, but is an achievement possible here in this life through steady contemplation and entry into 'Om̐kāra' **samādhi. Gāyatrī Devī, Om̐kāra Svarūpa and Paramātmā** are convertible terms denoting the one extent who is **Sat** (Being), **Cit** (Consciousness), **Ānanda** (Bliss), besides 'Om̐kāra'. The Gāyatrī and the **Prāṇāyāma mantras** also illustrate the same truth.

Source: *The Spiritual Significance of Sandhyākarma (Rituals)* - (1971)

30, Sampige Road, Malleswaram, Bangalore.

Every individual contains all aspects of the whole of existence, from the grossest physical to the subtlest spiritual, in a potential form. What is more, everyone can realize It with appropriate spiritual efforts (Sādhana). And the Upāsanā or meditation on Om is one of the chief and effective means of realising It.

- Swami Mukhyananda.

AKSHARA OM

Sidhanta Tulasi

Thinkers and scientists are to ponder over the symbol OM in relation to sound and light and thereby prove in veritable terms the significance of **OM Ityekākṣaram Brahma.**

Author.

Praṇava is Aum. Aum is a sound containing within it commencement, continuation and culmination of all expressions.

Vāk is spoken sound or word. **Artha** is the object conveyed by the spoken word. **Pada** is the object in the form of sound. **Artha** is the object conveyed by the **Pada**. **Vāk** plus **Artha** is **Vāgartha** or **Padārtha**. Śiva is **Purusha**. Pārvatī is **Prakṛti**. **Purusha** is latent in **Prakṛti**. **Prakṛti** is the manifestation of **Purusha**. **Purusha** or Śiva is infinite and omnipresent manifesting in the finite **Prakṛti** through infinite colors, forms, shapes, qualities, and sounds. The former is immanent and the latter is apparent. Śiva-Pārvatī or **Purusha-Prakṛti** is but the **Śabda-artha, Pada-artha, or Vāg-artha**. Kālidāsa, the great Sanskrit poet, refers to Siva and Parvati when he says in devotional expression **Vāgartha**, which is **AUM**, the all-pervading Brahman, the unmanifest and manifest. It is the cosmic energy, both visible and invisible, subtle and gross.

God is the architect of the cosmos and of life. He generates, ordains and dissolves them both. This threefold functioning is represented in **Aum**, the sum total of cosmos and the single sound of life with the generator, ordainer and destroyer, all three in one. Mythologically, the three functions are performed by Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheshvara. **Aum**,

therefore, is not only a symbol of cosmos and the life process in their activity but the very representative of the divine Trinity.

The ocean is water in abundance. It has waves on its surface. The ocean and its waves are not different from each other. Wave after wave is projected, sustained and swallowed by the ocean instantly. This threefold process is that of the sound **Aum**. The sounds of the ocean and **Praṇava** are alike. The mind is an ocean ever engaged in the triple action of originating, maintaining and withdrawing into itself the thoughts ceaselessly. Thoughts are in the mind as the waves are in the ocean. By meditation on the **Aum**, we are actually meditation [meditating?] on the universal activity, life-cycle and thought process and realize thereby the infinite energy behind all activity, eternity beyond the life-cycle of birth, breathing and death; and the cosmic mind transcending all thoughts as we realize the existence of a vast ocean beneath the waves.

Light is colorless. The same appears to be colorful when refracted and reflected by the prism. A disk of diverse colors when rotated fast appears to be of pure whiteness merging in it all colors. Rain-drop is colorless, odorless and tasteless when it is fresh from the sky. But the same acquires color, odor and taste on account of its contact with earth. Adulterated water becomes distilled and pure when boiled. Similarly, sound while emanating from silence is **Aum** in its subtle form and is capable of further diversification into infinite sounds. The diverse sounds, when heard from a distance, lose their diversity and merge into one sound; and that is **Aum**.

Brahman is often described in negative terms such as Inexpressible, Immutable, Infinite, etc. The same infinite and formless Brahman assumes innumerable forms of finiteness, sounds of specification, etc. On the analogy of colorless light and tasteless raindrop, the Brahman of infiniteness appears to be of finite forms, which are infinite in number. In the reverse process, all diversities when dissolved, transcended or merged are Brahman the Infinite and **Akshara**. Aum is Akshara Brahman in the sense it resembles and represents Brahman in infiniteness as well as in its potentiality and process of producing infinite sounds.

Modern Science has advanced to such an extent that it can transform one form of energy into another. Sound energy can be converted into Light energy and vice-versa. **Śabda** is sound. **Artha** is object. **Pada** or word is but a sound. **Pada-artha** is a combination of the word sound and the object conveyed by the word sound. When the word 'woman' is uttered, immediately the form of a woman comes to the mind's eye. So also all words bring their respective objects to the mind. Among the languages, Sanskrit is the one which is most scientific in the sense that it can very faithfully and objectively picturize the objects through the respective word sounds. By feeding the word sounds into a computer capable of converting sound waves into light waves, one can clearly see on the screen the images of the corresponding objects. When the sound **Stree** [?] is transformed into light waves, the form of a woman will be drawn on the screen. The sound **Aum** represents Brahman the formless. Its form or expression is perceptible in the threefold activity of **śṛṣṭi** (creation), **sthiti** (sustenance) and **laya** (withdrawal). And they are all-pervading since every perceptible manifestation is bound by the threefold action. And that threefold activity is **Aum**, the insignia of Brahman. When this sound **Aum** is fed into the specific computer under reference, one is sure to find on the screen the formless Brahman as the **Praṇava**, the sound cycle in the **Praṇava** form of light cycle with a stout, cyclic round and stop. Thinkers and scientists are to ponder over the symbol **Aum** in relation to sound and light and thereby prove in veritable terms the significance of **OM ITYEKĀKSHARAM BRAHMA**.

Sounds are combinations of vowels and consonants. Vowels can exist in and through consonants and also independent of consonants. But consonants require vowel sounds to formulate themselves into words. Every word, when articulated, has a commencement, continuation and culmination corresponding to the threefold activity of the sound **Aum**. The three put together are the very life-breath of every utterance and expression. **Prakṛti** is the manifestation or expression of **Purusha**. The life spirit or undercurrent of **Prakṛti** is **Purusha**. So also, all sound pictures invariably have in them the basic **Aum** sound. It is inevitable and immanent as the **Purusha** is. **Purusha** is **Akshara**; so also **Praṇava** is **Akshara** conveying in it the spirit of the all-pervading Brahman.

Human experience is in four states -- **Jāgrat** (wakeful), **Svapna** (dream), **Sushupti** (sleep) and **Turīya** (transcendental). The fourth state **Turīya** is persistently present in and through the three states of wakefulness, dream and dreamless sleep as well as independent of them as the thread is in a garland of flowers. **Aum** is the single sound invariably latent in every utterance, expression, sound and in their corresponding manifestation. Rather, **AUM** is the very breath of all as **Turīya** is of all states of consciousness. Therefore, **Aum** is the emblem of the **Ātman, Brahman, Turīya or Purusha**.

Blessed are they who by meditating on **Aum** transcend all mentation, manifestation, variation and thereby attain the Eternity, the **Akshara Brahman**.



THE GIGANTIC PLAN⁹

[Om Temple]

My whole ambition in life is to set in motion machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of everybody, and then let men and women settle their own fate. Let them know what our forefathers as well as other nations have thought on the most momentous questions of life... We must have a temple, for, with the Hindus, religion must come first. We will make it a non-sectarian temple, having only 'Om', as the symbol, the greatest symbol, of any sect. 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. Secondly, in connection with this temple there should be an institution to train teachers who must go about teaching religion and giving secular education to our people; as we have been already carrying religion from door to door, let us along with it carry secular education also. That can be easily done. Then the work will extend through these bands of teachers and preachers, and gradually we shall have similar temples in other places, until we have covered the whole of India. That is my plan. It may appear gigantic, but it is much needed.

-Swami Vivekānanda.

⁹ There is a picture of Svami Vivekananda, next to the title.

Svami Ramatirtha

Ye are the lamp and the moth. The bitterest enemy that ye have, ye are that enemy, nobody else. While chanting OM, you have to work your mind up to such a pitch of realization of this fact, that all jealousy and ill-will may be rooted out of your mind.

Ramatirtha.

THUS SPAKE SWAMI RAMATIRTH ON THE SACRED SYLLABLE OM

Volumes have been written in the Sanskrit language and are still being written to-day on this sacred syllable. In fact, all the Vedas, all Vedānta, all the sacred Scriptures of the Hindus are contained in this syllable OM.

AMEN, AMIN, OM

There are many different sects in India, but all the sects pay their heartfelt homage to OM. The Hebrews, the Mohammedans and the Christians, all end their prayers with "Amen". Mohammedans also do that, although they do not pronounce the word is "Amen" but as "Ameen"

In your ordinary prayer what part does 'Amen' play? It comes in at a place where all speech stops, where all talk terminates, at a point where the soul melts into Divinity. You go on pouring the language of the heart until that point is reached where the whole being is about

to be melted into Divinity. Where the ineffable, the unspeakable, the inexpressible is reached, there is Amen. Then what is Amen? It is OM, nothing else. In all your sacred prayers Amen or Ameen occupies a place that exactly satisfies the meaning of the word Vedanta or "the end of speech," and very nearly represents the essence of Vedanta, that is OM.

The literal meaning of Vedanta is the end of knowledge, the end of speech, a point where all speech, all thought stops and *among the Hindus the whole of Vedanta is represented by OM.*

The meaning in which that word is used in the Vedas will now be brought to your notice – OM, A-U-M.

The Tāntriks explain OM in their own way. The Vaishṇavas have their own interpretation and all other Hindu sects have their peculiar explanation, but the interpretation that is about to be given is universal. It is to be given as the very fountainhead of Vedanta.

Significance

OM consists of A-U-M. The sound A, in accordance with the teachings of Vedanta, represents the so-called material universe, the solid-seeming world, the world of gross senses, all that is observed in your wakeful state. All the experiences of the dreamland are represented by U (oo). The observer as well as the things observed, both the subject and the objects of the dreaming state are denoted by the sound U. The psychic or astral plane, the world of spirits and all the heavens and hells are signified by U. M represents all the unknown in the deep sleep state and even in your wakeful state all that is unknown, all that is beyond the comprehension of the intellect.

Thus OM or A-U-M covers all the threefold experience of man and stands for all the phenomenal worlds. There is in A-U-M the common principle called **Amātra**, that which signifies the imperishable, immutable noumenon or the thing-in-itself running through and

pervading the threefold phenomena. This **Amātra** will be treated fully in another lecture. Suffice it to say that OM represents the All.

All the philosophy of Europe and America is based on the experience in the wakeful state and takes little or no notice of the experience of the dreaming or deep sleep state. The Hindu says, "You start with imperfect data. How can your solution of the problem to the universe be correct?"

The Three States

Philosophers limit themselves to the wakeful state. Mill, Hamilton, Berkeley, even Spencer and all of them base all their discoveries and investigations on the experience gained in the wakeful state alone. There they want to discover the fountainhead of all force, energy or any name they may please to give it. But see here. If you are given a mathematical problem and are asked to draw a conclusion, all the premises, the whole hypothesis you will have to consider. How can you solve a problem correctly when you take up only a part of the data? Vedanta takes the whole data. Your data are threefold, your worldly experiences are threefold, and all these should be considered. The world of wakeful state disappears entirely in the other two states and yet you, that is to say, the Self lives in the dream state and in the deep sleep state: you are not dead, are you? The intellect and personal consciousness vanish entirely in deep sleep state and yet the real Self, the real "you" remains the same. The unchangeable and immutable principle, this reality runs through the threefold worlds as your true Ātman or Self. This is OM. You have no right to take the mind, intellect or the brain as yourself. How do you know that the world exists, how do you know that the universe is here? Because you touch things, you see things, you hear things, you taste and smell things: that is the only proof. If you say, here is Victor Hugo, Robert Ingersol, Emerson, all these great thinkers are writing so much about this world, and so the world must exist. But we ask how do you know that religious books are there? You know they are there through the senses. Your senses are the only direct or indirect proof of the existence of this world.

Sensation

Sensation is the primary cause of all perception, intellection, etc. Sensation is not limited to your wakeful state. In your wakeful state, your senses are in the gross form, but do you not sense and perceive in your dreams, have you not sense organs peculiar to that state? The outer eyes and the outer ears are not working there. In the dreamland you create objects of senses and the corresponding sense organs or sense simultaneously. Thus we see that in the dream-land the senses and the objects sensed are like the positive and negative poles of the same power or as the obverse and reverse of the same coin. In dreams the subject and the objects spring up together. Both the subject and objects of the dreams are comprised by the sound U in A-U-M and the underlying reality in which both the subject and the objects appear as waves is the real Ātman or OM. According to Vedanta, just so in your wakeful state your senses and the objects are co-related in each other as the positive and negative poles of the same power. **In dreams even though the objects are produced instantaneously, they appear to have a long past of their own. Similarly, in the wakeful state, the objects of the world together with their past history make their appearance simultaneously with the percipient subject. And when you say that this world is real, this is the solid, rigid world, the statement is entirely founded on the evidence of the perceiving senses or subject which is equivalent to the dreaming ego calling the objects of the dream real or to the man calling his dog in the picture on canvas real whereas in reality both are unreal.**

Evasive Reality

What brought the senses into existence? The elements. How do you know of these elements? Through the senses. Is not that reasoning in a circle? This establishes the illusory nature of the wakeful state. As in dreamland, so long as you are dreaming, the objects are real. Those objects are no more when we rise in wakeful state. In the wakeful state all things are solid but when we are in the deep sleep state, where is the world? Nowhere-- gone, gone. Here we see that the definition of reality does not apply to the phenomena of the waking or dreaming state.

The Hindus define reality as that which persists in all circumstances. That which appears to be at one time and like a shadow disappears after awhile must be a delusive phenomenon. Herbert Spencer gives the same definition of reality.

Why do you say that the dreamland is unreal? Because when you are awake it is not there. Then so does not this very definition of unreality apply to the wakeful state? When in the dreamland or deep sleep state, the wakeful world exists no longer.

The sound A in A-U-M indicates the apparent subject and objects of the wakeful state as mere manifestations of the underlying Reality, "Me"

What a prejudice has overtaken the heart of man! They say, "I have hard cash. This is real, this gross, solid-seeming world." O fool, the only hard reality is your Self-- Unchangeable. Eternal is your Self. That is the only hard thing. The rest is all a trick of the senses. Some people do not like to accept this conclusion, because it is derived from considering the dreaming and deep sleep states as rivals of the wakeful state. A few words will be said for their consideration.

Over one-half of the surface of this big cipher of the earth there being always night, almost half the population of the earth is always in the dreaming or deep sleep state. Everybody at some place passes through the wakeful experience. Is not the whole of childhood a long sleep? Death again is sleep. Well, the first three or four years you have been all along asleep. Now count the time, the hours passed in the wakeful state; you will be astonished to see that one half of your life is passed in sleep and one half in waking. What right have you to take into consideration what took place in the wakeful state, and not what took place in the sleeping state? Are you dead when you are asleep? No. The experiences of your dream-state are also experiences. Then why not take them into consideration? If the wakeful state be more powerful, why is it that even the strongest and wisest without exception are, as it were, bound hand and foot by sleep and laid flat on the sofa or couch every night? The inexorable power of sleep takes no account of their ardent desire to keep awake. The dream-state has a

world of its own as has also the wakeful state. Then if the wakeful world has any claim on attention, the dream world also must be duly considered.

Place of Majority

Americans and Europeans determine everything from the standpoint of majority. Well, then the dreaming state as well as the deep sleep-state are also to have a vote. If on the authority of wakeful experience the dreaming experience is unreal, so is the wakeful experience non-real on the authority of dreamland and deep sleep states.

Again here are plants in a state of perpetual deep sleep and here are animals in the constant dreaming state, as it were. To them the world appears quite different from what it does to you; why not regard their experiences? To the ant's eye, the frog's eye, the owl's eye, the elephant's eye, things are quite different from what they are to you. O, but you say man's experience alone must be considered and the wakeful state or the wakeful world must be called real. But if you rightly take the experience of all the perfect men, even that will convince you that this solid-seeming world is unreal. You will ask how this is so? Here are the scientists, philosophers, Huxleys and Spencers who all lay immense stress upon the reality of the wakeful world. How can their experiences show the unreality of the world? Just reflect. Will you believe them at their best or at their worst? You will not take into consideration their remarks made when they are asleep or snoring. In what state are these great writers at their best? They are at their best and worthy of all credit and reverence when knowledge is, as it were, issuing forth and springing from them. When in that highest state, go to them and see if every pore of their body, every hair on their skin is not lecturing, as it were, as to the non-reality of the world and proclaiming non-duality. In that state there is no meum et tuum, no duality, no plurality, no personality, no world. All phenomenon is melted down to nothing. The thinker is in a state of concentration, a state of abstraction, a perfect state, a state where all knowledge is naturally oozing forth from him, a state where all knowledge naturally comes from him as does light from the Sun. Being in that state he does not talk; talk comes when he is just emerging from that plane; discoveries and sublime thoughts are emanating from him. Thus the actual experience of all great thinkers when at

their highest, testifies to the non-reality of the world. This may be made clearer. What do we do when we think? When you think you proceed by dwelling upon a topic. You take up one point excluding all other subjects: you concentrate on it with your whole mind; all your energies and powers are brought to bear upon that particular point. **The mind becomes saturated with that idea. The result is that the idea disappears and absolute super-consciousness results, absolute consciousness which is the fountainhead of all knowledge.**

According to a well-established Law of Psychology, in order to be conscious of one thing we must have something different beside it. When there is no duality in the mind, then all object-consciousness is at rest and thus the point of inspiration is reached.

The True Self

When Tennyson is beyond all idea of Lord Tennyson, then alone is he the poet Tennyson. When Berkeley is no proprietary, copyrighting Bishop, then alone is he the thinker Berkeley. When Hume is above his personality, which the biographer proclaims, then alone is he the philosopher Hume. When Huxley is not the historian's Huxley and is the all, as it were, then is he the scientist Huxley.

When some grand and wonderful work is done through us, it is folly to take the credit for it, because when it was being done, the credit-seeking ego was entirely absent, else the beauty of the deed should have been marred. The consciousness of "I am doing" was altogether absent. The thing came from God of its own accord. Thus we see what these people, thinkers or great writers, whoever they may be, if we take their judgement, their opinion when at their best, they are found lecturing and preaching by their acts, nay, through every pore of their body, that the world is unreal.

"Acts speak louder than words." In battle we see great warriors and great heroes; being at their best they go on fighting; bullets fly thick and fast all about them, here is a bullet, there is a wound, blood gushes from their bodies, their bodies are torn to pieces, still they

press on and on; in such a state pain is no pain. Why? Because practically the body is no body and the outside world no world. In the language of energy he is giving a lie to the world and body. Thus your Napoleon, your Washington, your Wellington and all others tell you through their acts in spite of the belittling intellect, they tell you that when the real Self, which is all energy, asserts itself, the world is naught. The real Self, which is Knowledge Absolute and Power Absolute, is the only stern Reality before which the apparent reality of the world melts away.

What makes the arms of the warrior strong? It is coming into unison with the stern, hard and fast reality of the true Self.

What causes so many discoveries and inventions to be suggested to the mind? Simply the intellect or mind's absorption for a short time in the hard, stern reality of the real Atman, God, that you are, Ye are the Reality, Ye are the Light of the universe, the Lord of lords, the Holy of holies, the Highest of the high.

How to Chant OM

In the mantra OM (A-U-M), the first letter A stands for this stern Reality, your Self as underlying and manifesting the illusory material world of the wakeful state, U re-presents the psychic world, and the last letter M denotes the Absolute Self as underlying the chaotic state and manifesting itself as all the Unknown.

When chanting OM, the wise have to concentrate their attention and put forth feelings in realizing the Self to be the stem Reality which manifests the three worlds and also destroys the three worlds, just as the Sun revolves the colors at sunrise or dawn and also absorbs them back into himself before noon.

These worlds are phenomenal. In your dreaming state you see a wolf and fear that the wolf will devour you; you are frightened, but it is not a wolf that you see, it is yourself. So Vedanta tells you that even in the wakeful state it is "Ye that are the enemy or the friend." Ye

are the Sun and the pond in which the Sun is reflected. Ye are the lamp and the moth. The bitterest enemy that ye have, ye are that enemy, nobody else. While chanting, OM, you have to work your mind up to such a pitch of realization of this fact that all jealousy and ill will may be rooted out of the mind, may be voted out. Weed out this idea of separateness. The figure and form of the friend or foe is a mere dream. You are the friend and you are the foe. Are the things you did yesterday with you today? Are they not a dream? They are gone. The things of yesterday. Where are they, are they not gone? In this sense also the experience of the wakeful state is a dream; the experience of the dream state is a dream. The real, the hard cash, the stern reality, the real Self is behind them. Realize that.

Rise Higher

Some people want to materialize thought instead of realizing all matter to be mere thought. They regard the material plane to be real as compared with the astral world or the world of thought. According to Vedanta the material as well as the astral worlds are unreal. You must rise above both because rest, true peace, happiness can be had only when the Reality, the hard cash behind the scenes, is realized.

In AUM. A (ah) is sometimes called a **Mātrā** or form, U is often called a **Mātrā** or form, M is called a **Mātrā** or form; but Om does not stop at **Mātrā** or form; it stands for the Reality, the hard cash, which runs through, which underlies all these **Mātrās**. People say, "We want life, we don't want mere ideas." O, what is Life? Is it the life of the dream state, or the deep sleep state, or is it the life of the wakeful state that you want? All this is only apparent. The reality, the true life is your Self. There are stern laws, which will not allow you enjoyments of pleasure forever through the senses. Is it possible for you to sell yourself to the senses, to the sense-plane and be happy? No. It is impossible. There are most unrelenting, unrestrainable laws which cannot allow you to be happy in sensual pleasures.

The Hard Cash

The Ātman is the real life, the hard cash. Realize that and these material pleasures will begin to seek you, just as the moth comes to the burning flame, just as the river flows to the ocean, just as the small official pays his respects to a great emperor. Just so will pleasures come to you, when you have perfectly known and felt your true Self, your Divine Majesty, the real glorious Ātman. OM represents this Ātman.

It has been shown how out of A-U-M, these three **Mātrās**, the Hindus, especially the Vedas give you a clue to the underlying Reality that you are. OM means the underlying Reality behind the scenes, the eternal truth, the indestructible Self that you are. Thus when you sing this sacred mantra OM you will have to throw your intellect and your body into your true Self, make these melt into the real Ātman. Realize and sing it in the language of feeling, sing it with your acts, sing it through every pore of your body. Let it course through your veins, let it pulsate in your bosom, let every hair on your body and every drop of your blood tingle with the truth that you are the Light of lights, the Sun of suns, the Ruler of the universe, the Lord of lords, the true Self. The Sun and stars are your handi-work and the heavens and earth your workmanship. Everything declares your glory, and all Nature pays you homage.

AT A GLANCE

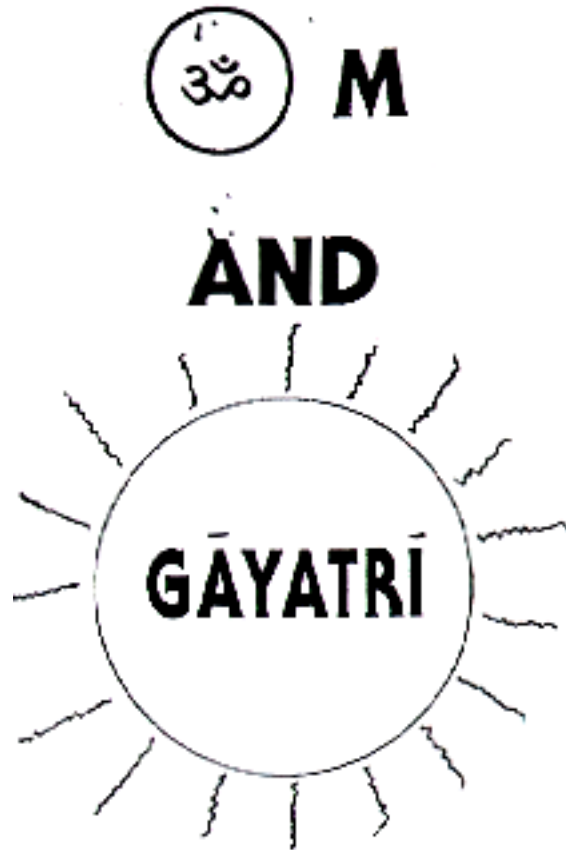
The Praṇava OM looks like a one-letter word, but it consists of three letters, viz., 'A,'U', 'M'. The first letter 'A' is the syllable [ʔ] in all the languages like Sanskrit, Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu and Kannada. Saint Tiruvalluvar has said in his **Tirukkural**, '**Ākāra Muthola Ezhuththellom Ādi Bhagavān Muthattre Ulagu**,' which states that 'A' is the root of all the other letters. This is the very first couplet of this celebrated book of wisdom. Similarly, God is the Creator of the Universe. 'A' can stand independently as well as merge with the other letters as in the case of God, who exists alone, and also dwells in other beings. AUM gives the sound OM. Children call Mother and Father while they are crying. But truly they don't call Mother or Father. When children open their mouth 'A' sound is produced. Similarly when they close their mouth 'M' sound is produced. Thus, they get the sound of Amma. When the child presses the lips together and gives out the 'A' sound, it calls out 'Appa', i.e., Father. Here, an explodent sound is created while releasing the 'PPA' with stress. When the child cries, the sound U comes out. We can hear the sound OM through musical instruments and vocal singing. In the beginning, the sound **Nāda** and **Bindu** originated from God. OM is the combination of **Nāda** and **Bindu**.

OM is the prime cause of the entire cosmos. Everything is created out of OM. Lord Vināyaka is the chief form of OM. In the world everything can be known either through the **Panchendriyas** or by the mind or by knowledge, OM TAT SAT. This is true. OM is the creator, producer, and destroyer of the world. OM also means **Satchidānanda**.

Anything that is created as the greatest beyond the three **Kālas** is OM, which is stated in the **Māṇḍūkya Upanishad**. Just as the flame is in the fire so resides **Paramātmā** in OM as given in the **Śvetāśvatara Upanishad**. Through OM we can attain **Moksha**. OM is **Ākāśa**, even Brahma or Gitam. The world is created out of OM. In **Nommazhrwar's Thiruvazhmozi** the first three lines comprise of the three letters. viz., AUM. **OM** is the

praṇava mantra. Before chanting any **mantra** we have to first recite OM. This shows the great significance of OM.

R. Ravi Shankar.



Swami Sivananda

The power of Om is difficult to believe until you have tried practicing Its chant. Having once tried it, you can easily understand how the above statement can be correct and perfectly true. I have tested the power of the Vibrations and can quite believe that the results would be as stated.

Pronounced as spelt, the chanting of Om will have a certain effect upon The student; but pronounced correctly, it will rouse and transform every atom In his physical body, setting up new vibrations and conditions, and awakening The latent powers of the body.

Swami Sivananda.

OM is the most sacred monosyllable. It is the mystic sound. The world rests in Om. We live and move in Om. In Om we rest and in Om we find our quest. Om is the symbol of Brahman. It is the word of power. Om is **Sat-chid-ānanda**. Om is infinity and immortality. Om is the source of everything, the womb of the Vedas, the basis of all languages. All trinities merge in Om. From Om proceed all sounds and in Om all objects exist. Om is the highest Mantra. Om is **So'ham** ("I am He"). Om is a benediction. Om is a lamp unto thy feet and a light unto thy path.

Sound – a Manifestation of the Absolute

Om is the mystic sound of Brahman. Sound is a vibration and Om was the very first vibration of sound. Sound was the first manifestation of the Absolute.

We do not know anything about the nature of the Absolute, except that It is. The scriptures have tried to tell us about creation, and how it proceeded from the Absolute.

They say: "The Self or Brahman was one and non-dual. It thought: 'One am I; may I become many'. That caused a vibration, eventually bringing in sound. The sound was Om. From Om proceed all other manifestations".

Thus sound is virtually the comprehensible basis of all creation. Brahman is incomprehensible in Its transcendent aspect. The nearest approach to It is sound. We can call sound the first manifestation of the transcendent Brahman.

OM--the Basis of All Sounds

All objects are denoted by sounds and all sounds merge in Om. All speech or words terminate in one sound - Om. Hence, the whole world has come out of Om, rests in Om, and dissolves in Om.

The sweet melody of the nightingale, the hum of the bee, the seven notes of music, the sound of the kettledrum, lute and flute, the roar of the lion, the song of the lover, the neigh of the horse, the hiss of the cobra, the "hu hu" sound of the invalid, the cry of the baby, the clap of an audience--all these sounds are emanations from Om.

The sound produced by the flow of the Ganges, the sound that is heard at a distance and that which is heard in the bustle of a market, the sound that is produced when the flywheel of an engine is set in motion, the sound that is caused when it rains--these are all manifestations of Om. Split any word--you will find Om there. Om is all pervading, like ether, like Brahman.

Om is the basis of all sounds. It consists of three syllables - A. U and M. These three syllables cover the whole range of sound-vibrations. The larynx and the palate are the sounding boards. When you pronounce A. no part of the tongue or palate is touched. When you pronounce U, the sound rolls from the very root to the end of the sounding board of the mouth. M is the last sound produced by closing the lips. Therefore, all sounds are contained in Om; all languages originate from Om.

Om is the essence of the four Vedas. He who chants or repeats Om mentally recites the sacred books of the whole world. Om is the source or womb of all religions and scriptures. Om, Amen and Amin are all one. They represent Truth, or Brahman, the one Existence. There is no worship without Om.

OM Represents All Trinities

Om is everything. It is your real name. It covers the threefold experiences of man. It supports the entire phenomenal world. The whole sense-universe has been projected from Om. A represents the physical plane; U represents the mental and astral planes, the world of spirits and all heavens; M represents the deep sleep state, all that is unknown even in your

waking state, and all that is beyond the reach of the intellect. Om is the basis of life and thought.

Every kind of trinity is represented by sacred Om--Brahma, Vishṇu, Shiva; past, present, future; birth, life, death; creation, preservation, destruction; waking, dreaming, deep sleep.

All triplets are represented by Om, such as Durgā, Lakshmī, and Sarasvatī; Father, Son, Holy Ghost; Rajas, Sattva, and Tamas; body, mind, soul; gross, subtle causal; Sat, Chit, Ānanda; omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence.

A is Brahman, M is Māyā. U is the interaction between the two. Om also represents "Thou art That." A is the individual soul; M is the Lord; U connects the identity of the individual soul with the Lord.

Om is an extremely important **Mantra**. It should be worshipped by all. It should be chanted audibly, repeated mentally with meaning and deep feeling, and should also be meditated upon.

The Power of OM-chanting

Om is sometimes repeated with a loud sound. The sound is generated in the navel and taken up very slowly to the opening or fontanel at the top of the head with the closing sound M. The vibration of M is prolonged for sometime. There is another kind of chanting-- it is a very long chant and the sound is elongated.

The pronunciation of the sacred syllable is one that has engaged the attention of many Europeans devoted to Eastern studies. The vibrations set up by this word are so powerful that if you persist in setting up such vibrations, you could bring the largest building to the ground. The power of Om is difficult to believe until you have tried practicing its chant. Having once tried it, you can easily understand how the above statement can be correct and perfectly true.

I have tested the power of the vibrations and can quite believe that the results would be as stated.

Pronounced as spelt, the chanting of Om will have a certain effect upon the student; but pronounced correctly, it will rouse and transform every atom in his physical body, setting up new vibrations and conditions, and awakening the latent powers of the body.

As soon as you sit for meditation chant Om loudly three, six or twelve times. This will drive away all worldly thoughts and remove distractions. Om is a very powerful Mantra and has a tremendous effect upon the mind. The five sheaths that enclose the individual soul begin to vibrate rhythmically. The chant infuses new vigor in the body.

Five persons can sit in a circle and then chant Om in chorus. It will be beautiful and exhilarating. All will at once feel a new life. When you feel depressed, chant Om fifty times. You will be filled with new vigor and strength. The sacred monosyllable is a powerful tonic. You need not pay anything for this divine tonic. When you chant Om, feel that you are the all-pervading Consciousness.

Those who chant Om will have a powerful and sweet voice. One-pointedness of mind will come quickly. While you take a walk in the morning and evening, you can chant it melodiously. Chant it on a moonlit night. Chant it while you walk along the seaside or along the banks of a river. You can sing it in a beautiful tune also. The rhythmic pronunciation makes the mind perfectly serene and one-pointed and induces spiritual qualities.

The Greatest of All the Mantras

Om is the greatest of all the **Mantras**. It bestows **Moksha** or liberation directly. All the **Mantras** begin with it. It is the life and soul of all of them.

Om precedes the five-syllable **Mantra** of Lord Shiva as well as the eight-syllable **Mantra** of Lord Nārāyaṇa. Every hymn and every Upanishad begins with Om. The Gāyatrī

too begins with Om. Chanting Om precedes the oblations that are offered to the various Gods. Om precedes all devout offerings. The greatness of Om cannot be truly and adequately described by anybody. Even Pārvatī, Ādiśesha and great sages were unable to describe its greatness. Such is its potency.

What the Sri Rāma Mantra is to a renunciate of Ayodhyā, what Hrīm is to a Tantric of Bengal, and what the Gāyatrī is to a Madrasi Brahmin; so Om is to a Vedantin or a renunciate of Varanasi or Rishikesh.

Any male or female, whose mind is sincerely turned towards Brahman, who has mental renunciation, who has strong Vedantic impressions in the subconscious mind, and who has a real taste for Vedanta, can repeat this Mantra. Those who repeat Om daily will receive tremendous power. They will have lustre in the eyes and face.

The Gāyatrī Mantra

The following is the Gāyatrī: **Om, bhūr bhuvaḥ svaḥ, tat savitur vareṇyam, bhargo devasya dhīmahi, dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt.**

The meaning of the **Mantra** is: "Let us meditate on the glory of Īshvara, who has created this universe, who is fit to be worshipped, who is the embodiment of knowledge and light, who is the remover of all sins and ignorance. May He enlighten our intellect!"

What is enlightenment? At present you have an intellect that makes you identify yourself with the body and mistake it for the Soul. Now you pray to the blessed Mother of the Vedas--the sacred Gāyatrī--to bestow upon you a pure intellect, which will help you realize Brahman. This is the pure (non-dualistic) meaning of Gāyatrī. Advanced students of Yoga may take up this meaning: 'I am that Supreme Light of lights, which gives light to the intellect.'

In the Gāyatrī Mantra there are nine names, viz., **Om. bhūr, bhuvah, svaḥ, tat, savitur, vareṇyam, bhargo and devasya.** Through these nine names the Supreme Lord is glorified. **Dhīmahi** signifies worship of the Lord and meditation on Him. **Dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt** is a prayer.

There are five stops in the Gāyatrī Mantra. **Om** is the first stop; **bhūr bhuvah svaḥ** is the second; **tat savitur vareṇyam** is the third; **bhargo devasya dhīmahi** the fourth; and **dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt** the fifth. While chanting and doing Japa of this **Mantra**, you should pause a little at every stop.

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OMKĀRĀ

**Listen to the Primeval Praṇava, OM,
Resounding in your heart as well as
in the heart of the Universe.**

BABA.

OM is the most sacred word for the Hindus. For them it is synonymous with the Supreme Godhead, the Impersonal as well as the Personal God. It is the all-comprehensive symbol and name of God. It is also deemed the **Mahā Mantra**, the best aid and means for man to realize God. In the Sri Sathya Sai Sarva Dharma symbol, Hinduism is represented by Om. In the timeless beginning, it is said, Brahman alone was. It was of the nature of Supreme silence. Out of the Supreme silence emanated the Nāda Brahman, the sound aspect and expression of God. That was the primeval sound. That was Oṃkāra. Out of the primeval sound became manifest all creation composed of the five elements, namely, space, air, fire, water and earth. Further Oṃkāra permeates all creation. It is the life principle of creation. That is why the sound of OM is also called Praṇava--meaning that which runs through Prāṇa or pervades all life. The available literature upon the significance of this Vedic Mantra is voluminous. Nowhere in the world can we meet another sacred symbol that has got such a vast import or significance. The entire history of the syllable is in the revelations of the Vedas and in the declarations of the Upanishads.

There is a Vedic verse as follows:

Prajapatir vai idam agra āsīt

**Tasya vāg dvitīyā āsīt
Vāg vai paramam Brahma.**

"In the beginning was Prajāpati, the Brahman, with whom was the Word, and the Word was verily the Supreme Brahman".

The same is echoed in the Gospel of St. John in the **New Testament**:

'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God'

In **Taittirīya Upanishad**, it is said, addressing OM, --"Thou art the sheath of Brahman." It means that Brahman is immanent in and contained in OM and, therefore, invoking OM is invoking the Supreme.

In **Praśnopanishad**, it is said: **Om iti ekāksharam Brahma--** "OM -- this monosyllable word is Brahman." It further says that OM syllable alone is the True Form of the Supreme God. One should meditate chanting OM only on the Supreme Purusha.

In **Muṇḍaka Upanishad** it is said. "To reach the central hub (Brahman) and to know that all spokes (i.e.. creation and the beings therein) radiate from it, the mind is the instrument. Brahman, the target, is to be reached by an arrow-mind. Have your mind fixed on the target and using the Upanishadic teaching as the bow, shoot straight and hard at the Brahman and Master. That is to say, the Praṇava or the OM is the arrow [bow?], Brahman is the target". (**Upanishad Vāhinī**).

Maharshi Patañjali also says in his *Yoga Sūtra*:

Tasya vācakaḥ praṇavaḥ --The indicator of Paramātmā, i.e. His name is Praṇava (OM)".

All the above quotations only indicate the supreme significance of Omkāra. OM is itself God and, at the same time, it is also the means for realizing God.

Other Faiths too have a holy word like OM in a little different or modified form. To the Christians it is **Amen**; Muslims call it **Amin**, although their interpretation and usage are not quite identical with that of OM.

OM symbolizes all the Names and of the Personal God also.

In the Upanishads God is extolled more in the Impersonal aspect. But the Personal God, God with form, with attributes, is the basis of the popular religion. For the mind to concentrate on a formless (**Nirākāra**) Brahman is very difficult in the case of most of us. The Impersonal Godhead, in its infinite compassion, has assumed different forms, assumed different names, incarnated on earth several times from age to age for man to cognize the divine glory. The intangible became the tangible for the benefit of human comprehension and understanding. Thus, we have the tradition of **Ishṭa-Devatā**, the favorite deity, the form of God of our liking, dear to our heart.

We have thus various forms of God: Śiva, Viṣṇu, Rāma. Kriṣṇa, Devī. Gaṇeṣha, etc. OM indeed encompasses all the names and forms of God which the human minds and hearts cherish.

Every name has a key letter, **Bījākshara**. Based on this, A is believed to connote Brahmā, U Viṣṇu, and M Maheśvara or Śiva. In the word Brahmā, the last letter A, in the word Viṣṇu the last letter U, and in the word Maheśvara the first letter M are said to be the key letters. OM, pronounced as AUM, thus encompasses the Trinity, the triple aspect of Godhead the Hindus believe in. Let us see how OM represents the other names of Gods also like Lakshmī, Pārvatī, Gaṇeṣha or Māruti or any other name and form which the Hindus install in their heart as their **Ishṭa Devatā** (favorite deity).

A is said to connote Brahmā. Where does Sarasvatī reside? She resides on the tongue of Brahmā. She is His expression. She is His **Vāk-śakti**. She is so inseparable from Brahmā. The aspect of knowledge and wisdom of Brahmā is Sarasvatī. Therefore, A is inclusive of the aspect of Goddess Sarasvatī also.

Where does Lakshmī reside? Her abode is the **Vakshasthala** of Vishṇu. She is inseparable from Vishṇu. She is the pure compassion aspect of Vishṇu. It is said that Vishṇu resides on the **Kshīrasāgara**. But in His Bosom itself the ocean is contained, the milk-ocean of kindness and compassion. Again, Lakshmī is said to be born of the ocean. Actually, She Herself is the ocean of compassion swelling in the Bosom of Vishnu, i.e. She is but the compassion aspect of Vishnu. Thus, the U symbol standing for Vishṇu includes the aspect of Lakshmī also.

What about Pārvatī? Pārvatī has no separate abode or existence, apart from Śiva. She is part and parcel, the half-form of Śiva who is the **Ardhanārīśvara**, the half-male and half-female form. She is the aspect of His supreme power, His Śakti. Without Pārvatī Śiva is a recluse, wandering and roaming in cremation grounds. Only with Parvati by His side, He gains auspiciousness. M symbol indicating Maheshvara, thus includes Mother Parvatī also.

Who are Gaṇeśa and Subrahmaṇya? They are the sons of Śiva and Pārvatī.

Who is Hanūmān? He is inseparably bound to Rāma, ever enfolding Rāma's lotus feet in the palms of His loving hands.

Who is Dattātreya? He is the single and common expression of Brahmā, Vishṇu and Maheshvara-- all the Three in one.

Thus it can be understood that there can never be a name or concept of God outside the fold of Omkāra. OM is, thus, the one expression which equally applies to all names and concepts of God and quenches the Inner yearnings and satisfies the likes of all, i.e., individually as well as universally. In other words, all forms of God respond when OM is chanted. That is

why it is said that OM is the direct telephone number of Baba. If we say OM we are instantly connected to Baba, whether He be in Puttapparathi, Brindavan, Anantapur or anywhere on tour.

Baba has also said that Omkāra and Rāma's name are identical. Rāma is symbolized by the Praṇava and the supporting sounds A, U and M represent Lakshmaṇa, Bharata and Śatrughna respectively.

OM is the Material, the Sphoṭa, of all the world of Sounds (words) and is the basis for the Science and Phenomenon of Phonetics.

All sounds and words have their origin in Praṇava śabda. All the sounds that can be produced or uttered by combinations of the different letters or any alphabet come under the gamut of the three sounds produced by A, U and M. If we take the example of the Devanāgarī script, the letters Ka, Kha, Ga, Gha..., emerge from the throat; Ca, Cha, Ja, Jha...are mainly from the palate; Ta, Tha, Da, Dha...originate from the tip of the tongue, and Pa, Pha, Ba, Bha and Ma at the meeting of the lips.

Since the Praṇava śabda contains all the breath sounds, it is said that OM is the sum and substance of the Vedas. All names are contained within the Praṇava and so it is the basis of all the different forms of worship and all the different names by which God is adored.

OM represents all the states of consciousness, the physical as well as the spiritual, and our awareness from the physical to the transcendental (divine) state.

The Upanishads proclaim that OM represents the Self which is the supreme non-dual Reality, Brahman or Ātman. The Self is said to have four states of consciousness. All of us are aware of three of these states of consciousness, namely, waking, i.e., **Jāgrat**; dreaming, i.e., **Svapna**; and deep sleep, i.e. **Sushupti**. Most of us lead our lives in this world experiencing these three states of consciousness (alternatively though). But Yogis experience and dwell in another, a higher state of consciousness, the superconscious transcendental state called **Turīyāvasthā**, which signifies the thing in itself, running through and pervading the threefold

phenomena of waking, dreaming and deep sleep. This is the **Samādhi Avasthā**--the Ātmic state when one transcends all three states and realizes his identity with the Self or Sat-Chit-Ānanda, consciousness within. OM is said to signify all these four states of consciousness. The entire theme of the **Māṇḍūkya Upanishad** is a description of this only.

Just as waves arise out of the ocean, our waking, dreaming and deep sleep **states** of consciousness arise from the **Ātman**, the substratum for the different states of consciousness we experience.

The A in Omkāra represents the waking state (and our gross body), U represents the dream state (and our subtle body), and M represents the deep sleep state (and our causal body) But, further, when OM is pronounced, there is the tailing silence, the **A-śabda**, the sound-less state where the same sound of OM rings without being aloud, vibrating in our ears even when we have closed our lips. The letterless resonance, that rich, humming sound of silence, represented by what is called **Amātra OM** is said to signify the Self or the Ātman, which is transcendental to the three states of consciousness--waking, dreaming and deep sleep. It is deeper and beyond the three bodies--gross, subtle and causal-- and is the core, the essence, the reality of our being. It is the basis and substratum of our very being.

The **Amātra OM** signifies the **Turīya** state in which we abide in our Self, oblivious of anything and everything else. It is said to be pure awareness and the supreme state of Bliss.

OM is again said to be the greatest aid to attain the **Turīya** state, the transcendental state of consciousness. After chanting OM, it is said, we have to trail along with the tailing, the lingering resonance of **Amātra OM**, and delve into the silence of our inner personality, into the depths of our heart. Then we touch the source of our being. We cognise the Self. That will be the state of divine consciousness.

OM must be chanted as slowly as possible -- A emerging from the throat (originating in the regions of the navel), the U rolling over the tongue in a crescendo until the sound reaches the peak, and ends in M at the lips. Then it must take a curve at M and descend as slowly as it rose,

taking as much time as it took to ascend, and with **Amātra** OM, it must gradually merge into the silence reverberating in the cavity of the heart. Baba says that these stages represent the flower of one's understanding growing into a fruit and filling itself with the sweet juice of its own inner essence and finally releasing itself from the tree.

OM is the essence of life principle. It is the vital vibration that fills the universe and it is the subtle sound of our very breath.

One who has the subtle 'ear' can hear OM, proclaiming the Lord's presence in every sound. All the five elements vibrate with this sound. The ringing of the bell in the temple is intended to convey the OM as the symbol of the omnipresent God, besides being an invocation to Him. Like the temple bell ringing OM, inside the human bosom too, the OM sound constantly goes on in its silent tone. The ever vibrant **Anāhata** sound in the Sushumnā **Nāḍī**, **which** our gross hearing faculty cannot hear, is said to be OM only. It goes on humming "SO'HAM, SO'HAM... trailing off into **OM** vibrations. This is the subtle sound of our breath. '**SO**' means He (God) and '**HAM**' means **Aham**, I (ego). Thus, it is the medium connecting man with God. Constant meditation on this leads to the experience of Advaita, oneness of Paramātmā and Jīvātmā -- **Jīvo Brahmaiva nāparaḥ**.

The names of God, although they are highly potent by themselves, need to be preceded by OM.

It is believed that without a preceding or a preliminary Gaṇesha Pūjā, no ritual, even the worship of Gaṇesha's own mother and father, i.e., of Pārvatī and Shiva cannot fructify. Likewise, no mantra-chanting, no name-chanting is to be done without the prefix of **OM** to the mantra or the name. **OM** has to precede all sacred chanting, and even for the chanting of the name of Gaṇesha, who is Himself **Praṇavākāra**, we have to say, "**Om Gaṇeshāya Namaḥ**." It is, therefore, to be understood that prefixing OM to any name or mantra potentiates the power of the latter severalfold.

The Modes of Omkāra Chanting

Vaikhari, Madhyamā, Pashyatī and Parā: In any Japa chanting, the incantation passes through four stages of the sound process. The first stage is that of loud incantation. One repeats OM in a loud voice so that the mind gets forcibly concentrated on the sound. This is best suited for the early stages till the mind gets habituated to the Japa. This stage of the sound process is called **Vaikhari**.

The second stage is **Madhyamā**, where the sound of incantation is not heard, but the lips move while repeating the mantra or the sacred formula. It is a middle stage between sound and soundlessness. The sound in **Vaikhari** proceeds from the mouth, while in the **Madhyamā** stage it stems from the larynx but is hardly emitted from the lips.

The third stage of incantation is called **Pashyantī**, when all is soundless. There is no utterance of the word, overt or covert, but the recitation of Japa still continues in the mind without an effort. In this stage the conscious process of incantation comes to a standstill. Japa becomes a part and parcel of one's being and one perceives and experiences the mantra involuntarily. The whole process is from the conscious to the unconscious, from the voluntary to the involuntary, from the gross to the subtle.

The fourth stage is reached when the mantra itself is forgotten and only its impact remains within the consciousness. This is called the **Parā** stage of Japa where every reference to Japa is set aside and the consciousness reaches its transcendence, its own inherent nature. **Parā** means far, far distant--transcendent. This is the **Turiya** state where there is nothing but bliss, happiness, and upsurging waves of joy.

OM, as said earlier, is a **Mahāmantra** itself. It is the key that unlocks for us the doorway to the mansion of the Lord. As we chant OM from the depth of our being, from the **Nābhīsthāna** or the region of the navel, it elevates and lifts our consciousness to higher and higher realms, ultimately lifting us to the supreme Brahmic state. It awakens the **Kuṇḍalinī** power lying coiled and dormant in and leads us to the supreme state of consciousness.

The mind is habit-forming. We have to practice Oṃkāra chanting with a conscious effort. To make it more readily appealing to our mind, we should add the name of our **Ishṭa-Devatā** to it, like Śrī Rāma, Śrī Krishṇa or Śiva, and word it as, "**Om Śrī Rāmāya Namaḥ**". "**Om Śrī Krishṇāya Namaḥ**" "**Om Namo Nārāyaṇāya,**" "**Om Namaḥ Śivāya,**" "**Om Namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya,**" "**Om Śrī Sāī Rāma**"... and so on. The chanting in due course will crystallize into a habit within our mind. Even in our sleep and unconscious moments, the mind will go on chanting OM, as used to be the way with Draupadī, Rādhā and Meerā, whose hearts used to chant Lord Krishna's name so incessantly whether they were awake or asleep. The chanting thus should crystallize into our very nature, like our inhalation and exhalation, a regular and unceasing process.

**Oṃkāra bestows Liberation and
Immortality and unites us with
God forever**

In the 8th chapter of the **Gītā**, on the "Akshara Para Brahma Yoga," Lord Krishna says,
Om ityekāksharam Brahma vyāharan Mām anusmaran.
Yaḥ prayāti tyajan deham sa yāti Paramām Gatim.

".....Uttering the one-syllable **Oṃ** Brahman, and remembering Me, he who departs leaving the body, attains the Supreme Goal."

In our last moment, if we remember or chant **Oṃ**, there will be no more birth and death for us. The cycle of birth and death will be snapped and broken once for all and we will merge in Lord Krishna and forever will abide in Him only. That is the **Moksha** state, which the **Jīva** aspires for, that is the highest and supreme state. There is never any coming back into this world. That is the ultimate goal or fulfillment of human life. It is eternal union with God.

**Oṃkāra Chanting purifies our breath
And bestows good health too, besides
its spiritual benefits.**

Let Oṃkāra chanting be our constant hobby. Let this hobby settle down to habit. This habit will crystallize into our very nature by continued practice.

We have to synchronize and regulate the Oṃkāra chanting with our breathing. Through this synchronization and regulation of the breath, physical well-being, mental purification, intellectual enlightenment, blossoming of the heart and spiritual unfoldment--all these accrue as one advances. Though, far away may be this ultimate attainment for us, physical well-being and sharper and brighter intelligence will surely be the immediate reward. To quote from Indra Devi's book, **Yoga for You**, "Only a few men die from a sudden lack of air, but multitudes perish because for years they have not been breathing enough." Our breathing is most erratic, shallow and superficial. It never fills the lungs even half, thus causing half of our lungs to retain foul, polluted and stagnant air all the time, or rather perpetually all through our lives. Unless breathing is deep, rhythmic and regulated, physical health suffers and mental calm and peace will be elusive. To regulate our breathing, **Oṃ** chanting helps greatly. We should synchronize the chanting with deep breathing (inhalation and exhalation). This will have a dynamic effect on our physical well-being and there will be mental calm and peace (equanimity and tranquillity). Our power of concentration increases and our mental faculties become capable of higher pursuits, both secular and spiritual.

Let **Oṃ** be our constant companion from today. Let our mind cling to it. With every simple chanting of **Oṃ**, we are marching one step forward, and nearer and nearer to Baba. Sooner or later, we are sure to reach His Lotus Feet and become nearest and dearest to Him.

Oṃkāra Prayers

Oṃkāram bindusaṃyuktam nityam dhyāyanti yoginaḥ.

Kāmadam Mokshadam caiva Oṃkārya namo namaḥ.

"The Oṃkāra written with a dot (bindu) signifies that we are bindus (drops) of that OM from which we have come. Yogis always meditate upon It, keeping this truth ever pre-sent in

their mind. Through the recitation and understanding of the Praṇava, one experiences the highest Bliss, and attains liberation. I bow down before the Praṇava."

Jaya Guru Oṃkāṛā, Jaya Jaya Sadguru Oṃkāṛā.

"May OM, the supreme God, be our Guru".

"Praṇava Svarūpāya, Oṃkāṛāya Śrī Sathya Sai

Parabrahmaṇe namaḥ."

Source: Sri Sathya Sai Pre Seval

Balvikas Group III (For Gurus and Students).

Publishers: Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations, Dharmakshetra, Mahakali Caves Road, Chakala, MIDC, Bombay-93.



Om̐kāra Meditation

(A tool to attain higher dimensions
of consciousness)

Dr. H. R. Nagendra

We have a sizeable number of articles in this issue to help us grasp the Vedantic, esoteric and symbolic significance of OM. In this article, Dr. Nagendra discusses Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna, etc. He also speaks of several hurdles in medication which are but natural to the beginner. It is hoped, this article will be valued for its practical hints. --Editor.

Extensive scientific research on Transcendental Meditation (TM) has clearly demonstrated the benefits of meditation in enhancing the capacity of an individual and to bring social harmony among people if meditation is practiced by 1% of the population at least.

Scientific research on **OM Dhyāna** as with TM has shown very significant improvements in concentration, memory, IQ, relaxation, etc.

What is Meditation?

Stilling the mind on a single thought is **Dhyāna**, says Patañjali in his aphorisms of Yoga. The nature of the mind is to wander, jump from one thought stream to another. The random mind - "**chanchalatā**" - is the grossest form, the well-experienced monkey mind. No connection between thought and thought. All energies in the mind totally wasted.

Next phase is concentration, **Ekāgratā**. Training the mind to stay on a single object. No distractions. No jumping round. If you like the topic, the mind automatically stays in it; you have a fine absorbing concentration. If you are not interested, the result is a distracted mind. Energy is channeled in concentration. Just as a dam is built with control valves and channels for flow of water, the useless, often dangerous, river is harnessed. In the same way mental energies are to be channeled. The whole of our training, education has essentially been to develop more and more concentration.

The results and benefits of concentration need no elaboration. Every job, from the most trivial to the most sophisticated, needs concentration. All great men reach their glorious heights with concentration.

Is There Anything Further?

Yes, says Patañjali. He called it **Dhāraṇā**. We can call it intensified concentration or focusing. From multiple thoughts to a single thought. The mind to be fixed, glued to a single thought.

From Multiple objects (**Chanchalatā**)
to
Single object (Concentration)
from
Multiple thoughts but single object
(concentration)
to
Single thought: **Dhāraṇā**

Deśabandhas Cittasya Dhāraṇā

Fixing the mind (on a single thought) in space is **Dhāraṇā**. (PYS 3-1)

There is total attention on a single thought. What thought you choose is immaterial. It can be a 'dot', a bull's eye, flower or Rāma. All energies of the mind are totally focused on a single thought, just as in a lens, focusing the entire light on to the focal point which can even burn a paper. A Laser beam focused at a point can trigger a fusion reaction.

The power of thought can burn up our **saṃskāras**. It can go deep into your subconscious and cleanse you up. **Dhāraṇā** is mandatory for Gun shooting (ranging) or **Dhanur-vidyā** (archery). Unless you develop a capacity for at least 10 seconds of good **Dhāraṇā** you are not allowed to hit your target.

A Classic Example

Droṇāchārya set a small parrot on the topmost branch of a peepul tree. The target was the midpoint of the pupil of the eye of the parrot. The Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas undergoing **Dhanurvedyā** were asked to stand a 100 meters away and hit at the target. As they got ready one by one, Droṇa sent them back just looking at them. The turn of Duḥśāsana came. When he was ready, Droṇa asked him, "What are you seeing dear?" "Why guruji, I see everything". "Please go back!" Bhīma comes up. "What do you see?" Droṇa looks at Bhīma. He says that he sees the parrot, the eye and the pupil. Droṇa sends him back.

Duryodhana, when about to shoot is asked the same question. "Sir. I see the eye, eyeball, the pupil and the mid-point." Droṇa says: "Dear, you need more training. Go back." It was now Dharmarāja. "Guruji, I still see the pupil apart from the mid-point. Should I hit?" "No dear, you can't get at it. You are yet short of your mark." Droṇa sent him back too. Finally came Arjuna. "What do you see Arjuna?" asked Droṇa. "I see only one point, the target, nothing else," said Arujuna. Droṇa asks him to shoot. Arjuna fixed his attention on the point for almost 15 seconds and cuts the target exactly at the point! That is real **Dhāraṇā**.

Trāṭaka is very helpful for **Dhāraṇā**. Fix the Gaze on the OM from a distance of about 5-ft. Look at it steadily for about 30 seconds. Close the eyes. Place the palms on the eyes. No pressure on the eyeballs. Find pressure on the eye muscles. Feel the relaxation. Keep the

picture of OM steady in the mind. Repeat 2 to 3 times. We can learn doing **Dhāraṇā** on any object at will.

Dhāraṇā is to focus all energies into a single point. The thought becomes very powerful, piercing through the subconscious.

From the phase of **Dhāraṇā** begins a new chapter in the modality of gaining knowledge.

In concentration, we analyze, build up a cause-effect relationship, and use logic, dwell on a subject and thereby understand and gain knowledge, greater the speed, faster the thought stream, quicker the grasp, sharper the intelligence, finer the knowledge, deeper the understanding. A large number of very fast thoughts feature this modality of understanding.

In **Dhāraṇā**, multiplicity of thoughts is stopped. A single thought is to be kept up all through. Are we not going against the very process of understanding through the intellect? Yes and no. Yes, because we are getting into a new process of understanding at a very subtle level by mere sweeping through the inner ocean of knowledge, which is what we essentially do when we think deeply. We use logic, analysis and intellect to build up a momentum, to prepare the mind to get at the knowledge. The intellect stops for a while and knowledge emerges. Through **Dhāraṇā** we consciously start getting a mastery over this so-called in-tuition.

Dwelling on a thought long enough will reveal the secret of that thought. It is a science. Patañjali starts unrevealing this science from the sūtra on **Dhāraṇā**.

Dhāraṇā to Dhyāna

Dhyāna, often called Meditation, is nothing but effortless **Dhāraṇā**! We cannot perform **Dhāraṇā** for a long time, as it is very strenuous. If done with maximum intensity even for ten seconds, **Dhāraṇā** tires out one fully. Remedy? Bring effortlessness, relaxation--we enter into **Dhyāna**.

Tatra Pratyayaikatānatā Dhyānam

To stay in a single thought stream is **Dhyāna**. Effortless dwelling on the single thought. **Taila-Dhārā-vat** like an oil stream flowing freely down an inclined smooth plane..

The five features of meditation are:

- 1) Single thought.
- 2) Effortlessness and Relaxation.
- 3) Slowness.
- 4) Wakefulness and Awareness.
- 5) Feeling of expanded Lightness.

In any process if these 5 aspects are there, we can call it meditation. Meditation is not a strenuous process of concentration. No force, no suppression that is the trick. It can be called as a process of defocusing-expansion. Often, some call it deconcentration.

Thus, meditation is a trick to dwell on a single thought effortlessly. The more we struggle to control our thoughts and fix ourselves on a single thought, the more we go away from meditation. Relaxation, slowing down, enjoying to stay in the thought with ease and with a feeling of elation and lightness are the tricks. This is to be done with total awareness, not allowing the system to get into sleep.

The Process of OM Meditation

Sit comfortably in any positions you like. If you are used to sit in **Padmāsana**, please do so. But if you can't, do not bother. Even you can choose a comfortable chair.

Choose a time when you are at ease, with no busy schedules planned at that hour or immediately after that. Early mornings or evenings would be ideal. And a light food. Have a light stomach.

PHASE I

Close your eyes and start chanting OM (or any other chosen mantra if you have been initiated to the same already). Allow the mind to repeat the mantra continuously without break. If there are distractions and distractions, you should chant the mantra faster and faster, not giving a chance to distractions. After a while the chanting slows down. Slow it down further. If the mind jumps to distractions, again increase the speed of Japa (the mantra repetition). Thus, by increasing and allowing the speed to slow down, you should be able to have an unbroken stream of the mantra in your mind.

PHASE II:

Make the chanting softer and softer, gentler and gentler, and more and more effortless. As you progress on the path of meditation, you will reach the second phase of Japa in which you start feeling the vibrations of the mantra in a particular part of the body and later throughout the body.

Patañjali says, '**Tajjapas tadarthabhāvanam**. The Japa should grow to a phase where you start feeling the meaning of the Japa. This is the phase in which you start enjoying the meditation and can bring deeper changes in your body and mind.

Hanūmān, one of the greatest of the **bhaktas**, is known for his intense **bhakti-bhāva** of Rāma. '**Roma Roma Meṃ Rāma Nāma**.' He felt the name of Rāma in each and every cell of his body. The first step toward such an end is the above feeling of Resonance.

All students of physics know that resonance occurs when the frequency of the chanted mantra coincides with the natural frequency of the body. There is going to be a fine mas-saging effect throughout the body. When the **Tambūrā or Veeṇā** is tuned properly, the pluck of the string will create vibrations throughout the body of the instrument. By touching you can feel it.

We have to tune our **Veeṇā**, our body, properly for the spread of the vibrations of OM or the mantra we chant in the mind.

It is much easier in the beginning stages of practice to feel the vibrations throughout the body when we chant the OM loudly. That is why many people take to **Vācika Japa** and later on to **Mānasika Japa**.

If you could feel the vibrations of the mantra throughout the body, rest assured that you have reached a very good stage of meditation. The struggle to fix a single thought in the mind would only increase the distractions. A boomerang effect! Slow down. Let all the distractions go.

Hurdles in Meditation.

'Sitting in medication was full of distractions', said one of the **sādhakas**. 'Is there a trick to deal with them?' he asks.

When you start the Japa of OM in the mind all of us notice that for a few seconds the repetition of OM goes on uninterruptedly. Continuity of Japa is achieved. But soon you find distractions in the mind. How fast you get into distractions is purely subjective. The mind may jump after 1 mt. or even after a single Japa.

After a while the mind returns to Japa. You get a click inside," Oh. I started doing Japa, but where did my mind go? " All distractions and distractions," your mind says. You often start hating the distractions. Then you are glued to those distractions and get stuck with them.

One of our friends, a meditator, came and told me. "When I sit for meditation, I don't know from where, all sorts of nasty thoughts come and bother me. I try MY best to throw them away. I just hate them. But I am quite at ease when I am not meditating. No such thoughts at all. I don't know why and from where these dirty thoughts come. I am sick of them. Now I feel that I better not do meditation."

The nature of the mind is such that it would get stuck if you hate the distraction. In those very thoughts!

Once a young man came to Swami Ramdas and requested him to initiate him to the spiritual way. The Swamiji had seen him quite sincere, coming to the Ashram regularly and serving the people with love. The Swamiji told him, 'Om, "I will initiate you into the Rāmanāma Japa, but on one condition: you should not think of a monkey when you do your Japa; no vānara, not even Hanūmān!" He looked at the young man meaningfully with a smile.

The man was puzzled. "Swamiji, why should I think of a monkey when I do Rāmanāma Japa? I will follow your injunctions with sincerity," he promised. The Swamiji initiated him and asked him to spend at least 15 minutes or 9 mālās (string of beads).

The man went away with all joy. He started off: 'Rāma, Rāma, Rāma' went on for a while. He suddenly remembered: 'Oh, I should not think of a monkey ... yes, I have promised my Guru that I will not think of a monkey ... he said not even a vānara --not even Hanūmān ... and no monkey . . . no monkey. . . no monkey. It had all become a mon-key Japa rather than Rāmnāma Japa!

That is the nature of the mind. The more you hate the thoughts the more you get stuck with them. Do not bother about the distractionsLet go. Allow the distractions to come and go. Just continue with your chosen Japa when you get a click from within that you had strayed away from your Japa.

Yet another trick to overcome the distractions is to increase the speed of the Japa. Increase the speed.of repetitions of the **mantra** in the mind. This helps in not giving a chance for your mind to get into distractions. Gradually reduce the speed of the Japa. The energy of the mind gets spent initially much faster. The mind calms down. Then you can maintain the continuity of the japa with ease. Even with slow chanting of the mantra inside, if you find distractions again, increase the speed of the japa again. Continue increasing and decreasing the

speed of the japa until you settle down to a comfortable slow chanting of the mantra, with very little or no distractions.

Now the second hurdle

One of our Yoga Shibir participants came out with a problem: "I feel sleepy and often lose myself whenever I sit for meditation," she said. "What is the way out?"

It is natural for the mind to slip into sleep when the mind slows down, as that is the only state that the mind knows normally. It is well established through scientific research that there is about 9% reduction in the Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR) when you have very good sleep for nearly 5 hours. BMR is the amount of energy you spend when you are at rest. While lying down horizontally, your breath slows down. Reduction in the rate at which your heart beats. BP too. And that is what happens when you meditate. So there is nothing strange, if you feel sleepy while sitting for meditation.

But that is not what is needed. It limits your progress if you just sleep off. If you keep awake and continue meditation, the benefit is lot more. . nearly 16% reduction in BMR. Hence it is the second hurdle. KEEP Awake . . that is the remedy. How? That is the question.

By mere determination. A determination not to sleep off--just a suggestion--that I will not sleep off during meditation. Often it works. But many times it fails. **You then need a stronger stimulation to keep yourself awake.** Start chanting the Japa faster, building awareness into the system. If that also does not work, just start chanting the japa loudly, or come out and just walk a bit, drink a few sips of water, sprinkle water into your eyes or wash your eyes . . . **Kapalabhāti Kriyā** and three important **Prāṇāyāmas** included in the OM Dhyāna set up can help a great deal.

The first hurdle is related to Rajas and the second to Tamas. You have to go beyond these two to reach Sattva. The peaceful awareness. To bring alertful rest. A state of expanded awareness.

As the japa slows down, you start feeling the vibrations throughout the body resonance. Further progress involves in touching the silence in-between the waves of Om. Each time you repeat OM in the mind, the resonant wave comes up and subsides. Before the next wave of resonance, silence and intellectual analysis starts. Feel the gap--Silence--the abode of Bliss. And again and again.

Still there can be distractions, pleasant ones, which may sway you away from the japa. A meditator met me in USA years back and told that she enjoys her meditation very much. I asked, "What do you do in meditation?" "Oh, I sit and fly out of my body floating through lands, mountains and sky to reach a beautiful park. A garden with blossoming flowers, my beloved Edward one. And the children in the park playing with joy and smiles on their faces. My dear friends chat and chat for quite long. I come back home after nearly an hour," she mentioned.

Daydreaming is no meditation. The thoughts of your choice, liking, sway you away out of your japa. They are distractions as are the thoughts which you hate. Strong likes and dislikes distract you away from meditation. They are all hurdles to be crossed. Again by the same track, speed up the OM chanting. Feel the resonance better, recognize the waves of resonance.

Yet another hurdle

Q: Sir, as soon as I sit for meditation, the japa goes fine for a few minutes. But soon I start analyzing and understanding the meaning of a japa, like OM, containing A. U. and M and their corresponding **Jāgrat, Svapna, Sushupti**: creation, sustenance, and destruction, etc. I suffer from no distractions. What is your advice?

A: It is good there are no random distractions. Intellectual analysis as it happens can certainly ward off **cañcalatā** and even sleep; so far so good. But even this intellectualization has to be stopped. Only then you get higher and deeper. The solution is the same. Give no greater value of those thoughts [?] analysis than mere random distraction of the mind.

Increase the speed of the japa. Use the meaning of the japa to develop the feeling of japa-resonance and perceive the silence in-between the japa.

SILENCE is no inertness or stagnation or constriction. If these exist in silence, they have to be removed. EXPANSION is the trick. Building awareness, expansive blissful awareness is the secret. The process of Descent and Ascent helps to grow systematically.

Expansion and Awareness

In **Dhyāna**, we start defocusing, expanding. From pointed awareness to linear surface and three-dimensional. From one dimension to three dimensions--entire body awareness. **As we grow deeper and subtler, we can experience the resonance even when we chant the japa in the mind. This is called three-dimensional awareness.** Our attention has been diffused from a point through various stages to three dimension--complete body. This is the process of expansion.

Descent

Start feeling waves and waves of OM engulfing the whole body establishing the 3D awareness. Now allow the descending part of the wave of OM to descend slowly. Feel the touch of silence at the end of the descent. The touch of silence at the end of each wave of OM helps to grow deeper and deeper.

Ascent

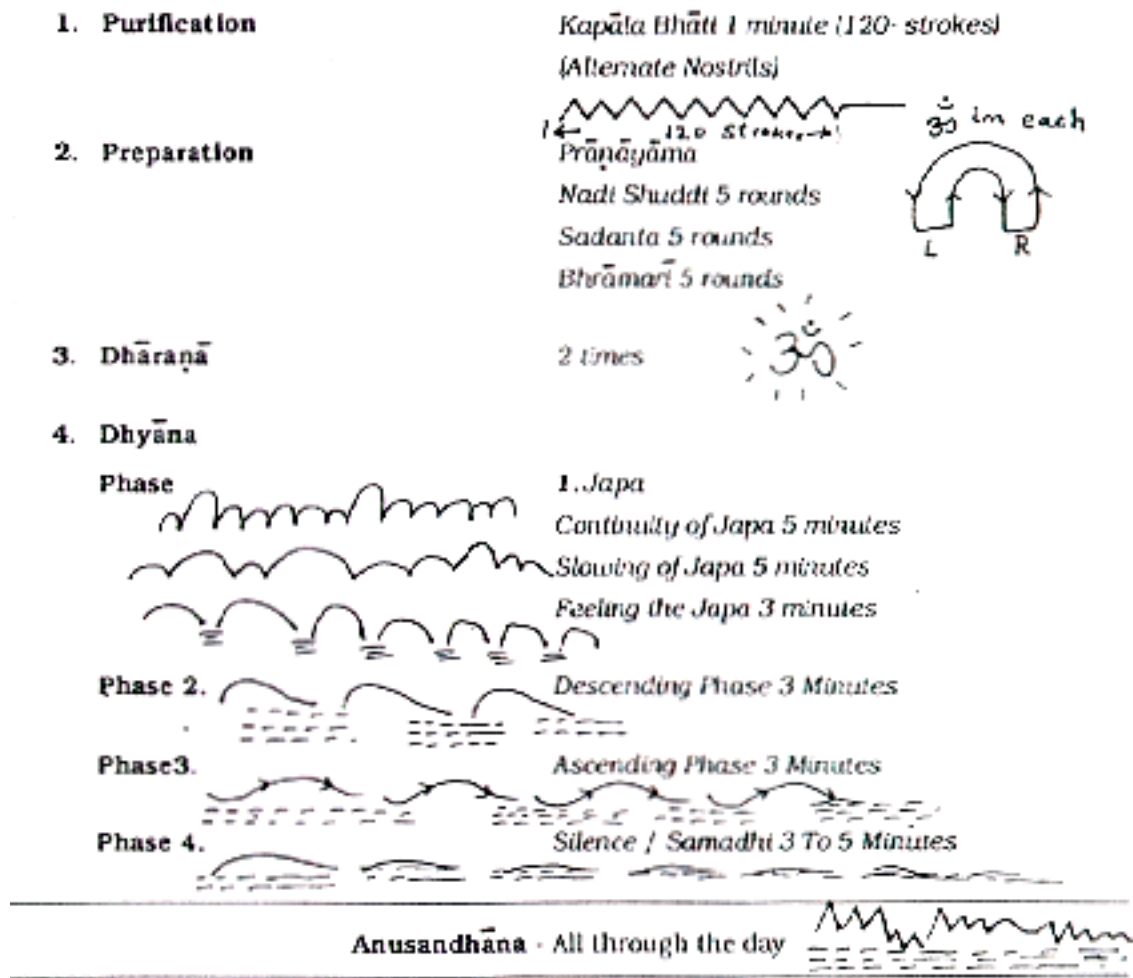
Now, allow the ascending part of the wave also to expand, before it starts descending slowly to Silence. More and more of Silence as you progress.

A feeling of expanse is associated with a feeling of well being, lightness and bliss. Greater the expansiveness, greater the bliss. **Dhyāna** culminates in **Samādhi** or super-

consciousness—a jump into higher level of consciousness. To a more subtle, expansive level of consciousness. That is the progress.

Experiencing silence in-between two japa waves helps to expand from 3D aware-ness of body to all pervasive awareness. The vision of a beautiful blue sky or a vast expansive ocean can be recalled to further expand. Expansion is the key to break open stagnation, drowsiness, and sleep.

As an aid to the progress of growth, purification techniques, **kriyās**, preparatory practices and **Prāṇāyāma** are often used. In the Omkāra meditation method, we have combined these phases and steps to bring about a harmonious, smooth and accelerated growth. This is shown in the following Table.



The bed of silence becomes deeper and more expansive—an OCEAN of Silence with waves on it—merge into complete silence—**ajapa**. Total duration: about 30 Mts.

Anusandhāna

After regularly performing the OM **dhyāna** for half an hour in the beginning and then longer, the meditator should spread out this feeling of lightness, silence and bliss throughout the day by recalling and repeating OM several times.

Samādhi

Progressing from one to the next layer of consciousness is accomplished by the culmination of **Dhyāna** into **Samādhi**. Through inner experience, we go deeper and deeper, purifying ourselves overcoming the wrong **Samskāras** or deep imprints in our memory.

Dhāraṇā and **Dhyāna** become aids to **Samādhi** says Patañjali. **Samādhi** is merging, the seer, the scene and the process of seeing coalescing.

The **Tripuṭī** vanishing. A jump within. When we come back from **Samādhi**, the expansiveness is retained. Meditation again. **Dhāraṇā** aiding it again. Jumping within deeper and deeper. **Samādhi** after **Samādhi**. This is the way of Patañjali. Unfolding the subtler and the subtler layers of consciousness. To manifest the Divinity more and more.

We have seen earlier that **Dhāraṇā** is focusing. **Dhyāna** starts off as attention or **Dhāraṇā** and grows through linear surface and 3D awareness leading to all-pervasive awareness—the process of expansion. Correspondingly, the depth of perception increases and the meditator starts perceiving things which are not normally perceived, hearing music sound, seeing visions, smelling unknown fragrance, tasting extra-sensory tastes of saliva secretions, and flowery or special touches. High sensitivity of all our sense organs result. Lightness in our motor organs leads to effortless work, enjoyable and blissful. The expansive mind builds great strength and will. Devoid of tensions and stresses, clarity of mind emerges. Poetry flows, says Sri Aurobindo, from this calm mind. High creativity is an offshoot of meditation. The ignorance within reduces. Notional corrections take place with perception of higher states of consciousness. We should allow these changes to occur. Let the dormant **Samskāras** get exhausted, cleaned up to develop the right **Samskāras**. The trick is to understand that we are growing and growing.

Let us all continue meditation, grow deep, spread this message of our ancient Seers throughout India and all over the world in order to bring peace, harmony, love and a holistic way of living.

IN PRAISE OF GOD

The First 'Kural' of Sage Thiruvalluvar

S. M. Diaz

அகர முதல எழுத்தெல்லாம், ஆதி
பகவன் முதற்றே உலகு.

Akāra mutala ezhuthellam ādi

Bhagavān Mudatte Ulagu

'The alphabet begins with A;
So does the universe begin with God.'

Just as the letter 'A' begins and energises all the other letters of the alphabet, God is the origin and substance of all the Universe. This is the first of the 'Kurals' (couplets) in praise of God. Perimelalagar would say that according to the custom of the day, the poet hails either his own favourite deity, or the deity appropriate to the theme, and concludes that virtue, wealth and love are connected with the three qualities **Sattva**, **Rajas**, and **Tamas**, of Primeval God, as stated in the **Gītā** (7, 12), and that, therefore, Valluvar has sung this chapter as a general prayer of praise to the Hindu triad.

Though we may admit that the basis of the poet's religious thought is Hindu and ethical philosophy is Tamil, this interpretation cannot be considered fully sound, in as much as Valluvar has so carefully and ingenuously worded these '**Kurals**' avoiding denominational names and exclusive doctrines, that every religionist all over the world is able to see the God and his own conception, in the references by the author.

In fact, specifically, the Jains would claim **Ādibhagavān** as the first of their Tīrth-ankaras. Some Christians would see Christ in the reference to **Porivaayil Ainthaviththan** (Tamil). But, running through the warp and woof of the entire work, we could see the basic

Hindu doctrines of **Karma**, virtue and devotion to God, superimposed upon the healthy rationality and social consciousness of the Tamils of the Sangam age.

In this particular couplet, there is more in the comparison of God to the first letter of the alphabet, than is obvious in the ordinary context. Linguists would realize that the sound of the letter 'A' is that which energises all the other letters and is the indispensable origin and source of utterance for all the letters of the alphabet of most languages. In this way, the letter 'A' and its sound not only form the starting point for all the letters of the language, but also give life and integrity to all other sounds and letters. In the same way, God is fountainhead and source of all life and activity in this universe. Perhaps, that is the reason, most invocations to God, begin with 'Om.' It is interesting to note also that **Thiru-manthiram** refers to God as

Akara muthalaa yanaithumaai Nirkum.

The idea is that God is everything from A to Z.

This is not only in keeping with Tamil tradition of hailing God as the prime mover of all things at the commencement of the poetical work, but also in accordance with the general practice of acknowledging God as the origin and source of life itself. This has a parallel in the Biblical lines, 'I am the Alpha and the Omega' (Revelations 216) meaning, the beginning and the end (i.e. all of life). That is why Spinoza called God, 'the first cause' in his philosophic discourses on Ethics. So does Thomas Aquinas and, from rational angle, De Cartes. This idea is found equally well in the **Bhagavad Gītā** (7. 6). 'I am the origin and dissolution of the whole universe,' and in Zoroaster's teachings as well as in the **Holy Koran** and the sacred books of almost all the religions of the world. That really is the special feature and vital core of Valluvar's universality of religious outlook. And it is not as if it is all a patchwork. On the contrary, what he presents in **Tirukkural** is a well digested, happily integrated universal philosophy, which is all his own and at the same time, acceptable to all thinkers, including those of all acknowledged religions.

Source: *Tirukkural*.

Published by: *International Society for the Investigation of Ancient Civilizations*, C/O Sakthi Sugars, Madras—32.

**Sarve Vedā yat padam āmananti
Tapāṃsi sarvāṇi ca yad vadanti.
Yad icchanto brahmacaryam caranti
tat te padam saṅgrahaṇa bravīmyomiyetat.
Kaṭha.¹⁰**



Meaning:

The goal which all Vedas proclaim, which all penances declare, and desiring which they lead the life of Brahmacharya, I shall tell you briefly—It is OM.

Kaṭhopanishad.

¹⁰ This Upanishad-vākya appears in original as well as in transliteration.



The OM

Prof. C. S. Mahadevan



His Holiness Swami Satchidānandaji of Yogaville has rightly observed, not long ago: “In the region of the Himalayas, you may very often hear OM. Everything chants OM in the Himalayas. The river says OM. Even the jungle animals roar OM. You can hear the OM sound everywhere. It vibrates every soul of your body. It creates a special rhythm in your system and you are sent into an ecstatic mood.”

His Holiness stressed recently that “Of all the mystic paths to Godhead, the simplest, the most dramatic, and properly viewed and miraculous symbol of the Hindus is OM. Resting on the human voice, the spirit, when the sound OM is produced, it soars upwards and transcends all material obstacles whose form and substance wither away before the pronouncement of OM.”

It is said that the grand finale of this heavenly music is attained when the entire universe vibrates with the sound of OM without any echo whatsoever. Is it not right then to say that this word emanated from even the Gods and manifested the world itself? The Hindus consider it as the ultimate creator. They see the Divinity in its sound.

All-Pervading, Transcending, and Immanent

This Divine OM is all-pervading, transcending and immanent. Hinduism looks upon the universe as the whole universe, as a single pulsating unit, created by the vibrations that emanate from the sound OM. According to them OM is a noumenon and from it phenomena made their appearance when some wave-particles temporarily congregated around foci in various locations. Life is a continuous get-together and dispersal of these local concentrations of the Universal OM which is Brahman itself. It is from its ability to generate, though in a much smaller particle, an exact facsimile reproduction of the OM that the human voice

derives its characteristic power. In other words, **man is a miraculous manifestation in minute form of the Universal Brahman.**

Man and his cultural output remain precious only so long as the spirit of the OM pervades them. This is the actual link between phenomenon and noumenon, between matter and spirit. What will happen if this link is broken? If it is broken the phenomenon becomes, metaphysically speaking, mere dead matter. Thus OM has a phenomenon and a noumenon quality. It exists as a noumenon with which the phenomenal OM having its origin in the human voice ultimately merges.

The OM serves as the link between the manifest and the real world [which?] is itself a manifest phenomenon. It has to be so. Otherwise, it would be out of reach for human beings. Where are we to find this mysterious phenomenon? It was the first sound produced by the human voice. In ancient times when human beings were pure and were sages, there was no mystery about it. But when we lost our purity on account of increasing wants and desires, we lost the significance of the mystic OM.

The opening verses of the Gospel says: **“In the beginning was the word, and the word became God.”** Do these words echo Hindu philosophy? The idea is earlier than that of the Gospel. Does it not mean that OM got imbibed into Christianity from Hinduism or at any rate from India?

The original mystic AUM, which is rendered as OM, is the most potent and contains within itself the essence of the whole gamut of Hindu religious thought. If intoned effectively, as per the injunctions of the Śāstras, OM has extraordinary spiritual powers. The religious texts solemnly aver that the mystic sound OM is produced by intoning sequentially the three basic elementary voice sounds a, u, and m.

L. S. Wakankar on OM

My friend Dr. L.S. Wakankar, popularly known as *Lipikāra*, has given a laudable interpretation of OM. He has made a thorough study of the significance of it and calls it **Gaṇeṣha Vidyā**. To the Hindu, the Divine word is “AUM,” to Zoroastrians it is “Ahum,” and to Muslims, Jews and Christians it is “AMEN.” The origin of the divine word, according to Indian Grammarians is “INPLOSION” (**Vaiyākaraṇa Bhūṣaṇa Kārikā-4**). The mono-syllabic divine word OM is worthy of worship as it is the spontaneous word of God (**Chāndogya Upanishad 1,1**). The **Gaṇapatyatharvaśīrṣa**, in describing the order of study of **Gaṇeṣha Vidyā**, places the recitation of ‘**Gaṇas**’ (phonemic categories) as the first stage. Then follows the drawing of alphabets with (earth) colours, i.e., “**Varnas**.” Gaṇeṣha is the lord of categories (**Gaṇas**). Everything which our senses perceive or our mind can grasp can be expressed in terms of kind, of category “(**Gaṇa**).” The ruler of all categories is Gaṇapati, identified with divinity in its perceptible manifestation. The stage reached by a Yogi in his ultimate identification (**Samādhi**) is called ‘Ga’ the goal and the principle called ‘Ja’ the origin; hence the symbol of the elephant head for Gaṇeṣha, son of Śiva.

Graphic Structure

The ancient graphic structure of the mystic syllable, as a graphic combination of signs A, U and M finds mention in **Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (5.32)**, **Kaushītaki Brāhmaṇa (26.5)** and **Āśvalāyana Śrauta Sūtra (10.4)**. It is also found painted on the walls of pre-historic caves in India. Further, the sign is found on hundreds of Ujjain [?] coins, along with the **Svāstika** on many other punch-marked coins and even engraved on the Sohagara copper-plate of great antiquity [too inadequate information!]

The significance of its graphic structure came right down to the Marathi Saint, Jñāneśvara, who completed his commentary on the **Bhagavad Gītā** in 1290 A.D.

“Salutations to AUM, the First Being, praised by the Vedas and realisable by the Self alone, which is one’s own self. That first are you, the Ga-Ne-Sha, who enlightens with

complete knowledge. This Divine word is complete. Its image is beautiful, wherein the faultless graphic of the script is manifest. Both feet are represented by the A-form, the big belly is represented by the U-form and the head is represented by the M-form. (It is interesting to note here that such graphic picture forms were constructed not with the medieval Devanagari letters, but with the ancient Mahesvari Brahmi letters.) When these three letters A-U-M combine, the Divine Word manifests. I bow to it, the First Element which I have understood through the grace of my Guru. (The Lord said: "I am 'A' manifest in all letters)."

The graphic form of OM or A-U-M is again clearly referred to by Saint Tukaram (1609-1650 A.D.), a contemporary of Shivaji, the great Mahratta Ruler.

The figure of AUM resembles the form of **Ga-Ne-Sha**; from it are derived the three Gods. **A-kāra** represents numerical digits from 1 to 10 mentioned in **Yajur (Vāj. Samh.)**, Sacrificial hymn (17.2), in **Taittirīya Samhitā** (14.40.174; 7.2.20.1), **Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā** (12.8. 4), and **Kāṭhaka Samhitā** (39.6); the list of letters in the Vedas is mentioned in **Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa**.

Alphabets (**Akshara**) and forms of vowels i.u.e. in colours are mentioned in the **Chāndogya Upanishad** (2.10.1.13. 2.22.3); Vowels and their '**Mātrās**' are mentioned in the **Taittirīya Upanishad** (1.1); sibilants-plosive-vowels and semi-vowels in the **Aitareya Āraṇyaka** (3.2.1), unvoiced consonants and voiced in the **Aitareya Āraṇyaka** (2.2.4), differentiation of Ṇ and Ṣ. (lingual) from N and S (dental) in **Ait. Āraṇ** (3.2.6). Conjugation is mentioned in **A. A.** (3.1.5) and **Shāṅkhāyaṇa Āraṇyaka**. The formation of mystic AUM from A, U and M is mentioned in the **Aitareya Brāhmaṇa** (5.32), **Kaushītaki Brāhmaṇa** (26.5) and **Āśvalāyana Shrauta Sūtra** (10.4). Singular and Plural numbers are mentioned in **Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa** (13.5.1.18) and the three genders in **Sh. Br.** (10.5.1.2, 10.5.1.3).

There are three verses (in Tamil) of Arutprakasa Vallalar, the 5th **Thirumural** on OM.

This becomes clearer when we study the form of his image (in iconography) and his **Vimāna** and compare it with the symbol ‘AU’ as written in Tamil script. He is seated in the pose of a Yogi. (Some cults of Yogis, especially the Nāths, have not only adopted his figures as their symbol, but even seem to have practical rituals in which they, or their principal leaders, appeared with an elephant mask, and imitated the pranks of that God, eating, drinking, dancing, and playing with female partners in the same way as he is depicted in temple sculptures. Such enjoyments are, to the Hindu mind, not incongruous with the bachelorhood of Gaṇapati, or the sannyāsihood of the Yogis. He has an elephant head with the trunk curled almost invariably towards the left (very rarely is it to the right) in a manner which together with his tusks bears a strong resemblance to the Tamil letter. At his feet is his **vāhana**, the mouse, the nearest approach possible to a dot in therio-morphism, or representation of deities, or their powers as animals.

Vallalar was thorough with the Upanishads. The **Gītā**, being a summary of the Upanishads, gives a significance of the mono-syllable which is everything. So, **according to Vallalar, if we say OM continuously by concentrating on Light or Sun we get the divine Grace.** We have to start with Light and then think of the Light within Light. That “Light within Light” has a spread beyond infinity. When we mentally attain that Light within Light, our body becomes transparent, loses weight and finally disappears. Many saints including Vallalar have bodily disappeared by concentrating on the “Light within Light.” OM is the pathway first to the Light and then to the Light within Light.

OM According to Arutprakasa Vallalar

Arutprakasa Vallalar, the famous saint of Vadalur, Tamil Nadu, has stated that OM is referred to as **Praṇava**. The meaning of the OMKĀRA implies the power which can create and destroy. What then is **Praṇava**? It has five parts and they are **Akāram, Ukāram, Makāram, Bindu, Nādam**. The word **Pañcamī** implies these five and was born out of **Praṇava**. Its location is in **Mūlādhāra** from which four others appear and they are **Sukkumai, [Parā?] Pasianthi [Paśyantī?] Mathimai [Madhyamā?] and Vaikarī [Vaikharī?]**. The location of these four are **Nābhi, Hirudayam, Kandam, Lalāṭam [Nābhi,**

Hṛdayam, Kaṇṭham, and Lalāṭam] i. e. the navel, heart, throat, and the forehead, respectively.

Arutprakasar in the 5th **Thirumural**, in verse 5440, suggests that OM is Śiva or energy and asserts the experience while meditating on OM, Lord Śiva appears like a **Sphaṭika** or **Jyotir Linga** which means Divine Grace Light. Again, in the same 5th **Thirumural** in verse 3242 Vallalar says that OM is a great spiritual utterance and says: “I wonder how I did not do research in it,” and asks whether it was due to ego that he forgot about it and went about wandering to find out what OM means.

In verse number 3075 of the same 5th **Thirumural**, he comes to the conclusion that while meditating on OM we must think of Light—Jyoti and then, “Light within Light” both of which are paths for total surrender to Him who bestows Grace.

More or less the same idea gets reflected in the **Bhagavad Gītā** in which the Lord of Kurukshetra in Chapter 10 in verse 25 says: “Of the great Ṛshis, I am Bhṛgu, of utterances I am the mono-syllable OM. Of **yajñas**, I am **Japa Yajña** and of unmoving things, the Himālaya.”

OM is the most sacred sound symbol of Īśvara. Constant utterance of this mono-syllable is sure to enable us to attain Divinity. It is equivalent to God. Chapter 9 verse 17 gives the same idea in which the Lord asserts: “I am the Father of this world, the Mother, the dispenser and the Grand Father. I am the knowledge of Purifier, the syllable OM and also the Ṛk, the Sāman and the Yajus.”

OM IN TIRUMANTIRAM

Introduction

The author of this treatise, Tirumular, was originally a Yogi called Sundarar, residing in Mount Kailāsa. Once he undertook a journey to the South to meet his friend and fellow-disciple Agastyar, who was living in Pothiya mountains. One evening he found himself in the outskirts of Sathanur village. He was deeply moved to notice a herd of cows lowing miserably round the dead body of their cowherd, Mulan. The Yogi who gave us the famous dictum, '**Anbe Sivam,**' God is Love,' thought it his duty to do something to help the dumb creatures. By virtue of his yogic powers he abandoned his body and entered the body of the dead cowherd. The cows were overjoyed to see their master coming alive. The ascetic in the cowherd's body led the cattle to the village, and leaving them there, returned to the spot where he had left his own body. He was surprised to find that the body had disappeared. It was an act of the grace of Lord Śiva, who had a mission to fulfill through his devotee. So, the Yogi had to continue to remain in the cowherd's body. He was immersed in Tapas under a peepul tree in Thiruvavaduthurai, a neighboring Saivaite centre. He came to be known as Tirumular. Soon disciples flocked to him. He was usually in **samādhi**. But now and then he uttered a verse which was recorded. Thus 3000 verses came to be recorded and these now form the text of the **Tirumantiram**.



In the **Tirumantiram**, the sage has given several verses extolling the glory of OM. The following random selection of verses from the Tirumantiram will give an idea of OM as discussed by the sage:

I praise, I laud,

Jñāna that is our Refuge;

I adore the holy feet of the Lord,

*Constant in my thought;
I expound Śiva Yoga;
Hearken you!
I chant the One Letter, Aum
Dear to our Lord.*

Note: Aum consists of three letters, ‘A’, ‘U’ and ‘M’. But as the three letters are always evoked together as Aum [OM], it is also known as One Letter mantra. [We are discussing OM and not AUM. After the sandhi, OM is one letter].

The exposition of the secrets of the mantra and yantra belong to the realm of Śiva Yoga, as distinguished from Kuṇḍalinī Yoga.

Saint Tirumular treats OM (instead of the natural haṃsa) as the Ajapa. In Sanskrit, ordinarily, OM is treated as a monosyllable; but as Pāṇini has pointed out, the combination ‘a’ and ‘u’ in this word, as an exception to general rule, is to be pronounced ‘au’ [?], a diphthong. This is the general rule in Tamil language.

Letters A, U and M

*By one letter, A, He all worlds became;
By two letters (A and U), he the two became--Śiva and Śakti;
By three letters (A, U and M) He the Light became;
By letter M was Māyā ushered in.*

Jñāna.

Note: The One Letter mantra, Aum, denotes the Divine Dance. It is Tāṇḍava, the Grace Act of the Lord performed in the Golden Hall of Chidambaram, the Sabhā of the South.

The word Chidambaram is of Sanskrit origin, and is made up of two words, 'cit' (meaning mind or thought) and 'ambaram' (meaning sky or space). Hence the word would mean Infinite Mind or the Divine itself.

God is Letter A and U

He is the cosmic Light.

He is Tattvas all.

He stands as Letters A and U.

He is the Light Divine for Tattva Dance.

He is for Himself the Support [of] All.

Note: Śiva/Śakti, who stands as the letter A and U, is the cosmic Light. The Lord is the support of the **tattvas**. He is the **tattvas**. He is the light divine of the **tattva** dance. He stands beyond the **tattvas** as well.

Chant OM and Rouse Kuṇḍalinī.

Kindle the Fire (Kuṇḍalinī) where it dormant lies

Chant letter 'na' that is in the chakra

Then the symbolised 'na'

Brings the Lord there.

Lord is in "AUM" beyond Adharas

Where Adharas end,

"Aum" is;

There shall you see Lord

Who of Himself reveals;

He is Blemishless,

He is Light Divine,

*He is Whole Truth,
He is the Alchemic pill,
Of flameless gold.*

“Aum” Mantra Sustains Life.

*“Hamsa” Mantra chanted within
In directions all spreads;
It is the Mantra of life, sustaining breath;
It is the Mantra in the lotus of the heart;
When constantly chanted,
That Mantra in life’s centre
Is verily unto a mahout’s goad,
That elephantine passions control.*

Chant AUM and be redeemed.

*They who chant the six-Letter Mantra
(Om Śi Vā Ya Na maḥ)
Are they who truly know;
They who chant not the six-Lettered Mantra
Are they who know not;
Even they who chant with other letter none,
May with One-letter [Aum] redeemed be.*

Greatness of AUM

*Aum is the one Word Supreme;
Aum is the Form-Formless;
Aum is the Infinite Diversity;
Aum is Siddhi and Mukti radiant.*

In Aum Jīva, Para and Śiva merge.

*In Aum arose the elements five;
In Aum arose the creation entire;
In the atīa (finite) of Aum
The three Jivas merged;
Aum is the Form
Of Jīva, Para and Śiva in union.*

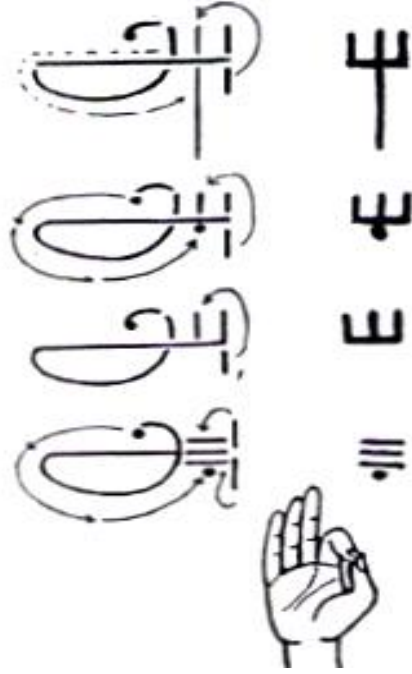
Chant “AUM” incessantly.

*Chant, the Lord’s name, a thousand times,
A thousand blessings shall yours be;
They who chant the lovely “Aum” a thousand times,
Are rid of a thousand thousand passions, away.*

Source: Tirumantiram: a Tamil Scriptural Classic by Tirumular.

Publishers: Sri Ramakrishna Matha,
Mylapore, Madras—600 004.

In Tamil, the first letter A or [*] is written as [*]. The following outlines of the letter show the positions of the baby in the mother's womb, and they are interpreted as representing the Trident (**Trishula**), the sacred perpendicular lines on the forehead applied by the Vaishṇavaitees (the V-shape and the U-shape) and the three parallel lines of the sacred ash applied by the Śaivaites on their forehead [**Tripundra**] and finally the 'Cinmudrā.'



V. Balaramaiah.



The Concept of OM

Svami Vivekananda

A symbol is the manifester of the thing signified, and if the thing signified is already in existence, and if by experience, we know that the symbol has ex-pressed that thing many times, then we are sure that there is a real relation between them.

Svami Vivekananda.

Every idea that you have in the mind has a counterpart in a word; the word and thought are inseparable [Vāgarthāviva sampṛktau]. 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 man—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 be always 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 ex-press 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 be a real connection between the thing signified and the symbol. Until then that symbol will never come into a general use. A symbol is the manifester of the thing signified, and if the thing signified is already in existence, and if by experience, we know that the symbol has ex-pressed 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 that the manifesting word of

God is 'Om.' Why does one emphasise 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.

Sound Mechanism of 'OM'

In making a sound we use the larynx and the palate as the sounding board. Is there any material sound of which all other sounds must be manifestations? 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 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 the possibility of all the words that can be made.

Universality

Apart from these speculations, we see that around the word 'Om' are centered all the different religious ideas of the Vedas....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 '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 word for God in every other language; their significance is very small. This word 'Om,' however, has around it all the various significances. As such it should be accepted by everyone.

Repetition and Meditation

Why should there be repetition? We have not forgotten the theory of **Saṃskāras**, 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, the moon, the stars, and the 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 **citta** 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 **Saṃskāras**. “One moment of company with the holy makes a ship 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 mind. Study, and 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 than to keep good company because the good impression will then tend to come to the surface.



THE FINITE AND THE INFINITE

The universal thought is Mahat, as the Sāṅkhyas call it, universal consciousness. What is that name? There must be some name. The world is homogenous; and modern science shows beyond doubt that each atom is composed of the same material as the whole universe. If you know one lump of clay you know the whole universe. Man is the most representative being in the universe the microcosm, a small universe in himself. So in man we find, there is the form, behind 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. **Kaṭha Upanishad** says: "That, seeking which a man practises 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.

--Svami Vivekananda.

OMKĀRA—ITS ALL-PERVASIVENESS

S. S. RAJAGOPALAN

AND

N. RAJABADHAR

**Omkāra, a manifestation of divine energy,
is the generator, operator, and destroyer
of this mundane world as represented by
the expression ‘God.’**

Authors.

OMKĀRA or OM is a universal phenomenon pervading the entire creation from the very origin of this world. It is not a meaningless sound. It is a combination of three sounds; AKĀRA, UKĀRA, and MAKĀRA. It is a sign of auspiciousness. Living creature —animate and inanimate and lower creatures endowed only with five senses emit this sound ceaselessly like the human heart-beat. It was reported in a recent Congress of American Scientists that there are perhaps in a year thirty-two thousand lapses of human heart-beats, also of some missing tapals and children in spite of extreme and exclusive caution and care, but in the case of OMKĀRA, the manifestation of the Almighty’s outer invisible breath, there has never been and there never can be a single lapse. Regularly, systematised symmetry, supremacy and sonorous, stimulating sound are the characteristic features of OMKĀRA. Theists, Scientists and Agnostics are stunned at the universal prevalence of OMKĀRA. Look at the chirping of the birds, yawning of animals, and sounds and the noise of the non-stop ocean waves—all these are replete with the sound of OMKĀRA.

From the cradle to the grave, humans are overpowered by the omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, transcendental, all-pervading, all-embracing, immanent, formless but full of

material, spiritual, ethical, evangelical sound of OM̄KĀRA. Right from the creation of the world, votaries of all faiths—Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Moslem, Christian, Jewish, Parsis, well-versed in the Bhagavad Gītā, Koran, Bible or Zendavesta—have experienced the mighty, majestic, magnificent effects of OM̄KĀRA symbolised by the Flute, Cross and the Crescent. All fine arts in the world are the refined, rejuvenating, rehabilitating, radiant manifestations of OM̄KĀRA.

In all walks of human life and activity—secular, sacred and scholastic--OM̄KĀRA is the underlying undercurrent which gives rise to a kinetic energy enabling humans to worship each one's work.

The supreme embodiment of Godhead is oneness of energy and power replete with the glow of Sound and Light embodied in OM̄KĀRA EMANATING AS SOUND. OM̄-KĀRA embodies in itself an effulgent, energising, enthralling, enthrilling light, inseparable from sound. This pair of sound and light is the obverse and reverse of one coin. **There is no sound without light and no light without sound as a healthy, harmonious heavenly combination embedded in OM̄KĀRA.**

In short, light and sound are the inseparable, insurmountable, intertwined entities like the Siamese twins without which the Universe cannot function or progress. OM̄-KĀRA, a manifestation of divine energy is the generator, operator and destroyer of this mundane world as represented by the expression “God.”

OM̄KĀRA is the acme of divine realisation of the goal of human existence, namely, transmitting and transferring the moral coil into golden immortal life as exemplified in the lives of Nandanar, Thyaga Brahman and Vallalar 1823-1874, who became one with Arul Perunjothi (Grace—Grand—Effulgence). Divine effulgence and **Thaniperum Karu nal** – unsurpassed divine compassion. From Valluvar to Vallanar, the Hindu scriptures – Thirukkural, Thirumandiram, Thiruppavai, Thiruvembavai, Thiruppathigam, Thiruppughaz, Thiruvaimozhi, Thiru Arutpa, Thevaram, Dhivya Prabhandam, etc. are exemplifications of the

Creator—One without the Second—in the shape of the visible God Sūrya Bhagavān—Sun God—a mighty Omkāra Svarūpa...common to all climes and people.

Now that OMKĀRA is understood, interlaced, interwoven, and intermixed combination of universal unison of sound and light, it is interesting to ruminate on the scientific aspects of OMKĀRA as the basis of religion and science. If science should help humanity as a harbinger of peace, plenty, purity, and perfection, it should have an ethereal, non-conventional, non-sectarian, non-denominational spiritual basis. OMKĀRA sound is a form of unparalleled energy acting as an external stimulus for hearing, produced within a body vibrates involving to and fro movement. OMKĀRA sound is thunder, clapping of hands, horns of buses, zooming of the winds and waves, falling of raindrops, buzzing of bees, rustling of paper or dry leaves, in wave motions caused by the vibrations in air or water called sound waves. OMKĀRA sound is propagated through solid medium, liquid medium and gaseous medium. OMKĀRA is further produced by musical instruments like the Veena, Guitar, Flute, Nādhasvaram, Harmonium, and percussion instruments like the Thavil, Mridangam, Kanjira, etc. OMKĀRA sound waves are utilised for transmission of news, views, pictorial presentations through television and radio. It is pertinent to note that in Western countries musical notes are utilised for curing diseases like mental retardation, insanity, etc. apart from relieving patients suffering from rheumatic pains, heartaches, etc. That apart, it is scientifically proved that these musical notes, viz. OMKĀRA shabda will help crops to ripen quicker or to increase the produce of such crops. Therefore, it can be safely concluded that it is nothing but OMKĀRA shabda which pulsates within and without the entire universe to the great benefit and advantage of entire humanity and animal kingdom.

Yet another invisible shape of OMKĀRA is light which again is a form of energy enabling humans to see things. The sources of light are the sun, stars, the electric light, burning of substances, and candle. OMKĀRA reveals through luminous substances like the burning- candle, the electric light and the non-luminous bodies like the moon, the rock and the tree.

In conclusion. OMKĀRA, a scientific combination and coalescence of sound and light is eternal, everlasting, all-pervading, all-reverberating, and is the sustainer and protector of the universe without beginning and end. Its incandescent, illuminating, indestructible ways and the ways of Providence commencing from the creation of the world once immersed in total darkness and as the OMKĀRA Nāḍha Brahman pierced through dark-ness, the world became a living Paradise inviting humans to achieve the goal of human existence, viz., the attainment of immortality not by burying or burning the mortal coil which is a temple of Godhead displaying OMKĀRA, but by alchemising the human body into one of Gold and diamond hue like unfolding divine light, effulgence and deathless delight, as proved by Saint Ramalinga Vallalar.

.....
OMKARA
ROOPA



V. Balaramiah

OM IN EPIGRAPHY AND NUMISMATICS



K. V. Ramakrishna Rao

**Om Pūrṇam adaḥ Pūrṇam idam
Pūrṇāt Pūrṇam udacayate.
Pūrṇasya Pūrṇam ādāya
Pūrṇam evāvaśiṣyate.¹¹**

**“Om, That, the Invisible is the Whole, This, the visible is Whole.
From the Whole, the visible universe has come out.
The Whole Remains ever Itself even though the infinite
Universe has come out of it.”**



**The derivation of ‘Amen’ from OM has been accepted by many scholars.
Surprisingly, the Arabic Amen [*]¹² closely resembles OM [*]. Definitely, it is not
a mere coincidence that these two letters of Arabic and Sanskrit denote the same
meaning and AUM and ALM also signify the creation of the universe. Thus, the
study of OM not only reveals the unity of world religions, but also proves the fact**

¹¹ In Devanagari.

¹² * denotes in original script.

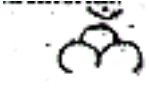
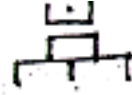

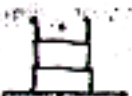
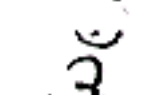


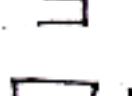

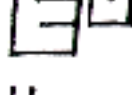
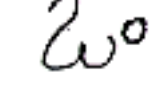
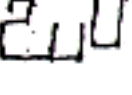

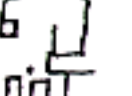
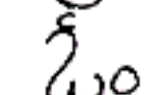
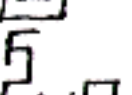
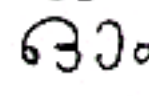
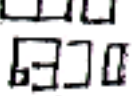

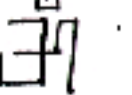
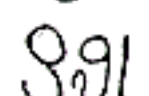
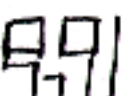
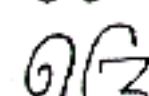
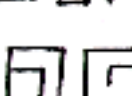
that all scripts evolved out of a common script, which perhaps existed once throughout the world.

The Author

OM the primordial sound and its symbol in various forms have been associated with humanity ever since its creation on the earth. In fact, it has not only been connected with the creation of the universe, but also with the speech, script and symbolism of human beings. Now, as much material about epigraphy and numismatics of ancient India and other countries are [!] available, a study of such details brings out very interesting information about OM.¹³

Those who are familiar with Vedic hymns and their recitations know the significance of the vibration of the monosyllable OM. In the beginning, definitely, there was only one word and then only man started to write the spoken word. In the case of OM, the importance is that has been represented in various forms, or such representation used shows the evolution of OM itself from time immemorial.

¹³ There are many errors of punctuation and its marks.

	Vedic	
	Pauranic	
	Assamiya and Bangla	
	Oriya	
	Telugu	
	Tamil	
	Kannada	
	Malayalam	
	Marathi	
	Sindhi	
	Gurmukhi	
	Sartha	

Before going deep into such a study, let us be familiarized with the following representation of OM in various scripts:

For an understanding, the respective letter in each script has been converted into segmented form. This human tendency is to represent any word in short form that is very often used. It changes according to the surface used for writing or inscribing. Thus, a letter written or inscribed on the material medium like paper, cloth, clay-tablet, copper plate, stone, etc. appears characteristically depending upon the material surface used. But, the important feature signifying its subtle inner meaning is always retained. Archaeologists and epigraphists may even opine that such forms are the initial stages of the evolution of writing by human beings. The noted epigraphist. Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sircar, long back pointed out the possibility of the identification of certain symbols appearing at the beginning of many inscriptions with OM. Al-beruni a non-Hindu, in his work interprets it as OM. Therefore, it is evident that in the 11th century itself the symbolism of OM was very familiar in India and abroad.

The practice of Tamils to start writing with ‘**Pillaiyar Suzhi**’ [*] is evident from many palm-leaf manuscripts and inscriptions. Why the symbol [*] known as ‘**Pillaiyar Suzhi**’, i.e., the curve is associated with Gaṇesha is very significant, as such curved symbols in inscriptions not only represent OM, but also prove the connection with Gaṇesha. Indeed OM or Praṇava itself is the symbolic representation of Gaṇesha. The bent trunk thus explains the connection. Another interesting episode is the writing down of the Mahābhārata by Gaṇesha himself! It clearly proves the relation

between sound and matter or speech and writing. Various forms and images of Ganesha have been found in different countries like Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Nepal, Cambodia, Java, Bali, China, Japan, etc. If the outline of such images is drawn with the characteristic bent trunk, they exactly coincide with the various letters of scripts representing OM as shown above. Particularly, the Tamil OM exactly coincides with the figure of Ganesha. Thus, while explaining the tattva of the figure Ganesha, it is pointed out that in whatever language the letter OM is written, the common characteristics among them is the resemblance of the respective letter with the elephant ears, head and trunk. Ganesha with the elephant features is known as Omkarmurti. The symbol ☺ is known as 'Chandra Bindhu' and it is in common use in northern India as 'Pillaiyar Suzhi' is in southern India.

The inscriptions, copper plates, palm-leaves, ceramic and other surfaces invariably start with OM, Sri, Swasti, Siddham, Subasri, Subamastu, etc. but represented by symbols which resemble very close together. From the frequency of occurrence of Sri, OM and Siddham at the beginning of the inscriptions, some scholars opine that OM may be having the nature of Sri and Siddham, as its character lies in-between them as can be seen below from the inscriptional details. The name of the inscription, period or date, the word with which it starts, script in which it has been inscribed and reference are given in order with the symbol on the left hand side.

Two image inscriptions from Mathura (1 plate).



oY



2.



3.



4.



171-72 A.D. Sanskrit (with a slight influence of Prakrit).

Siddham — expressed by a symbol which looks like the one found in another Mathura inscription of the fourth year of Kanishka (Vol.34, plate facing p.10).

Epigraphica Indica (Hereafter mentioned as EI), vol.37, p.IV., oct.1967.

Two **Maltraka** characters - copper plate.

526-7A.D. - Sanskrit. — Devanagari.

Siddham - plate facing p.169, Ibid.

Vrajam plates of Indravarman — II.









Copper plate—Oct.23, 595 A.D. - Sanskrit.

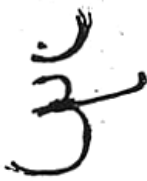








Siddham /Svasti/ (**Siddham** expressed by a symbol and **Svasti** in Devanagari) - Ibid.

Four **Buddhist** inscriptions from Phohnarkalan.

Sanskrit - 6th cent.A.D.

Siddham (spiral symbol) —Inscription B.

5.  **Siddham** (facing p.149) - Inscription C
EI, vol.37, p.III, July 1967.
Mahua inscription of Vatsaraja—latter half of the eighth cent: A.D.—Sanskrit (plate facing p.55)
Siddham (expressed by a symbol).
EI, vol.37, p.II, pp.54-55, April 1967.
6.  Gavalur inscription—Sanskrit-Devanagari.
Om namo Vishnave—876 A.D. (plate facing p.160).
EI, vol.I, 1892.
7.  A stone inscription from Kudarkot (Gavidhumat).
588-89 A.D. - Sanskrit - Devanagari, *ibid*.
Om expressed by a symbol.
8.  Pehoa Prasasti of the reign of Mahendrapala.
OM Namō Madhavaya - Sanskrit - Devanagari.
882-917 A.D. - plate facing p.244, *ibid*.
9.  Pattanlandi plates of Silahara Avasara—(II).
10.  Copper plate - Saka 910 (989 A.D.) -Sanskrit-Devanagari.
Om represented by a symbol.
EI, vol. 37, pp. 58-59, April 1967.
Ekallahara grant of Trilochanapala, Saka 972.
Copper plate - 1051 A.D. - **OM** expressed by a symbol.
Plate facing p.16, EI, vol.36, Jan.1965.
11.  Brlhari Chedi inscription.
Sanskrit - Devanagari - 11th cent.A.D.
OM OM namasivaya—here OM is represented by a symbol and as well as by letter.
EI, vol.I, 1892.
12.  Yadava charter from Devalali - 1 plate.
copper plate - 11th cent.A.D. - Sanskrit Siddham/ Svasti/ (Siddham expressed by a symbol and Svasti in Nagari) - plate facing p.80.
EI, vol. 37,p.II, April 1967.

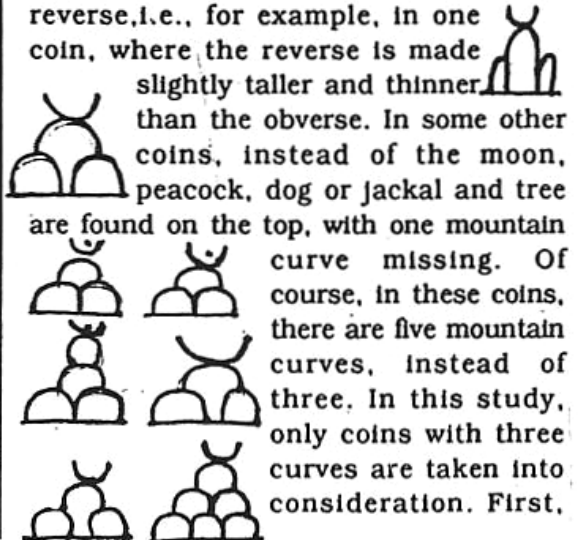
13.  Prakasa inscription of Sirihana's time-Saka 1156. 1233-34 A.D.
Om /Svasti/ (Om is represented by the usual OM symbol and Svasti in Nagari) - plate facing p.21.
EI, vol 36, p. I, Jan. 1965.
14.  Chahamana inscription of Vikrama—1189 (Oct.16, 1132 A.D.).
White marble pillar-Sanskrit.
Siddham—expressed by a symbol, plate facing p.164.
EI, vol. 37,p.IV, Oct.1967.
15.  Mahul (Trombay inscription of Harpaladeva).
Saka 1075-July 7,1153 A.D.
Sanskrit stone inscription.
OM (symbol) / **Svasti/** (Nagari)-Ibid.
16.  Menal inscription of the Chahamana Prince Meghanada Vikrama 1312-Aug.16,1255 A.D.
17.  Daddala inscription has 'Chandra Bindu' like symbol at the top and starts with 'Svasti'. Sanskrit-in Kannada-Dec.24, 1069 A.D.
Plate facing p.115, EI, vol.37, p.III, July 1967.
18.  Agali grant of Ganga Sripurusha.
Saka 669-Jan.18, 748 A.D.
OM Svasti (OM by symbol and Svasti in Nagari)
Plate facing p.134, Ibid.
19.  Inscriptions of rulers of Gaya start with this symbol. Also see 10 of this list.
20.  Inscription from Khajuraho.
Plate facing p.160.
OM by usual symbol.
EI, vol.1,1892.
21.  The Dewal Prasasti of Lalla the Chhinda.
Plate facing p.76, Ibid.

From the above, it can easily be seen how OM has been represented symbolically and it tallies with the other scriptural representations. 'Chandra Bindu' appears in 1,13,14,17 and 18. Curved symbols appear in 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,12 and 15. The symbol 8 resembles Tamil OM. In 11,13,20 and 21 OM appears very clearly. The symbol 13 may be noted carefully, where the normal characteristics of Devanagari OM is somewhat disarranged, but this form appears on many ancient coins of India. Clockwise and anti-clockwise curves may also be noted, as in many figures, the trunk of Ganesha has been characteristically drawn in either way, perhaps, according to the wish of the artist. But, each symbol has its own significance and it is explained in the **Vināyaka Purānam**. In any case, here, it is evident that OM is not only represented by its usual symbol, but also by shorter curved forms. As the concept of Ganapati or Ganesha is traced back to Rigveda, the moment the Vedas were available in written form, the symbolic representation or its monosyllable must have come into vogue at that time itself. It is also significant to note that 'OM' or 'Om̐kā' as a mystic symbol, associated with the creation was known in the ancient world including North and South Americas, China, Tibet, Japan, Mongolia and other countries. Now, let us turn our attention to numismatics.




The Vedic and Pauranic representation of OM and the Chandra Bindu symbol are found on many punch-marked silver and copper coins of ancient India. The British scholars have interpreted this symbol as a mountain, three curved mountain peaks with the moon on the top.

stūpa or caitya, reliquary and so on. Discussing this symbol, John Allan points out that one of the commoner symbols on the punch-marked coins, and the one which can really be said to be common on other series also, is that which represents a mountain. In the footnote, he mentions about the evidence for this identification, i.e., it is not a stūpa or 'caitya', as has been summed up by Ananda Coomaraswamy. Theobald suggests that they are reliquaries, one in each chamber of a stūpa. As the same object is found in many other combinations, usually with the 'taurine' symbol, where it can hardly be a reliquary, John Allan argues that it is a mountain. Alexander Cunningham opines that it is a Buddhist "caitya", the object of worship. Parameshwarilal Gupta describes it as 'three curved mountain peaks with the moon on the top'. Following these scholars, other Indian scholars interpret that it must be the mountain 'meru'.

A careful examination of such coins with the symbol shows that the form used for the obverse is never exactly identical with the one used on the reverse, i.e., for example, in one coin, where the reverse is made slightly taller and thinner than the obverse.

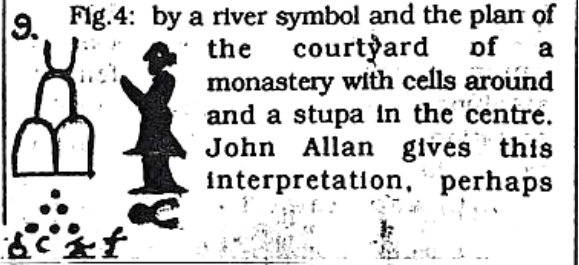
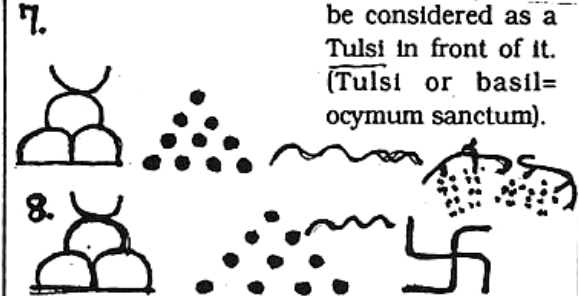
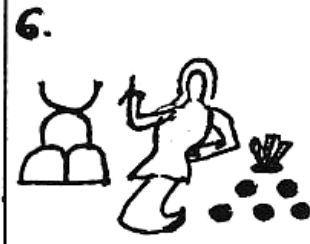
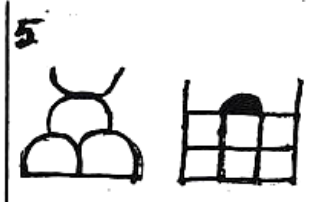
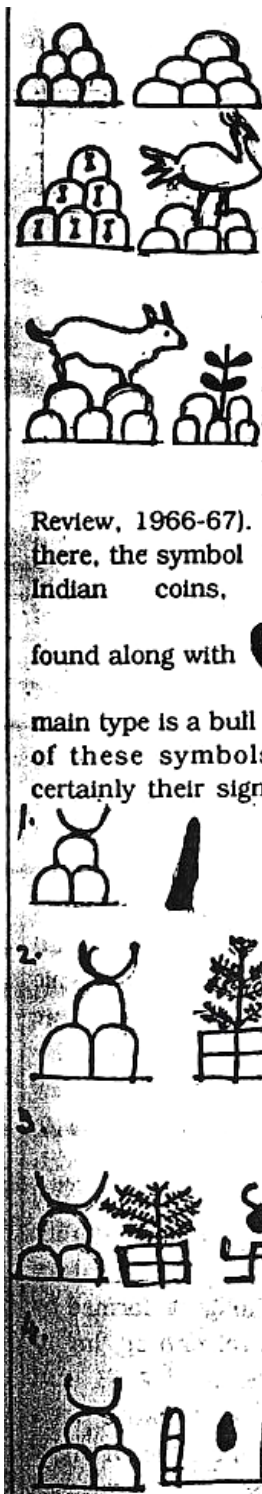


are found on the top, with one mountain curve missing. Of course, in these coins, there are five mountain curves, instead of three. In this study, only coins with three curves are taken into consideration. First,

the coins with 'Chandra Bindhu' are discussed and then, the above popular category is considered. A rectangular copper coin (uninscribed) with a 'crescent on a hill' was recovered from phase II of the excavated trench at Sonkh, Mathura District (p.41-42, Indian Archaeology-A Review, 1966-67). On the beads obtained there, the symbol  is found. In south Indian coins, the symbol is found along with  and . The

main type is a bull surrounded by a border of these symbols or ornaments, but certainly their significance is different, as has been observed in this study. Wherever, it is used at the top of the coins, its significance can be compared with that of the inscriptions.

Coming to the other category, it is noted that the symbol is mostly found in the coins of Taxila, Andhras, Western Satraps, Maghad and a few other north Indian early kingdoms. This symbol app-



ears to be characteristic of Taxila, as it is invariably found in most of Taxila coins, alone or with other symbols as explained below: In figure-1, it is accompanied by a monolith. P.L. Gupta considers the accompanied symbol as a conical, metallic piece.

Fig.2: by a tree in railing. If the symbol is treated to be sacred, then, the tree or plant may be considered as a Tulsi in front of it. (Tulsi or basil= ocymum sanctum).

Fig.3: by a plant in railing, svastika and taurine symbol (taurus=bull). As a tree, svastika and bull are in front of it. These combinations suggest a deity in a temple. Therefore, definitely, the symbol should have been used to denote some divinity.

Fig.4: by a river symbol and the plan of the courtyard of a monastery with cells around and a stupa in the centre. John Allan gives this interpretation, perhaps

keeping caitya in his mind, even though he considers it as a mountain.

Fig. 5: by a plan of a monastery with a stūpa at its center or front precincts of a temple with a flag mast.



Fig. 6: From the figure, it is very clear that a female stands holding a flower in her right hand. The pile of six balls, apparently with flames at the top may represent an altar or sacrificial fire or a homa-kuṇḍa (oblatory pit).





Fig. 7: Though there are ten balls most of the scholars mention as nine balls and consider that it may be another way of representing a mountain. But, they may also represent the **Navagrahas** inside a temple as river and orchid symbols follow.

Fig. 8: Besides the nine balls or the **Navagrahas** and river, the **svastika** symbol is there. All these coins belong to second century B.C. In some other coins, the Taxila symbol appears in combination with a lion, elephant and so on.

Fig. 9: Perhaps, this figure solves the riddle of symbolism, as here a female figure clearly stands before the symbol with folded hands, proving that it must be a deity. The six or seven stones may represent Goddesses and the taurine symbol 'bull.' This combination again gives the picture of a temple. As only the female figure is represented, the God represented by the symbol may be the God of procreation or Oṃkāramūrti. The entire old world considered this mystic symbol as the union of the male and the female signifying creation. The Tantric interpretation of OM is that it is capable of freeing the Jiva or soul from the bondage of birth and death. There are coins available with the name Sri Somaladevī supposed to be the wife of Śakambhāī king Ajayadeva, found in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh belonging to the post-Gupta period. On the reverse of the coins the expression 'Śrī OM' or 'Śrī Oṃkāra' is found very clearly. It is said that the coins were issued in the name of a God 'Omkara Mantata' '[Māṇḍhātā?]. There is a magnificent temple built in the name of this God at Mantata near Indore. (Note). People believe that childless couples who worship the deity would bear a child.

In this context, the connection between AUM, ALM and Elohim may be considered here, as it has a direct bearing on the above discussion. Om [in original form] , AUM consists of three letters a u m [in Devanāgarī] and these by Māṇḍūkya are made the modal expressions of the first cause, the means of the self development of the Divine along the three planes of **vyavahāra**, **pratibhāsa** and **paramārtha**. A represents **jāgrat**, the 'wakeful' phase; U **svapna**, the 'dreaming'; and M **sushupti**, the 'slumbering'. The first verse of the second **sura** of the Koran consists of only three letters--ALM! Islamic scholars say they are the three Arabic letters Alif, Lam and Mim. Opinions differ as to their significance, the prevalent view being that they indicate some mystic words. Thus, the mystic word ALM, which prophet Muhammed prefixed to many chapters of the Koran, alludes to Mother Goddess or Mother of Gods. H. P. Blavatsky explains how the word Elohim is formed by adding a masculine plural ending 'im' to the feminine noun 'Eloah', ALH and represents the Male-Female Creative Gods or Hierarchies of Beings who bring a

Universe into being. The derivation of 'Amen' from OM has been accepted by many scholars. Surprisingly, the Arabic Amen  closely resembles . Definitely, it is not a mere coincidence that these two letters of Arabic and Sanskrit denote the same meaning and AUM' and ALM also signify the creation of the Universe. Thus, the study of OM not only reveals the unity of world religions, but also proves the fact that all scripts evolved out of a common script which perhaps existed once throughout the world.

The next question arises as to how the symbol  should turn to 90° clockwise to represent the present Devanagari ? Those who are familiar with tantric texts know! how the symbol is turned in different directions or even upside down to interpret various concepts. Tantric scholars say, if the symbol of  is turned around,  it represents the pose of prayer, i.e., a person with uplifted hands. The other interpretations are beyond the scope of this paper. The point that is stressed here is, that the evolution of the symbol also proves the evolution of the script on the earth.

On the ancient ceramic ware also, the symbol is used in the following forms



are nothing but the Roman 'AUM'; written in different ways: the fifth is similar to which exactly represents Ganesha; the sixth is the segmental form of OM and the last one is extended svastika, another form of OM. Dr Feteah Singh, former Director of Rajasthan



Prachya Vidya-yā Pratisthan, Jodhpur, argues that an Indus Valley seal depicting a tree of life incorporates OM in its iconographic representation. According to him, the central portion of the seal represents OM with the combination of letters O and M, the former placed on the latter to symbolise the evolution of life or the tree of life.



The Bhagavad Gita uses different expressions in place of akshara, such as prakṛti, paṛa prakṛti, mahad brahman, kṣetra, yoni, avyakta, brahman and ātman. Of course, it is too well-known to be repeated here that Krishna proclaims, "Aham asmi ekam aksaram" (I am the monosyllable OM). How true it is to note that the study of OM in epigraphy and numismatics also brings out the facts of the Gita or rather follows the Gita to arrive at truth.

OM TAT SAT.



Some Plain–Speaking on OM

G. M. Jagatiani.

“If there is any sect here which believes that OM ought not to be the symbol of Hinduism, it has no right to call itself Hindu.”

Swami Vivekananda.

NO other word in any other religion has acquired such significance and importance as the word OM in Hinduism—the sacred symbol, imprinted in our mind and memory.

OM is the sound of the Lord. It is the symphony of our spiritual saga. It is the music of our soul. Any Hindu who objects to OM is not a Hindu. Any non-Hindu who ridicules OM is worthy of contempt. Like the word ‘**dharmā**’ OM has no corresponding English translation. It has no literal dictionary meaning.

Svami Vivekananda described the significance of OM in the following beautiful words: “These three letters (A.U.M.) pronounced in combination as OM may well be the generalised symbol of all possible sounds. The letter ‘A’ is the least differentiated of all sounds; therefore Krishna says in the **Gītā**, ‘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 whole phenomena of sound-production, and no other word can do this.’ [C.W.III.58.]

OM is the primordial sound of timeless reality, which vibrates us consciously and unconsciously. It is the transcendental sound of the inborn law of things, the eternal rhythm

of all that moves, --a rhythm of divine ethereal joy in tune with the Supreme Being. It is the symbolic Word of God. It expresses what is beyond words, beyond limitations and beyond definition. If love cannot be defined, how can OM be?

Just as a chemical formula gives power only to those who are acquainted with the symbols of which it consists and of the laws of their application, so OM gives power only to those who are conscious of its inner meaning and method of operation. To one it may be boundless space; to another it may have infinite power; and yet to somebody else it may be a subtle sound in solitude with the beating of the heart.

OM is the highest aim of Vedic endeavour. No language, however perfect, can illustrate such a sanctified symbol which has a tinkling of small bells inside it, chiming with candour and lilt. Om is an idea that there is a Creator who is infinite, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent. This symbol of OM is found even in the **Rig Veda**—the oldest scripture of the world. The Vedas have no author. OM has neither an author, nor any copyright.

OM is the symbol, the word, the sound that unites all cults and creeds to each other. **The Arya Samajists and the Sanatanis may differ with each other, but OM unites them.** It is the cementing symbol. Svami Harshananda says, “Praṇava or OM is the universally accepted symbol of Hinduism. All sections, cults and groups honor this and use this.... The word OM is derived from the Sanskrit root ‘ava’ which has 19 different senses. Actually, OM comprises of three independent letters: ‘a’, ‘u’ and ‘m,’ each of which has its own meaning and significance. The letter ‘a’ represents ‘beginning’ (**ādimattva**), ‘u’ re-presents progress (**utkarṣa**), ‘m’ represents ‘limit’ or ‘dissolution,’ (**miti**). Hence the word OM represents that power responsible for creation, development, and dissolution of this universe, i.e. God Himself.

“All sounds are included in ‘OM,’ he says. ‘OM’ and God are identical. Or, at least, OM is the best symbol of God.”

The Cross became holy for the Christians only after Jesus Christ was crucified on it. OM has been sacred for the Hindus from the beginning of the civilisation, before the **Purāṇas, the Upanishads** and the **Vedas**. OM has no time limit. It is an inalienable part of our religion and culture. It is with us. It is in us. It is us.

The **Kaṭha Upanishad** says of OM: “The word which all the Vedas declare, that which all penances proclaim and desiring which people live the life of religious student-ship, the word I briefly declare—it is OM.”

No wonder, in the Ivory Coast (West Africa) where Muslims are 65 per cent of the country’s total population, its religious symbol is OM. The Muslims there chant the Omkāra like any Hindu. Its African Airlines carries the symbol OM in its advertisements.¹⁴

Om is not only a symbol but also a sound. This is unique. It is, therefore, a potent icon.

Call it a ‘**mantra**’ or an invocation. OM is merged in the blood, bones, and body of every Hindu. “From Vedic times until the present day” said Svami Chinmayananda, “ the word OM has been taken as a symbol and as an aid to meditation by spiritual aspirants.”

There cannot be any sacred chant without the word OM. OM recharges the mind and invigorates your soul. Bread without salt is tasteless; a mantra without OM is incomplete. The **Taittirīya Upanishad** says of OM: “Thou art the sheath of Brahman.”

¹⁴ We tried our very best to verify this statement, but there was no evidence. May be greater and longer search is needed. Ivory Coast is now Ghana. The Embassy of Ghana did not even care to acknowledge our letter. The author has quoted or cited or referred to from a very archaic source. The problem with many Indian writers is : Gītā me Bhagavān ne kahā hai! Everything goes by the name of Bhagavan and Gita. Also to be noted is the fact that this article was not written originally for this publication, but is an extract from another book, which might have been published ages ago. Also it is to be noted that the author names Ivory Coast and not Ghana.

Tailpiece: In a report on the state of liturgical Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches, the text of which was sent to all the Hierarchies of the Syro-Malabar Church, Rome, on 12 August 1980, it said: The ‘OM’ is the synthesis of all the Vedas and all the ‘gnosis’ of Hinduism. Notwithstanding the attempt made in various quarters to offer an accommodated Christian interpretation, it remains so strongly qualified in a Hindu sense, is charged with meanings so unmistakably Hindu, that it simply cannot be used in Christian Worship. ‘OM’ is not a revealed name of God. Besides if even the Old Testament tetragramme itself can no longer be used, how can this syllable so charged with special meanings, and charged with ambiguity, be used to invoke God? Moreover, ‘OM’ is an essential integral part of Hindu Worship.”

Source: **Hinduism—Some plain-speaking.**¹⁵

¹⁵ It is to be noted that this is an extract, and not an original writing for VKP issue.

OM—THE SEED OF POWER

Dr. K. Udai Bhanu

In some distant future if one were to ask
the computer,
'Who created you?' the printout may
read "Certainly,
not you, anthropomorph, Om-Tat-Sat.



The ancient Hindus had a penchant for saying a great deal in a few words, much later quotified as 'Brevity is the soul of wit.' The mantra AUM or OM is an example personified (from person – 'per' means through, 'sona' means sound). This one-lettered syllable OM enshrines a whole philosophy which takes many volumes of written words so as to measure its **Ākāshic** depth and expanse, and, its true meaning could be as simple as the word 'Mā' to an infant, and the word 'Mā' means in any language, since an infant may be said to be a 'Para-Ma-Ātman' transcending national, social, cultural, and religious boundaries. Indeed OM has a universal appeal and closely approximating OM, are AHUM (Zoroastrian). AMEN (Christian), AMEEN (Islam) meaning, "so be it". As to its origin, scholars are divided in their opinion. The Vedas extol OM. The word Veda is derived from the root '√vid' meaning knowledge; compare it with the Latin word 'Video,' which means 'I see.' In the **Kāthopanishad** OM has been praised thus:

**Sarve Veda yat padam āmananti
tapāṃsi sarvāṇi ca yad vadanti.
Yad icchanto brahmacaryam caranti
Tat te padam samgraheṇa bravīmi.**

Om ityetat.

‘OM’ is considered as the primordial sound representing **Śabda Brahman**. The three letters AUM represent Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Mahesha and the glyph crescent moon with a dot – the fourth element called **Tūrīya** (pure consciousness). **Tūrīya** is the noumenon behind the creative aspect of Brahman. Indeed OM in its nascent form is quiescent and the sonorous OM is manifested in it. Appropriately another name for OM is Praṇava [pra=before and **Nava**=new]. Śrī Rāmakrishna used to say: “The Veda loses itself in Gāyatrī. Gāyatrī loses itself in Praṇava (OM), and Praṇava loses itself in **Samādhi**, the superconscious state.” According to the Veda, and indeed other religions, Śabda (sound/ word) is manifest in God (Brahman). Śabda-Brahman (like bivalent carbon (yet) exhibiting tetravalency by hybridisation) at appropriate time awakens as a result of a metaphysical stress (vibration) and gets transformed into Hiranyagarbha (Golden Egg) and from this issue forth the myriad forces/forms of the universe. This stress/vibration (energy) is like a catalyst and remains undestroyed. This process of creation in a way may be likened to the release of insulin in the body in appropriate amounts to metabolise excess sugar; however, this analogy is applicable just to visualize the release of stress/vibration in terms of needed Energy at appropriate time to catalyse the quiescent Brahman.

In Hindu philosophy there are innumerable variations of depicting the symbolic significance of the letters A U M, the crescent moon and the dot. Apart from OM’s importance as a symbol of creation, it also represents Vidyā (knowledge). Lord Gaṇesha who holds this portfolio is extolled by the Marathi Saint Jñāneśvara (13th century) thus: “Salutations to OM, the first Being praised by the Vedas and realisable by the Self alone, which is one Self. That first are you, the Ga-ṇe-sha, who enlightens with complete knowledge.”

Indeed the letters Ga-ṇe-sha in Sanskrit are the only three letters among the total fifty-two letters in which the consonant part is detached from the vowel part. Interestingly, the rendering of OM in Tamil (see the figure) has a striking resemblance to Lord Gaṇe-ha’s face; and if it is a coincidence, it must be said it is a Divine one.

Reverting to creation and OM's significance, there is an interesting theory put forward in Bhartṛhari (seventh century A.D.) which has a similarity with the big-bang theory. (The term big-bang sounds rather crude and is not to be equated with the harmonic rhythm of OM. However, we use the expression here to serve the purpose of an interesting comparison).

“Those who know about sound know that there are two sounds in the words we speak—one the cause of sound, and the other denoting the object. The sound which is caused is called **Sphoṭa**. **Sphoṭa** is, therefore, **Shabda-Brahman** or **Nāda-Brahman**. **Hiraṇyagarbha** (Golden Egg or more appropriately the Cosmic Mind with reference to the context) first manifested Himself as name and then as form (ideation) which is this Universe. Behind this form there is the eternal inexpressible **Sphoṭa** (compare with ‘vis-phoṭa’ meaning ‘big-bang), the essential eternal material of all ideas (expressiveness), the power through which the Lord creates the universe. The Lord first became conditioned as **Sphoṭa** and then evolved Himself out.

OM is, therefore, the key-note by which one can invoke his hidden cosmic Energy (**Kuṇḍalinī Shakti**) for Self-realization. Indeed, Kuṇḍalinī, the quiescent power at the base of the spinal cord is the mirror image of **Hiraṇyagarbha** (the golden seed) which can be made to germinate or resonate by proper repeated chanting of OM or better still the ‘non-parall [?]’ **Mahāmantra** Gāyatrī. The purpose of awakening one’s **Kuṇḍalinī** is not so much to know the pros and cons of creation, but to know and understand God and merge with his ideation.

On a sadder note, however, the symbol OM today has but remained a logo for mysticism and religiosity. Science is yet to slough off its mechanical skin to take a closer look at the potent symbol OM. A time has now come when a covalent bond between science and philosophy is established. The mechanistic view of science and its technological ideation, as it were, has reached its plateau level, whence the path can only be down-wards. Had Newton [?] that his discoveries would lead technology to such a flash-point (pollution, global warning, new diseases to name a few noteworthy achievements), he would have quietly eaten the apple. In stressing the need for science to take a closer view of OM or other **Mantras**, it

must be clarified that there is a vast scope to resolve many of the uncertainties which have not lent themselves to be unraveled. It may interest scientists involved in SETI (Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence) to constantly beam OM or Gāyatrī, somewhat similar to beaming Hydrogen wave-length as is being done. This may appear to the science-pandits as meaningless, but in defense the writer would like to quote Sir William Crooks: “To stop in any research that bids fair to widen the gates of know-ledge, to recall from fear of difficulty or adverse criticism, is to bring reproach upon science.” By some inscrutable ways (through space) OM, Gāyatrī, may transcend the barriers of speed, space-time and the ‘Answer-Back’ may first take a jitty.

To be more precise, it needs no elaboration that despite the achievements of modern science, we have no clear [?] understanding of the nature of space than did our Greek ancestors. It does not mean any mental construct upon space such as geometry or perspective. In essence, it means an awakening, an experience of space itself—the basic truth or aura in which we all participate, which permeates our every act and thought and whose ‘omnipresence’ we feel unconsciously as synonymous with the very existence in the world. The real understanding of the ‘omnipresence’ is what we can achieve, in some measure, by understanding the OM and other **Mantras** like Gāyatrī. In other words, let Plato’s philosophers preside over science instead of politicians.

In some distant future, if one were to ask the computer—“Who created you?” the printout may read, ‘certainly not you, anthropomorph, OM Tat Sat!’ Capra may agree, for man is himself an electromagnetic instrument in search of mysteries of his Creator.

A DISCOURSE ON PRAᅇAVA MEDITATION

K. T. KRISHNA VARIAR



The Praᅇava worship, which is an easy path leading to God-realization and Salvation, is also a hazardous path and should be followed with extreme concentration and caution. The attainment of result will be in proportion to the worthiness and effort of the devotee.

According to Vedanta, the meditation on Praᅇava is a sure and certain method which enables one to open the gateway of self-realisation. A person who performs meditation on **Praᅇava** in a concentrated and systematic manner, does not require any other **Sādhanā**. This will be possible only to those who are totally detached from worldly pleasures and have an ardent desire for spiritual attainment.

The first and foremost step, therefore, is to give up attachment to physical possessions and to develop strong desire for realising the Ultimate. The significance of **Pra-ᅇava**, in this respect, has been explained in the various Upanishads. The **Māᅇᅇūkyā Upanishad** is totally dedicated to the explanation of **Praᅇava** only. Gauᅇapāda's **Kārikā** on the **Māᅇᅇūkyā Upanishad** is very comprehensive, leading us to the real meaning of **Praᅇava** and postulating the theory of "**Ajāti-vāda**" or non-creation as the ultimate state. This is one of the most logical expositions on Advaita, which appeals to scientists, philosophers and agnostics alike. All Purāᅇas, Shāstras, Vedas, and the Upanishads also emphasize the greatness of **Praᅇava**.

The great sages and teachers have offered their lessons on Praᅇava and the disciples have contemplated on the same. The incantation of **mantras** without **Praᅇava** will not have

sufficient sanctity or strength. It is, therefore, clear that the **Praṇava mantra** has in-finite potentiality.

In the usual sense, **Praṇava** means “**Oṃkāra.**” ‘Om’ is a syllable which is to be recited. The recitation of the syllable can be done within a few seconds. **Praṇava** is, therefore, not limited to the recitation of the syllable ‘Om’ only, which has a start and finish in itself.

Praṇava is this universe itself. **Praṇava** is the ABSOLUTE Reality which encompasses the entire universe and is beyond that. **Praṇava** is the realisation of the oneness of the Supreme Brahman and the individual self. **It represents the unity of consciousness in the three states of waking, dream, and sleep.** It is the serene, tranquil substratum on which the “Big Bang” of creation is superimposed. The utterance of OM represents the infinite ocean of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. **Praṇava** encompasses the gross and subtle phenomena pervading the past, present and the future, ever present in the infinite cosmic space and time.

The Four Quarters

The syllable OM contains four quarters, namely the letters ‘A’ (*), ‘U’ (*), ‘M’ (*)¹⁶ and the humming tone which runs through the complete syllable and continues beyond the utterance of ‘M.’ These are referred to as the four quarters (**Pādas**) or four elements (**Mātrās**). These four quarters are not like the four legs of an animal, but like the four quarters of a coin. The idea is that each quarter merges into the one next to it and when the three quarters merge into the fourth, the fourth is the whole coin.

In the **Praṇava** meditation, it is necessary to realise the significance of these four quarters and worship them one after the other. As explained earlier, the first quarter is ‘A,’ the second quarter is ‘U,’ the third quarter is ‘M’ and the fourth quarter known as **Nāda** or **Dhvani** is unifying all the four quarters of the syllable.

The first quarter refers to the visible gross form of the universe with its multi- plying of forms and names; the second quarter refers to the subtle phenomena and the third refers to the causal world. The fourth is the attributeless [**Nirguṇa**] Brahman or the Self.

So in the first quarter of **Praṇava**, the disciple should worship the entire gross uni - verse with the multiplicity of living organisms as **Īśvara**.

Constitution of the quarters

The five gross elements, namely, earth, water, fire, air and ether; their five attributes (qualities), namely, smell, taste, shape, touch and sound; the physical organs of action: the gross body; divine aspect “**Vaiśvānara**” who experiences the body; the act of creation; and **Brahmā**, the God of creation; the waking state where these are cognised or experienced— these are the constituents of the first quarter ‘A’ representing the gross universe. The worship of the first quarter consists of identifying the individual microcosm with the all- pervading macrocosm and worship the same as God giving up the idea of duality and difference. Worship or **Upāsana** does not mean concentration with closed eyes only; it is the realisation of complete oneness in thought, word, and deed experience and knowledge. Once a deserving disciple continues the worship of the first quarter in the above-mentioned manner, he sees everything as God and nothing but God. At this stage, his sins are totally obliterated.

Now, he can go to the next step, *viz.*, the worship of the second quarter. The first quarter is explained in the Purāṇas as the **Virāṭ Puruṣha**. The second quarter is referred to as the subtle world which is explained as the **Hiraṇyagarbha** or **Nārāyaṇa** in the Purāṇas.

The five senses of perception; the five **Prāṇas**; the four mental and intellectual aspects, namely, the mind, **citta**, **Buddhi**, and **Ahaṃkāra**; the five subtle elements and their inherent qualities (**Tanmātras**); the act of sustenance and **Vihṇu**, the God of Sustenance; the Divine aspect “**Taijasa**” and the Dream State—these are the constituents of the subtle world. The second quarter comprises the totality of these various constituents. A disciple who has

¹⁶ * means in original Devanagari script.

attained a very high level of concentration can only perform this worship. He who has attained purity of mind and sharpness of concentration and performs this worship with complete devotion and faith will have the mirror of intelligence cleared of all dust and impurities and will release the basic continuum of “existence-knowledge-bliss’ behind these gross and subtle realities. His life will become blissful, benevolent, and non-violent and he will become a model for others. The result of good deeds will automatically and unexpectedly reach him without any effort. His mental peace and ecstasy will gradually increase and once he continues this worship without ego and totally dedicated to God, he will become worthy of worshipping the third quarter.

The third quarter is the causality, **Avidyā** or ignorance which is the cause of the gross and subtle world; the Divine aspect is “**Prājña**”; the act of dissolution and the God of dissolution “Rudra”, the state of deep sleep in which these are realised--these are the constituents of the causal world. Once the worship of this third quarter reaches an advanced stage, the universe consisting of forms and names will gradually dissolve and a lower level of **samādhi** will be experienced. He will gradually transcend the phenomenal world of thoughts, words and deeds. Once this form of worship advances further, his life-style and experiences will completely change. Although “Jāgat” or the visual world is seen in the eyes, he will experience the same as a dream only. He will automatically lose interest in food, etc. His thoughts, words and deeds pertaining to the physical existence will gradually shrink. As he attains maturity in this form of worship, his consciousness will transcend the three states of wakefulness, dream and deep sleep, into “**Turīya**” (superconsciousness) and the seen universe will be dissolved.

Now he becomes worthy of starting the worship of the fourth quarter. Once his penance in the fourth quarter becomes firm and unchanging, he becomes a **Jīvanmukta** (liberated of embodied state). As he continues his day-to-day existence as a **Jīvanmukta** totally dedicated and being neither the doer nor the experiencer, he becomes liberated from the physical body, as the time comes. He is in a state of “**Nirvikalpa Samādhi**.”

It may be seen from the above that at individual level, the first, second and third quarters refer to the physical, mental, and intellectual conditions and the fourth quarter is transcendental state. The Praṇava meditation for worship will raise a mortal human being step by step from his lowest position to the highest state of immortality, i.e. liberation from the continuous chain of births and deaths. However, this can be attained only by those who are purified of all sins, free from desires and worldly aspirations and have an ardent wish to attain the Lotus Feet of Supreme Brahman. The Praṇava worship which is an easy path leading to God-Realisation and Salvation is also a hazardous path and should be followed with extreme concentration and caution. The attainment of result will be in proportion to the worthiness and effort of the devotee.

OM - MURUGA – SWAMIMALAI

Tamilnad is famous for the six abodes of Lord Kārtikeya (more familiar as Lord Muruga). These six shrines or abodes of the Lord are known as ‘Arupadalveedu’. They are Palani, Thiruttani, Thirupparankundram, Swamimalai, Thiruchendur and Pazhamudhir--salai. Of the six holy centres, Swamimalai near Kumbhakoṇam is of special significance to our theme of ‘OM.’



The mythology is as follows: Lord Muruga, that is Kārtikeya, once asked the Creator, Brahmā, the meaning of the Praṇava ‘OM.’ Brahmā fumbled. Muruga, who was then a lad, ordained that Brahmā was not really competent to be called as the Creator, as he was not able to explain the Praṇava. This defiant attitude of Muruga nonplussed the Devas and Devatas who approached Lord Śiva and pleaded for a solution to Brahmā’s predicament. When Muruga went to Lord Śiva, the latter queried on the others’ cause for grievance. Muruga told his father (Lord Śiva) that Brahmā did not know the meaning or significance of the Praṇava ‘OM.’ Surprisingly enough, Lord Śiva also pleaded ignorance on the question. Then Muruga, his son, offered to reveal to the Lord the import of ‘OM.’ For this, as per the son’s behest, the Lord had to sit near Muruga on bended knees, with reverence, to receive the **Upadeśa** or initiation of ‘OM,’ the **Praṇava mantra**. That is why Lord Muruga is also known as ‘Svamināthan’ or Thagappan Svami.

This incidence is said to have taken place at Swamimalai, one of the six famous traditional abodes of Lord Muruga.

OM

SANJAY

This article, for a change, is different from the others, since the author discusses it in a non-academic way, with reference to his own experience, the enigma, and ultimately, his sense of surrender to OM.

(Editor).

When I was a young boy and when I was taught the art of writing, the first rather complicated but beautiful shape that was taught was ‘OM’. The four round curves were a source of delight to me. Surprisingly, the sound was picked up much earlier in the letter-reading class where this letter also headed the list of the alphabet.

‘OM’ thus became the beginning of reading and writing to me. Much earlier, since the age of 2-3 years, sitting in the lap of my grandmother/aunt, I had chanted ‘Om’ inadvertently numerous times. In fact, almost everything began with Om, and if it did not, it certainly ended with “Om Shāntiḥ! Shāntiḥ! Shāntiḥ.”

It was an enigma for me since then and it continues to be so till date. There have been many a scholarly treatise on ‘Om’ right from the period of the Upanishads down to the present day – (there are many such articles in this special issue as well) but I would not go into these details and try to narrate my personal continuing discovery of the ‘Om’.

Born in a Marāṭhi-speaking conservative family, ‘Om’ as the beginning of a formal, conscious learning process, was inevitable. I was told ‘Om’ is the **Ādyakṣara**, the primal letter. In Marāṭhi, ‘**Akṣara**’ means a letter and it also means one without ‘**kṣara**’, that is indestructible. Thus, ‘Om’ was a letter which was the ‘**Ādya**’- beginning and ‘**Akṣara**’ – without destruction. Therefore, everyone told that any auspicious beginning has to be with ‘Om’.

Santa Jnānesvara is said to be the first poet in Marāṭhi and he equates ‘Om’ with Gaṇeśa. That is why **Gaṇeśa Stavam** is also done at the beginning of any auspicious function. He, while trying to bring out similarities between OM and Gaṇeśa, says that ‘Om’ is composed of three sounds, ‘A’ ‘U’ and ‘M’. The ‘A’ stands for the caraṇa (feet). ‘U’ for his round **udara** (stomach) and ‘M’ for his **mastaka** (head). These three combine together to give us not only Gaṇeśa but the ‘**Śabdabrahma**,’ the primal seed of sound.

This ‘Om’ (**śloka**-stanza) was learnt in childhood and though all its significance was not clear, one thing was firmly embedded that ‘Om’ is the equivalent to Gaṇeśa and has the power to make anything successful, if chanted, worshipped at the beginning.

‘Om’ is called the ‘**Praṇava**’, which means the ‘best praise’ or ‘**Udgītha**’ which means the ‘best song’ in the Upanishads. In fact, as said earlier, there are so many interpretations of ‘Om’ and its components ‘A’ ‘U’ and ‘M’ that one gets confused. In a book commenting on the Upanishads, I saw a Table giving 50 different interpretations (all with reference to various Upanishads) and with a footnote that this Table was just a guide and not at all complete. I took my clue from it and decided to have my own personal encounters with it.

All this happened much later when I had crossed the limit of 30 years. But before that, this symbol kept on meeting me on numerous occasions in different circumstances. It is interesting to look back upon them.

‘Om’ is not just a letter. It is a sound, a syllable, a symbol, and an experience. This I realised quite early because chanting (or shouting) ‘Om’ in chorus during an **Āratī** or a procession of Gaṇeśa, or in a temple, always produced a queer sort of feeling, inexpressible in words.

‘Om’ kept on coming in audio-visual terms. The songs in the Hindi films which can best be called as pseudo-Western had to adopt “Om Shantiḥ Om.” But the Westerners,

especially the talented geniuses like John Lennon and his Beatles group did research on the sound and came out with an unforgettable number, “Nothing is gonna change my World.” The repetitive lines and sounds in this song is ‘Jai Gurudeva—‘Om’ and this chanting in Western background showed me the universality of this sound. For me, the song with its words trying to convey that which is beyond the senses was a revelation. It always came back to ‘Om.’

And so ‘Om’ is a special thing, a symbol of the inexpressible, a composite sound of ‘A’, ‘U’ ‘M’, the three most fundamental articulations which a human being makes with the base of the throat, with the sides of the mouth and the tongue and with the help of the nose. Somebody told and I am inclined to believe that if all the sounds (consonants and vowels together) in Sanskrit language are chanted together (properly) then their combined effect is the sound ‘Om’. This he claimed has been proved mathematically by sophisticated instruments with which you can have sonographs of frequencies, etc.

That would mean ‘Om’ is a sound of sounds, like white is a colour of colours. But ‘Om’ is much more. It is not restricted to the one sense of hearing. Chant it loudly and observe the changes within you. That was termed as ‘**Oṃkāra Dhyāna**’ (I learnt of it only very late—just 2 or 3 years ago). But it was a game, an enjoyable game. The experience was not only of ears but also of all the senses, the entire existence.

How the world came into being. There was NOTHING, and then this sound of ‘Om’ that ushered in the vibrations which lead [?] to energy, then matter, and then all this which we are part of. This ‘Om’ is always there. It was the converting factor (and the one that got converted) from Infinite to finite, from nothingness into being and from involute to the evolute. It is a sort of threshold entity. It is the ‘Brahman’—the Ultimate, the Truth and thus it is recognised in all the Indian scriptures. But it is an understanding which one can reach without going into the scriptures.

The rock at the confluence of the three seas at Kanyākumārī is a thing out of the world. Everyone who goes there comes back with an experience one cannot put into words.

The rock sanctified by the **tapas** (meditation) of Devī Pārvatī and Svami Vivekananda (and probably many others) brought out to me the visual aspects of ‘Om.’ Sitting in the **Dhyānamaṇḍpam** of the famous Vivekānanda Śilā Smāraka, I was gazing at the ‘Om’ with its fine smooth, golden curves, brightly illumined by a light unseen. And I wondered why this symbolic entity had so much fascination for so many. The curves became brighter and brighter. There were three and a half of them. They never got converted into circles or ‘śunyas’. They never really closed into loops, always beckoning, telling the story (history) of the universe, solving all the mysteries and puzzles that had bothered one for long. The roaring sound of the waves and the bright intermingling arcs, curves of ‘Om’, were all that I could remember when I found myself on the Kanyākumārī shore again. This was the experience in the first visit and though subsequent visits produced a tranquility, this was never repeated.

But the link between the two schools of thought, one saying that ‘Om’ the Brahman, is the ultimate truth and the other calling all as Mother Adīśakti’s play became clear due to ‘Om’ again. ‘Om’ has its constituents, ‘A’, ‘U’, ‘M’. Slightly transposing them, one gets UMA which is one of the names of the Mother, the Śakti, ‘**Ekam Sat Viprā Bahudhā Vadanti**’ (truth is ONE; the wise call it by different names) was once again realized.

But the sound of ‘Om’ comes to me through the ‘Amen, Amin, Aum’ of the prayers of various non-oriental religions. The oriental religions have ‘Om’ in common (All Sikh-ism, Buddhism, Jainism, etc.). And that is why when Swami Vivekananda, who was an Advaitin, a Vedāntin, a person who said that there cannot be a book, a person, a personal God, for, the universal religion always had ‘Om’ as the probable symbol in the universal temple.

Travelling through the length and breadth of India during the Vivekananda Bhārata Parikramā one could see the visual symbol of ‘Om’ very imaginatively and congruently blending the symbol of Islam and Christianity. This has further stressed the ‘Om’ in my mind.

In conclusion, I would just say that 'Om' is the only complete, wholesome, Truth that we all are striving for knowing. Let us all try to realise it.

Om Shāntiḥ! Om Shāntiḥ!! Om Shāntiḥ!!!

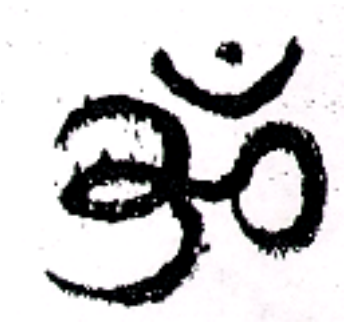


To every Mantra ‘OM’, the Praṇava, is added on [prefixed?]. And without ‘OM’ no sacred chant has its power. Just as a living body has no vitality when the life-giving breath is not flowing through its veins, so too a Mantra has no life in it without the addition of the Praṇava. Vedantic students generally practice the repetition of and the meditation upon the symbol provided by the Praṇava – this is called Praṇava Upāsanā.

Svami Chinmayananda

‘Omityekākṣaram’

L. S. Dev



Seed is ‘Brahma.’

That begets shrub is ‘Parā.’

Sound is ‘Pashyantī.’

Nāda is ‘Madhyamā.’

Size is ‘Vaikhari.’

The definition of the Praṇava ‘Om’ is well given in the 8th chapter, stanza 13, of the **Gītā**, as it says:

Omityekākṣaram Brahma vyāharan mām anusmaran.

Yaḥ prayāti tyajan deham sa yāti paramām gatim.

(in original Devanāgarī).

Uttering ‘Om,’ one indestructible Brahma, and dwelling in me in my absolute aspect, one reaches the Supreme Goal, i.e. Nirvāṇa or Paramapada. [not complete].

The yogi realising this profound truth, doubtless transcends all the rewards ascribed in the scriptures, to the study of the Vedas as well as to the performance of sacrifices, austerities, and charities, and attains the beginningless supreme state, the ‘Paramapada.’

The world-renowned and erudite saint Jñāneśvara has already said in his most celebrated work, Jñāneśvarī's very first line of the beginning stanza, which is supposed to be the masterpiece version of the **Gītā**:

**Om namoḥi Ādya Veda pratipādyā/
Jaya Jaya svasaṃvedya Ātmarūpa//**

(Om) is the gist of this universe, which is the absolute and beginning of the Earth and as described in the Vedas, is born by Himself, is the Eternal Almighty, that is 'Om̐kāram and to this 'Praṇava' Patañjali says: **Tasya vācakaḥ Praṇavaḥ**, which means **Parabrahma**. All the Vedas proclaim this very 'Om' being the goal supreme to be achieved in man's (yoni) life. That is why all the **tapas** describe the goal attainable, all those observe celibacy throughout their life, for obtaining this very goal supreme, is that absolute Almighty. 'Om̐kāra', which is also called Sat-Cit-Ānanda (the happiness of the highest order) the **Paramapada** or **Parabrahma**, which was at the root of the Earth at the beginning, which is Eternal, is today, and will last for the days to come. 'Om' is the perfect embodiment of **Parabrahma**, the sole, infinite and Absolute God.

This universe of ours was born out of sound, **nāda** the **Śabda-Brahma** from the firmament above, i.e. **Ākāśa**. There was an element of sound in the beginning of the Earth. When our ears are totally purified by constant performance of yoga (tapas) we can hear the 'Soham' noise of 'Om̐kāra,' which is the real manifestation of the **Paramātman**.

In the **Kāthopanishad**,¹⁷ 'Etaddhyevākṣaram **Brahma**' is also propounded by the **Gītā** as 'Om̐tyekākṣaram **Brahma**.¹⁸ So also in the **Praśnopanishad** as **Param cā-param ca Brahma yad Om̐kāraḥ**, i.e. 'Om̐kāra' means **Para** and **Apara** Brahma.

¹⁷ The language is very poor. It does not match with what has gone before.

¹⁸ The rendering too leaves much to be desired. A poor show.

In the **Taittirīya Upanishad** it is described as ‘**Om iti Brahma**’ and in the **Chāndogya Upanishad** as ‘**Om ityetaḍ Akṣaram Udgītham upāsīta** –One should worship Om [as **Udgītha**].

In **Jñāneśvarī** again, it has been well and rightly propounded by Saint Jñāeśvara as

‘**Pai [?] Brahma Bola Jahala Ankuru**’

‘**Ghosh Dhvani Nāḍakaru**’

‘**Tyāce Bhuviaga Omkaru**’

‘**Tohi Me Ga.**’

Which means

Seed is ‘**Brahma.**’

That begets shrub is ‘**Parā.**’

Sound is ‘**Pashyantī.**’

Nāḍa is ‘**Madhyamā.**’

Size is **Vaikharī.**¹⁹

Such is ‘**Omkāra**’ that is our Ultimate Almighty God. ‘**A**’ is **Puruṣa** (Man), ‘**U**’ is **Prakṛti**, i.e. **Shakti** gives birth to **Akṣara Brahma**. This ‘**Omkāra**’ is **Triguṇātīta**, i.e.

A + U + M - Om | that comprises

Akāra - Viṣṇu | Trinity.

Ukāra - Maheśa |

Makāra - Brahmā |

Akṣarāṇām Akāro’smi the **Gītā** reiterates. So, in saying ‘**Soham**’, **Tattvamasi**, **Om Tat Sat**, **Aham Brahmāsmi**, etc., the gist is ‘**Om**’, is sublime, i.e. Supreme Almighty, the sole credential ingredient of this universe.

¹⁹ Neither the text nor the translation is clear to us.

In short, the Almighty is eternity beyond limitation, i.e. Infinite and Unfathomable, called **Brahma** or **Parabrahma**, who is **Virāṭ, Viśvavyāpī, Viśvātmā** according to Svami Vivekananda, pervading all **Tribhuvana**, i.e. Heaven – Earth – the Earth beneath the Ocean. This very Parabrahma, Paramātmā is Omnipresent everywhere, Omniscient and omnipotent, is to be embraced, which must be the goal supreme attainable for every human being, i.e. every Ātmā must embrace Paramātmā. Such is our blessed soul which is an offspring generated from the Praṇava – Om – the perfume and essence—permeating **Triloka, i.e. Svarga-Mṛtyu- Pātāla**.

It has also been said in the **Devīmāhātmya** (1.74): Thou art the Eternal, Indistinct, Supersonic Mora (known as **Ardhamātrā**) in the transcendent form of (Om): O Devī (Goddess) thou art **Sandhyā, Sāvitrī**. Thou art the Supreme Generatrix (of all things). Here also we visualize the essence of ‘Om’ which is well enumerated and is also profusely depicted in the English Poem, “Heavenly Harmony this Universal Frame (the Earth) Began.” Such is the echoing of ‘Om’ sound. The **Shabda Brahman** is the creating global factor of our universe.

In **Shivalīlāmṛta** also it has been well depicted that in the first instance when globe came into being and was about to assume shape, there was no human race or Māyā. It was total oblivion. Only an Absolute or **Nirākāra ‘Brahma’** was reigning supreme and when **‘Soham’** or ‘Omkāra’- **Nādabrahma** was infused and echoed, this created the human world out of the **Mahattattva** and **Sattva, Rajas, Tamas**, ego, were created out of the sweet desire of Shiva, the ‘Omkāra’; and it gave birth to the human world. Just to sum up in Bhagavan Ramakrishna’s words, it is the Gospel interpretation of ‘Aum’ or ‘Om’ the Mahā Bīja, i.e. ‘A’, ‘U’ and ‘M’ meaning creation, preservation, and destruction.

Our Master says: “ But I give the illustration of the sound of a group (?) ‘tom’ t-o-m (The ‘o’ is to be pronounced as ‘aw’ in dawn). It is the merging of the **Lilā** in the **Nitya**; the gross, the subtle and the causal merge in the great cause; waking, dream, and deep sleep merge in **Turīya**. The striking of the gong is the falling of a heavy weight into a big ocean. Waves begin to rise; the Relative rises from the Absolute; the causal, subtle and gross bodies

appear out of the Great Cause; from **Turiya** emerge the states of deep sleep, dream and waking. These waves arising from the great ocean, from the Absolute to the Relative, and from the Relative to the Absolute; therefore, the illustration of the gong's sound 'Om' is given, because I have clearly perceived all these things. It has been revealed to me that there exists an ocean of consciousness without limit. From it come all the things of the relative plane, and in it they merge again. Millions of **Brahmāṇḍas** rise in that **Cidākāśa** and merge in it again. All this has been revealed to me. I do not know much about what your books say.”

How beautiful, how absolutely beautiful the Nature of Reality is described in the most elegant manner! The very same idea is brought into the light of understanding for modern people by some contemporary scientific observations, though the language at times may appear a little comical. For example, the 'Big Bang,' The mechanics of creation, the physics of this beautiful universe, in all its splendour, is portrayed in eloquent terms. Try and see, if you can, the similarity between the 'Gong' and the 'Bang.' Before space-time was created, before energy and matter were invented, out of something less than the size of a single atomic particle, out of something so infinitesimally small that it cannot be comprehended, the Primordial Explosion, the 'Big Bang' (the Great Cause) appeared—expanding in the first split seconds of space-time, to the size of a grape-fruit, a little ball of unimaginable power and light! Spontaneous creations out of the Ineffable something, what a thought! Echoes of non-duality, what is there before the creation of the other!

Three minutes later, as space-time spreads out, the luminous plasma (the causal) appears. It is opaque, filled with highly charged free moving particles and electromagnetic forces that have yet to become atoms. Note the parallel between this plasma and the cosmic Prāṇa of the Upanishads, the original cosmic universal breath, filled with life-force and energy that animates all creations. 'Prāṇa' is ubiquitous, just as the mysteriously smooth cosmic microwave background radiation is both are amazingly uniform. Could physics and spirituality both be speaking of the Breath of God?

AN APPEAL

The Kendra brings out as a part of its activities, periodicals and publications, which will further the cause of spreading Swamiji's messages. The Publication Office at Madras brings out a Cultural monthly in English for the youth YUVA BHARATI. It is elegantly designed and carries informative articles on wide-ranging and topical subjects of popular interest.

There is also a six-monthly deluxe magazine --VIVEKANANDA KENDRA PAT-RIKA -- in English, devoted to specified topics of national importance and general interest. Each volume is a collector's delight of lasting value and serves as a mine of information on the chosen topic.

Besides, we are publishing a number of books on various topics such as Yoga, Swamī Vivekānanda, Culture, etc.

It is our earnest desire that these periodicals and publications should reach a wider circle of readers so that it caters to a larger cross-section of the society and thereby help in the dissemination of the universal message of Swami Vivekānanda. For this purpose, we propose to make some innovations in the get-up and contents of the magazines. This will mean a larger financial input and we seek the support of all our well wishers and patrons in our endeavors.

We therefore, have the pleasure in announcing a PUBLICATION DONATION SCHEME from 1st September 1992. Under this scheme, a person can donate a sum of Rs.1000/- as an outright donation. Such donors will be eligible to receive regularly the following:

1. Vivekananda Kendra Partika - 1 copy half-yearly.
2. Yuva Bharati, 1 copy (monthly).
3. A copy of any one publication brought out by the Kendra during the year.

Those who are already life-subscribers for the above two magazines can also offer "*gift-subscription*" donation and the magazines will be sent to the beneficiaries while any other publication brought out will be sent to the donors.

We are quite hopeful that our well-wishers and patrons will help us generously in making this scheme a success. A donor's application form is enclosed and it may be filled in and returned with a Cheque/D. D. drawn in favour of the Vivekananda Kendra Publication Donation Scheme, to enable us to do the needful.

With best wishes,

Yours,

In the Service of My Master,

Dr. M. LAKSHMI KUMARI,

President.

Note: 1. For outstation checks please add Rs. 10/-.

2. For those living abroad, the amount to be remitted under the Scheme is Rs.2000/-.

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A Garland of Holy Offerings
Number Three

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