

# WHAT'S WITH "OM"?

*a bhuh u bhuvah m svaha*

*"Aum is my mother, Aum is my father."*

Om-kara. Pranava. Ekākṣara (*eka-akṣara*: imperishable one). The names of Om.

Om is the cynosure of syllables, the *mulamantra* that manifests and maintains everything. Om contains all vibrations. Om is honey, sap. It's inexhaustible creativity. It's the drop into which the Vedas are distilled. Completely squeezed out.

Its power has been predicated on its non-lexicality, on its pure sound-potency and its constitutive role in human physiology as place of articulation, fullest opening and closing of the mouth as cosmos.

It's the only possible word for the inconceivable. There's mono-theism and then there's mono-syllablism, in union in Om.

Especially in early ritual, singer-theologians used om as a multiform interjection, as a non-lexical vocable implying "amen" "indeed" "right on" "I hear you." It gives permission and assent as in "you may" "may I" "go right ahead". Just as Om resounds throughout the cosmos, it infused, elevated and orchestrated the performance of Vedic ritual. Om sanctions, punctuates, cues, magnifies, surrenders, initiates, hallows, perfects, makes efficacious, completes, asseverates and blows ignorance away.

Om fecundates.

It served to meld verse to melody. Though non-lexical, integral to the text, absolutely not an add-on or suffixed or prefixed presence, but primary authorization. (Bizet's Carmen...an entire song of the vocable "la la la la...comes to mind.)

Or, simply, it's a vocalization of breath. A ritualization of breath.

Om incarnates infinite phonic creativity. It's a pre-linguistic relic. A developmental and evolutionary cosmogonic-ontogenetic, phylogenetic preverbal, paraverbal hum, a quintessential opening and closing of the expressible, perfusing, fulfilling the vocal cavity from bottom to top and back to front.

It won out over fillers like *hā-u*, *hā-i*, *hum*, *ho* and *ohā*.

Om first appeared, and fittingly so, in the *Samaveda*, the Vedic songbook of melodies.

It was gradually changed over, from 'o' 'm' as an instrument of sacrifice to an 'a' 'u' 'm' tool of soteriological contemplation — Vedic to Upaniṣadic — from performative, extroverted liturgy to fissile interiorized or discursive dot.

Diphthongization lengthening. *Prana* bump up.

It's at once the irreducible concentration and furthest flung state of phenomena. A dot without dimension and dark matter run wild.

It's a wish-fulfiller that carries us across the ocean of sorrows. Like they say, it's everything, the sonality of total synonymy. Sorely missing or disused sustainable energy. Ten million simultaneously arising suns rising without incident.

Impart.

One sound makes all the difference.

Pressing down all the keys.

Think it through me.

Acceptance by that which doesn't exist in relation to anything else.

When the music stops, pure existence. *Amātra*. No measure.

Obsoleting the optimal option.

From the *Maitri-Upaniṣad*: “Having crossed over with the raft of the syllable Om (*omkāra-plavena*) to the other side of the space in the heart (*antar-hsdayākāśa*), in the inner space which gradually becomes manifest one should enter the hall of Brahman (*brahma śālam*) ”

“Verily, the nature of the ether within the space of the heart is the same as the syllable Om.

Phenomena is one family as it emanates from the same kindred source, and om is the emanating of that source. In Sanskrit the word *bandhu* means 'bond'. It means 'kinship'. It means 'respect' ... deep respect for unfolding phenomena by realizing the interrelationship of all things, knowing that such realization, whether contemplative or interactive, inner or outer, is at once constitutive of the phenomenal within consciousness as Om.

From the *Mandukya Upanishad*:

I

Harih Om! The syllable OM is the whole universe. A clear explanation of it is as follows: All that is past, present and future is, indeed, Omkara. And whatever else there is, beyond time, space and causation— is also Omkara.

## II

All this is, indeed, Brahman. The Self itself, Atman, is also Brahman. This Atman has four aspects.

## III

The first aspect is called *jagrata* (Vaisvanara) the Self in the waking state. In this first state, consciousness is turned toward the external world. Through the seven elements and nineteen channels one experience the gross, phenomenal world. \*

\*The seven instruments are the more macrocosmic instruments, while the nineteen channels relate more to the microcosmic, individual person. Seven Instruments: First, Consciousness manifests outward as elements space, air, fire, water, and earth, along with the individuation from the whole and the flow of energy (which we know as the pulsing impulse towards breath). Nineteen Channels: Then, the individual operates through the four functions of mind (aspects of *antahkarana*, the inner instrument), which are *manas*, *chitta*, *ahamkara*, and *buddhi*. Those four operate through the five *vayus* (*prana*, *apana*, *samana*, *udana*, and *vyana*), the five active senses or *indriyas* (*karmendriyas* of eliminating, procreating, moving, grasping, and speaking), and the five cognitive senses (*jnanendriyas* of smelling, tasting, seeing, touching, and hearing.)

## IV

The second aspect is *svapna* (Taijasa) the Self in the dreaming state, conscious of internal objects. Here the Self also operates through the seven limbs and nineteen channels which engage the subtle objects of the mental realm.

## V

The third aspect is *susupta* (Prajna,) the state of deep, dreamless sleep in which the Self engages neither gross nor subtle objects. wherein one asleep neither desires any object nor sees any dream. One merges with the ground of undifferentiated consciousness, filled with the experience of bliss. *Prajna* is the door leading to clearer knowledge of waking and dreaming.

## VI

The one who experiences all of these states is the omniscient, indwelling source and director of all. This one is the source out of which all beings originate and dissolve back into.

## VII

The fourth aspect of Atman is *Turiya* in which the Self is conscious of neither the inner (subjective) world nor the outer (objective) world, nor both. The Turiya state is not a mass of consciousness, nor simple consciousness or unconsciousness. It is unperceived, unrelated, incomprehensible, uninferable, unthinkable and indescribable. It is pure consciousness, the actual Self. It's the cessation of all phenomena; it is peace filled with all bliss. The Atman is this *Turiya* to be realized.

## VIII

The four aspects are the same as the letters A U M and silence. Though described with 4 parts, OM is indivisible as pure consciousness and that consciousness is Om. The fourth state, *Turiya* can only be realized in the silence beyond the other three states. It is without relationship. It is un-utterable and can't be comprehended through the senses or mind. It is the cessation of phenomena. It becomes known as bliss, merging self with Atman. One's subjectivity with One Subjectivity.