

OM (AUM) LITERATURE REVIEW**Dr. Bharat Zinjurke***

Assistant Professor, Dept. of Swasthavritta, Smt. K. G. Mittal P. Ayu. College,
Charniroad, Mumbai 400002.

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Corresponding Author*Dr. Bharat Zinjurke**

Assistant Professor, Dept. of
Swasthavritta, Smt. K. G.
Mittal P. Ayu. College,
Charniroad, Mumbai
400002.

ABSTRACT

In Indian scriptures the holy syllable “OM” is the early sound from which all other sounds and creations emerged, which signifies the supreme power. Om is basic sound of universe. Akasha Mahabhuta (Ether) created from Shabdatanmatra. From Ether – Air (Vayu Mahabhuta) – Fire (Agni Mahabhuta)- Water (Jala Mahabhuta) – Earth (Pruthavi Mahabhuta) all basic element form one by one but origin of all is OM sound. Om is the oldest mantra known to the sages of India. It is regarded as the vocalization of an actual sound or vibration which permeates the higher state of consciousness and also called as Shabda Bramha by sages. The three constituent parts of the syllable are to symbolise past, present, and future as well, waking, dreaming and deep sleep. The manifesting world of God is OM. The reason is in making a sound we use the larynx and the palate as a sounding board. It single syllable Mantra which is sufficient for to attain supreme goal i.e. Moksha (salvation).

AIM

To explore the significance of the syllable, OM, from the ancient text; how to chant OM, effects of chanting OM evoked in Indian scriptures and latest clinical research on OM chanting.

Patanjali Yoga Sutra

Patanjali Yoga Sutra is one of the classical yoga text in which the explanation of OM is well defined. Patanjali have given different ways to restrain of modification of Chitta (mind), out of that “Ishwarapranidhana”, surrender to God, is one of the easiest way. After that Patanjali has said ‘Tasya Vachaka Pranava; name of Iswara ‘Pranava’ i.e. OM. ‘Tatajapastadarthabhavanam’ means constant repetition and meditation on its meaning.

Repetition of Mantra OM is done first audibly, then silently and lastly mentally. The Sanskara's live in the mind. They are latent, when they get the right stimulus they come out. The repetition is the greatest stimulus for the spiritual Sanskara's to come. This repetition should not be mechanical but accompanied by meditation on its meaning. The meaning of OM is Ishwara (God) himself. Bhavana is intense meditation on the significance of the mantra and the object which is sought to be gained. It is not only intellectual process. It is the joint action of all our faculties in the pursuit of a common goal.

Patanjali also mentions the benefits of OM chanting, if one chants OM, then nine obstacles like Sickness, Incompetence, Doubt, Delusion, Sloth, Non-Abstention, Erroneous Conception, Non- Attainment of any yogic stage, and Instability to stay in a yogic stage, these obstacles are removed.

Chanting of 'OM' also removes obstacles like Sorrow, Dejection, Restlessness of body, Inhalation and Exhalation arises from distractions.^[1]

Patanjali has clearly mentioned physical, mental and spiritual benefits of 'OM' chanting.

Bhagavad Gita

In Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna has said that abstract of all Veda is Pranav [Om].^[2] (Bhagavad Gita 7:8) Pronouncing OM, the single-syllabled Brahman or meditating OM at the time of leaving body, anyone can attain the Supreme Goal i.e. salvation (Moksha). He will free from all bondages and all sorrow i.e. Birth-Death-Birth cycle. (Bhagavad Gita 8:13).

Mandukya Upanishad

Mandukya Upanishad is the smallest Upanishad contains only 12 verses but Among the Upanishads, the Māndūkya may be regarded as the most important, and it is aptly said – mādūkyam ekam eva alam mumukshūnām vimuktaye - for the liberation of the mumukshū or seeker the Māndūkya alone is enough.

It starts by stating, "OM is the whole world".

AUM: All states of time

Upanishad states that time are threefold: PAST, PRESENT and FUTURE, and that these three are OM. And four fourth of time, which is transcends time, is also OM. Verse 1

AUM: All states of Atman

In the second verse of Upanishad states that, everything is Brahman. Brahman is Atman, and that the Atman is fourfold.

AUM: All states of consciousness

Verses 3,4,5,6 of Mandukya Upanishad describes the four States of Consciousness: Wakeful, Dream, Deep sleep and Ekatma (being one with Self, the oneness of Self). These four are A + U + M + "without an element" respectively.

Aum as all of etymological knowledge

In verses 9 to 12, the Mandukya Upanishad enumerates fourfold etymological roots of the syllable "Aum". It states that the first element of "Aum" is A, which is from Apti (obtaining, reaching) or from Adimatva (being first). The second element is U, which is from Utkarsa (exaltation) or from Ubhayatva (intermediateness). The third element is M, from Miti (creating, constructing) or from Mi Minati, or apīti (eradication). The fourth is without an element, without development, beyond the expanse of universe. In this way, states the Upanishad, the syllable Om is the Atman (the self) indeed.^[4]

Mundaka Upanishad

Taking as the bow the great weapon of the Upanishads [Om], one should place in it the arrow sharpened by meditation. Drawing it with a mind engaged in the contemplation of that [Brahman], O beloved, know that Imperishable Brahman as the target. The Syllable Om 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 [Brahman] as the arrow [becomes one with the target]. He in whom the sky, the earth, and the interspace are woven, as also the mind along with all the pranas, know him alone as the one Self. Dismiss other utterances. This [Om] is the bridge to immortality. Meditate on Om as the Self. May you be successful in crossing over to the farther shore beyond darkness" (Mundaka Upanishad 2.2.3-5).

Shvetashvatara Upanishad

"OM has been sung as the supreme Brahman, and in it are the Triad [the individual spirit, the cosmos, and the Cosmic Spirit]. It is the firm support, the imperishable. The knowers of Brahman by knowing what is therein become merged in Brahman, intent thereon and freed from birth" (Shvetashvatara Upanishad 1:7).^[6]

Chandogya Upanishad

The Sun is Om, Sun is continually sounding OM and the breath is also continually sounding OM. (Chandogya Upanishad 1.5.1,1.5.3,2.20.1).^[7]

Manu Smriti

“The monosyllable Om is the highest Brahman. Undoubtedly a Brahmin reaches the highest goal by japa of Om alone, whether he performs other rites or neglects them” (Manu Smriti 2:83, 87).

Lahiri Mahasaya

Kriya Yoga is one of the most practical ways to achieve highest goal of life ie Salvation. In the Kriya Yoga tradition Lahiri Mahasaya has told that constant japa on the Pranava, Omkar, which is self-revealing, and constant focus on it as the form of Ishwara, and dedicating all actions to it.^[8,9]

Shrimad Bhagavad

How to chant OM is only mention in Shrimad Bhagavad While you chant OM vibration of OM fill in the Heart, chanting of Om is smooth like stem of lotus flower and sound in middle tone with slowly come down like bell in temple.^[10]

There are number of research on methods of OM chanting. Om chanting in low volume with 1/3 syllable O and 2/3 syllable M it gives tranquilizer effect and activate Para-sympathetic nervous system. While Om chanting in high volume with 2/3 syllable O and 1/3 syllable M it gives stimulant effect and activate sympathetic nervous system.

The Benefits of Om Chanting

Improved pulmonary function. In a study that looked at the effects of bhrumari pranayama and Om chanting on pulmonary function, 82 healthy subjects practiced both pranayama and chanting for five minutes each, six days a week for a total of two weeks. Significant improvements in various pulmonary functions were observed in this group when compared to a control group.^[11]

Increased mental alertness. Older research has shown that Om chanting can enhance alertness even when you're already relaxed, noted by a reduction in heart rate. A group of meditators who chanted Om showed a statistically significant reduction in their heart rate compared to a control group that engaged in non-targeted thinking.^[12]

Increased environmental awareness. Studies that have shown a combination of mental alertness with physiological rest during Om chanting have also revealed increased sensitivity to sensory transmission. In other words, Om chanting and meditating helps you become more present by putting you deeply in touch with your body and your environment via sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch.^[13]

Potential relief from stress and depression. The vibration that occurs while chanting Om stimulates nerves throughout the body and affect the brain. Researchers observed significant limbic deactivation during Om chanting when compared to observing parts of the brain in a resting state. Similar observations have been seen in treatments used for depression and epilepsy, suggesting that Om chanting could be used in clinical treatments for certain conditions.^[14]

CONCLUSION

Spiritual importance of Om is mentioned in most of the ancient Indian literatures. The utterance of Om consisting of the three letters A, U, and M covers the whole process of pronunciation. Red, Yellow and Blue these are three basic colour all other colour are made by combination of these colour like that all sounds are created by combination of A, U, M. OM is single syllable mantra told in many scripture and chanting of Om is the simple way to connect Atman(self) to Parmataman (Superior Consciousness). Regularly chanting of Om is beneficial for number of diseases on physical and mental level. Om increase function of Para-sympathetic nervous System it stabilise mind, improve pulmonary function, decrease stress level. In present era OM Meditation is easiest way to Healthy life and stress free life and achieve highest goal of life.

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