

# **What is AUM?**

## **CONTENTS**

- 1. Preface**
- 2. AUM**
- 3. Nine Names**
- 4. Sublimity**
- 5. Significant Relationship**
- 6. Unlimited Significations**
- 7. Greatest Name**
- 8. Pervasiveness [Vastness, Hugeness, Greatness]**
- 9. Innate Nature**
- 10. Divine Name**
- 11. The Reality**
- 12. Meditating of Symbol AUM**
- 13. Meditation AUM**
- 14. Notes**
- 15. References**

## Scheme Of Transliteration

Vowels - a ā i î u ū r ṛ ḷ e ai o au

Anusvara - m

Visarga - h

Consonants

Gutturals - k kh g gh n

Palatals - c ch j jh n

Cerebrals - ṭ th d dh n

Dentals - t th d dh n

Labials - p ph b bh m

Semi vowels -- y r l v

Sibilants --s [ as in sun]  
ś [palatal sibilant]  
ṣ [cerebral sibilant}

Aspirate --- h

## PREFACE

‘Aum Tat Sat’ is an oft repeated phrase in Hindu social circles. It signifies that in this world only syllable Aum is Sat (true = lasting = ever-lasting) , implying that the rest of the world is Asat (untrue=perishable=transitory). Curiously, most of the Hindus have deep faith in this saying. Guru Nanak Dev calls Aumkāra (Aum) as satta-nām meaning true name, a name which lasts and triumphs in the end.

All believers accept that the Almighty Supreme Being is Omnipresent. He is immanent in all creatures. Being subtle He permeates even man’s soul. Inside human soul , He is always present as indwelling spirit. While awake the soul enjoys life of outward moving consciousness. From wakefulness when the soul goes into dream state it enters into the life of inward moving consciousness. Further, when the soul is in deep sleep, where the consciousness enjoys peace and has no perception of either internal or external objects, it is said to be a state of knowledge. Beyond deep sleep there is transcendental consciousness. Here the soul is in “Turīya” state, the fourth quarter of Brahman the Supreme Being.

Turīya is the self which is of the nature of the syllable Aum, in regard to its elements. This is the self. It is the deepest essence of soul, the image of the God-head, they say. Vaiśvānara, Taijasa, Prājna, Īśvara, Hiraṇyagarbha and Virāt are some of the sublime aspects of the Almighty Brahman, the Supreme Being, with which the soul comes into contact during its functioning in the universe. These six along with Agni, Vāyu and Āditya (Yajurveda XXXII-1) are considered sublime names of the Supreme Being. Syllable Aum combining within itself these nine names connotes, nature, attributes and deeds of the Supreme Being in the best possible manner.

When in waking state, the soul is led by Vaiśvānara, which is also known as Viśva, because He comprises all beings. When in dream state the soul is guided by Taijasa and when in deep sleep it enjoys divine bliss, being one with Prājna, who is full of bliss. Further there is the Turīya state.

In many passages the Upanisads make out that Brahman is pure, being beyond all word and thought. He becomes Īśvara or Personal god, with the quality of Prajñā or pure wisdom. He is all-knowing, the Lord of the principle of mūla-prakṛti or the Unmanifested, the inner guide of soul. From Him proceeds Hiraṇyagarbha, who as demiurge fashions the world. From the last develops Virāt, the totality of all existence.

The underlying idea of eulogizing syllable Aum for worship of the Lord though simple, is yet very hard to understand. People who through the passage of time have been made to remember and worship the Almighty through various sectarian names find it difficult to grasp this thought. The auspiciousness of syllable Aum in this regard is well known to all . Its sublimity too is mostly acknowledged. But its divinity which has been felt through out the ages has practically been forgotten. It needs to be reasserted and established again. An honest attempt in this direction has been made in the following pages to make this intricate thought as clear as possible to the readers.

Satyananda Shastri

## Aum

Bhagat Kabir the greatest iconoclast of his time says<sup>i</sup>:-

“All pray in adversity  
None does in prosperity  
If they remember during good days  
Would not fall on bad days.”

Who is to be prayed and remembered? Bhagat Kabir does not disclose the identity.

Guru Arjun Dev the fifth Guru of the Sikhs tries to unveil the mystery when he says<sup>ii</sup> :-  
“Man is beset with difficulties  
He has forgotten Ísvara the Almighty”.

Guru Nanak Dev the founder of the Sikh religion solves the riddle when he says<sup>iii</sup> :-  
“Aumkāra<sup>iv</sup> (Aum) is one (without a second)  
His name is true (and of none else)  
He is the real **Prasada** (grace) to be acquired in life”.  
All these thinkers are not saying anything new. They simply echo the good old sayings:-

- a) Have faith in Aum { Aum Pratiṣṭha ( Yajurveda-II.13) }
- b) Oh active soul, do remember Aum. { Aum Krato Smara ( Yajurveda XXXX.15) }

The whole mystery is laid open when the Almighty reveals to the world in these words:-

“Aum is my name. I am vast like atmosphere, greatest of all in merit,  
action and nature”. { Aum kham Brahma ( Yajurveda XXXX-17) }

Thus it is Aum that is to be prayed and remembered, if one is not to fall on bad days.

Who is Aum? How to pray and remember Him?

Aum is the highest name of God, highest because when uttered it signifies all His characteristics and brings before the mental eye of the devotee His true nature, attributes and deeds, so much so that it is viewed by some people as God’s own name. In Hindu religion Aum is a name that is reserved for God alone. Even those who believe in various gods, deities and goddesses have never named any of them as Aum.

This sacred name Aum has a unique distinction of being comprised of three vowels. Letter A and letter U are vowels all would admit. But letter M too in this context is not a non-vowel. Its pronouncer has not to make much effort. He is to close his two lips only giving out a humming sound soft and pleasing, un-impeded like that of a vowel.

To emphasise the importance of Aum Yamacharya in Kaṭhopenisad (I.2.15) says<sup>v</sup>:-

“ Whom all the vedas declare worthy of homage, whom all the devotion and religious deeds lead to and for whose realisation brahmacharya is observed through out life, Oh Naciketa in a nutshell I tell you, it is Aum”.

Aum is composed of three<sup>vi</sup> letters , viz; (1) A (2) U and (3) M. This one name comprises many other names of the Almighty. Its letter A stands for (1) Virāt (2) Agni and (3)Viśva. Its letter U stands for (4) Hiraṇyagarbha (5) Vāyu and (6) Taijasa. And its letter M stands for (7) Īśvara (8) Āditya and (9) Prājna

### Exposition of nine names

1. Virāt is derived from root *rāj* meaning to illuminate with prefix *vi* and suffix *kvip* added to it . It signifies God because He illuminates the multifarious universe . “Virāt denotes the totality of all existence.”
2. Agni is derived from root *ancu* which signifies *gati* and worship. Further *gati* means to know, to realize and to go. It connotes God because He is all-knowledge, omniscient and worthy of adoration, fit subject to be known sought after and realized. “Agni denotes Divine Vigour, the efficient cause of the whole universe.”
3. Viśva is derived from root *viś* (meaning to enter) and suffix *va*. It signifies God because all the world and worldly objects dwell in Him and He resides in all of them.” Viśva comprises all beings.”
4. Hiraṇyagarbha is compound of two words, that is, hiraṇya meaning light and garbha meaning source. It connotes one who is the source and support of all light and lusturous bodies, such as the sun.”Hiraṇyagarbha as demiurge fashions the world “.
5. Vāyu is derived from root *vā* (meaning to move, to kill) and suffix *uṇ* and augment *yuk* . it means one who is the life and support of universe, the cause of its dissolution, mightier than the mightiest. “Vāyu denotes Divine Dynamism”.
6. Taijasa is got by adding the suffix *aṇ* to *tejas* meaning light, which itself is the composite of the root *tej* (meaning to whet) and suffix *asun*. It means one who is resplendent and gives light to sun and other luminous bodies. “Taijasa signifies Divine Resplendence”.
7. Īśvara is derived from root *īś* (meaning to be powerful, to rule) and termination *varac* . It means one whose power and knowledge are infinite. “Īśvara signifies the moving force of the universe”.
8. Āditya is the secondary formation from the word *aditi* compounded with the suffix *ṇya*. *Aditi* itself is formed of ‘*a*’ a negative particle and root ‘*do*’ (meaning to break, to decay) and suffix *ktic* (ktin in the *feminine* gender) . It means one who never dies and is immortal.” Āditya signifies Divine Indestructibility”.

9. Prājna is got by adding the termination **añ** to **prājna** which itself is composed of prefix **pra** and root **jnā** ( to know) and suffix **ka** . It means one whose knowledge is perfect or who is omniscient.

Thus syllable Aum combining within itself nine of the most sublime names of the Supreme Being, connotes His nature, attributes and deeds in the best possible manner. The above phraseology appears to be somewhat involved and complicated. But in simple terms it means that the Supreme Being being infinite has unlimited attributes. Out of these His nine most sublime attributes have been notified for the benefit of those devotees who are in initial stages of adoration and the rest minor attributes (names) have been left out. Syllable Aum connotes all of them, the left out minor ones and the notified nine sublime ones as well. Question arises, what makes these nine names sublime? The sublimity of three of these nine names viz; Vaiśvānara, Taijasa and Prājna is explained in details in Māndūkyopaniṣad. .

According to the first verse of this upaniṣad,

*aum ity etad akṣaram idam sarvam, tasyopavyakhyānam, bhutam bhavad bhaviṣyad iti sarvam aumkara eva, yac canyat trikalatitam tad apy aumkara eva*

“syllable Aum which is the symbol of **Brahman**, stands for the manifested world, the past, the present and the future as well as the Unmanifested Absolute”.

Continuing further the second verse says: - *sarvam hy etad brahma, ayam atma brahma, so'yam atma catuṣ-pat*

“All this is, verily **Brahman**. This self is **Brahman**. The same self has four quarters.”

About the first quarter the third verse says: - *jagarita sthano bahiṣ-prajna. saptanga ekonavimsati-mukhah sthula-bhug vaisvanarah prathamah padah.*

“The first quarter is Vaiśvānara whose sphere of activity is waking state, who cognises external objects .....

Vaiśvānara is called Vaiśvānara because He leads all creatures of the universe in diverse ways to the enjoyment of the various objects. He is also called Viśva because He comprises all beings. In this state basis of duality (the one that knows and the object that is known) obviously operates.

Then the fourth verse describes the second quarter as: *svapna-sthano .ntah-prajnah saptanga ekonavimsati-mukhah pravivikta bhuk taijaso dvitayah padah.*

“The second quarter is Taijasa, whose sphere of activity is dream state, who cognises internal objects.....” **Taijasa** is conscious of internal or mental states.

While Viśva (Vaiśvānara) which is the subject of the waking state, cognises material objects in the waking experience, Taijasa experiences mental states dependent upon the predispositions left by the waking experiences. In this state soul fashions its own world in imagining dreams.

In this state also the basis of duality operates.

The fifth verse describes the third quarter as *yatra supto na kam cana kamam kamayate na kam cana svapnam, pasyati tat susuptam, susupta-sthana eki-bhutam prajñāna-ghana evānanda-mayo hy ananda-bhuk ceto-mukhah prājnas trītiyah padah*

“Where one being fast asleep does not desire any desire whatsoever and does not see any dream whatsoever, that is deep sleep. The third quarter is Prājna, whose sphere of activity is the state of deep sleep, who has become one, who is verily, a mass of cognition, who is full of bliss and who enjoys (experiences) bliss, whose face is thought.”

Prājna is a state of knowledge though the external and the internal states are held in abeyance.

It is called Prājna consciousness or knower, as it is not aware of any variety as in the two other states.

Prājna is full of bliss, who enjoys this bliss. It is not bliss but the enjoyer of the bliss.

In this dreamless state the self is liberated from the empirical world indeed from the person as a self-contained unit.

The transitory character of the sleep in this state shows that it is not the ultimate state. The apparent absence of duality has led to the view that this is the final state of union with Brahman.

About the third quarter the sixth verse remarks: *esa sarvesvarah , esa sarvajnah;; eso'ntaryami, esa yonih sarvasya prabhavāpyayau hi bhutanam*

“This is the lord of all, this is the knower of all, this is the inner controller, this is the source of all, this is the beginning and the end of all beings.

Here Shankaracharya commenting on his teacher's teacher Gaudapadacharya's Kārikā (I.2) urges “That which is designed as Prājna (when it is viewed as the cause of the world), will be described as TURĪYA separately when it is not viewed as the cause and when it is free from all phenomenal relationship i.e. in the Absolute real aspect”.

About the fourth quarter the seventh verse says: *nāntah -prajnam, na bahis prajnam, nobhayatah -prajnam, na prajñāna--ghanam, na prajnam, nāprajnam, adrstam, avyavahāryam, agrahyam, alaksanam, acintyam, avyapadesyam, ekatma-pratyaya-sāram, prapancopasamam, śāntam, sivam, advaitam, caturtham manyante, sa ātma; sa vijneyah.*

“(Turīya is) not that which cognises the internal objects, not that which cognises the external objects, not that cognises both of them, not a mass of cognition, not cognitive, not non-cognitive. It is unseen, incapable of being spoken of, ungraspable, without any distinctive marks, unthinkable, unnameable, the essence of knowledge of the one self, that into which the world is resolved, the peaceful, the benign, the non dual, such they think is the fourth quarter, He is the self, He is to be known.”

In TURĪYA state there is a permanent union with Brahman.

About TURĪYA state the eighth verse then remarks: *soyam ātmādhyaksaram aumkaro dhimātram pādā mātrā mātrās ca pādā akāra ukāra makāra iti*

“This is the self , which is of the nature of AUM in regard to its elements. The quarters are elements and elements are quarters namely, the letter **a** the letter **u** and the letter **m**”.

Syllable Aum consists of three letters namely **a**, **u** and **m**. On the other hand there are four quarters of Brahman, viz; one Viśva, the waking state, two Taijasa the dream state, three Prājna the state of dreamless sleep and four Turīya, which is the state of spiritual consciousness. While three previous quarters of Brahman have respectively letter **a**, letter **u** and letter **m**, as their elements. Syllable Aum is the element of the fourth quarter.

The knowledge<sup>vii</sup> of this fourth quarter is attained by merging the (previous) three such as Viśva, etc., in the order of the previous one in the succeeding ones. These are all aspects of the God-head. The last alone being all-inclusive and therefore true. Thus the Absolute of the spiritual consciousness is the reality of the God Brahman.

According to Acharya Gaudapada ( Shankaracharya’s teacher’s teacher)Brahman is birthless, free from sleep and dreams, without name and form, ever effulgent, all thought, no form is necessary for it. (Vide Karika III-36).

About the fourth quarter the twelfth verse remarks :- *amātraś caturtho'vyavahāryah prapancopaśamah śivo'dvaita evam aumkāra atmaiva, samviśaty ātmanā 'tmānam ya evam veda*

“ The fourth quarter is that which has no elements, which cannot be spoken of, into which the world is resolved, benign, non-dual. Thus the syllable Aum is the very self. He who knows it thus enters the self with his self.

According to Shankaracharya “There is first the pure Brahman beyond subject and object and then NARAYANA<sup>viii</sup> or God confronted by object, but superior to it and then the world soul”. (See the beginning of Shankracharya’s commentary on Bhagavadgita).

In many passages the Upanisads make out that Brahman is pure being beyond all words and thoughts {see Māndūkyopanisad verse seven where He is described as AVY-APADEŚYAM (meaning beyond all words) and ACINTYAM (meaning beyond all thoughts)}. He becomes Īśvara or Personal god {see Māndūkyopanisad verse six where He is mentioned as SARVEŚVARA meaning Īśvara of all } with the quality of pure



wisdom. He is all-knowing {see Māndūkyopaniṣad verse six where He is mentioned as SARVAJNA meaning all-knowing}, the lord of the principle of the Mūla-prakṛti or the Unmanifested, the inner guide of soul. From IŚVARA proceeds Hiraṇyagarbha who as demiurge fashions the world {see Yajurveda XIII-4}. And from the last develops Virāt { See Yajurveda XXXI-5} the totality of all existence.

In this way the nature and sublimity of the six of these sublime names namely, Viśva, Taijasa, Prājna, Iśvara, Hiraṇyagarbha and Virāt have been explained. The other three viz; Agni, Vāyu and Āditya are mentioned in Yajurveda (XXXII-1). Agni is Divine Vigour, the efficient cause of the whole universe. Vāyu Divine Dynamism, the cause of dissolution of the universe and Āditya is Divine Indestructibility or Inexhaustibility.

It must be understood here that :-

“God although in His being He is completely self-contained and self-sufficient, shoots forth a great stream of radiation, immaterial, yet on that account ALL THE MORE REAL”. God’s divine energy does not get exhausted on any account for He is ĀDITYA Indestructible i.e. ALL THE MORE REAL always. He creates, He sustains, He dissolves this stupendous cycle of creation and dissolution without being least affected

Syllable Aum within which these nine names are combined is an underived and indeclinable word. It represents in its fullest connotations only God. Being an indeclinable particle syllable Aum does not undergo any change by the addition of any suffix indicating number, gender or case as other words do. This fact signifies a very significant relationship. God does not undergo any change or decay being ‘avranam<sup>ix</sup>’ (indivisible) [vide Yajurveda XXXX-8], likewise His highest epithet Aum too, being an indeclinable particle does not suffer any change in form. This resemblance very clearly establishes an inevitable equation between the highest, name Aum and the inexpressible Absolute the Almighty God, whom it entirely and completely connotes in all states and forms.

Sacred syllable Aum is also formed by adding suffix *man* to root *av* which has following nineteen<sup>x</sup> significances viz; protection, motion, desire, love, satisfaction, attainment, entrance, hearing, owning, entreaty, action, wish, light, obtaining, embracing, killing, giving, division and development. Each of these significances as applied to God would connote the following ideas:-

- 1 Protection: One who directly or through some medium or media is protector of all.
- 2 Motion: One who keeps the world going according to certain laws. Besides this, motion metaphorically implies three ideas viz; knowledge, movement and attainment. In the sense of knowledge Aum connotes one who is knower of everything as it is. In the sense of movement Aum connotes one who is the cause of motion of the world which always keeps on moving. And in the sense of attainment, Aum signifies one who is available to all, at all times and every where.

- 3      Desire: One who is the fulfillment of the desires of all souls, though himself He is free from desires.
- 4      Love:        One who is object of love of all, being himself All Bliss.
- 5      Satisfaction: One who always yields joy to his devotees.
- 6      Attainment:    One who is the donor of final beatitude to souls.
- 7      Entrance:       One who is the inner self of all.
- 8      Hearing:         One who is the efficient cause of hearing of all gross, subtle and hidden sounds.
- 9      Owing:          One who is master of all.
- 10     Entreaty:        One to whom all approach with entreaties.
- 11     Action:          One who is the framer of the world in formation.
- 12     Wish:            One who reveals auspicious wishes for all.
- 13     Light:          One who is the expeller of darkness in the form of wrong knowledge.
- 14     Obtaining:      One who reveals his true form in pure hearts of his devotees
- 15     Embracing:     One who is related to all, being All- pervading.
- 16     Killing:         One who destroys ignorance, hostile feelings and dissensions among those that live according to Vedic teachings.
- 17     Giving:         One who gives the souls at the very beginning of the creation right understanding of things tending towards their happiness.
- 18     Division:       One who is at the time of dissolution the cause of division of the world, that is, reverting of the visible gross universe to the subtle invisible form.
19.   Development: One who for the formation of the world at the time of creation, is the efficient cause of the development of the primordial or elementary matter into its gross form, so that souls may enjoy the residue of their past actions.

These nineteen connotations if expanded according to the rules of grammar would reveal the word Aum to have infinite significations. Thus with unlimited meanings beyond human ken, Aum is rightly called the greatest name of the Supreme Being. Surely, such a short, graceful and unique word signifying multi-connotations of the Lord does not exist in any other language of the world.

In this way word Aum is of two types. One underived *avyaya* and the other derived *avyaya*. But both types are essentially *avyaya* for, word Aum as such has been included in Svarādi-gana of Maharsi Panini's Ganapatha. And therefore in accordance with sutra "Svarādinipātam-avyayam" (Astadhyayi I-I-37), it is *avyaya* in both its forms. Being *avyaya* both types are undeclinables.

The underived Aum too, in the opinion of the author of Gopatha Brahmana is derivable from root *āp* meaning to pervade, although Maharsi Panini has not made any provision (sutra etc.) for the derivation of Aum from root *āp* in his all comprehensive scheme of Sanskrit grammar. But the author of Gopatha Brahmana considers Pervasiveness (Vastness, Hugeness, Greatness etc.) to be the most important quality of the Supreme Being, and has therefore suggested root *āp* as the base for the derivation of Aum. He finds that *Aum* and *āp* both have long vowels (O=AU) and (Ā=AA) in the beginning and Labials letter m and letter p in the end. This similarity in their forms is not so important in his opinion as the affinity in their connotations. Both *Aum* and *āp* sparkle forth pervasiveness and bring to the vision vastness, hugeness and greatness etc. per force. He therefore justifies the derivation of Aum from root *āp*<sup>xi</sup> on the ground of affinity of connotations. But grammarians do not give much weight<sup>xii</sup> to the opinion of the author of Gopatha Brahmana, perhaps because his suggestion is very much cumbersome<sup>xiii</sup>. They invariably insist on deriving Aum from root *av* which has nineteen connotations, as has been explained earlier. Maharsi Panini has made a specific provision in the shape of a sutra. "Avateṣṭilopaśca" (Unadikosa I-42) for the derivation of Aum from root *av*.

The difference regarding the two types of Aum (derived and underived) seems quite superficial and only serves the purpose of bringing to the fore the thinking of two opposing schools of thought, one of the grammarians and the other of *nairuktas*. Otherwise for all practical purposes the word Aum in both forms signifies all the characteristics of the Supreme Being and does not undergo any change also. For devotees too, both types are equally adorable and useful for meditation.

Our readers can say that inspite of all that has been explained to us above, we are still not very clear as to what sacred syllable Aum stands for? They can also ask us what in reality constitutes the innate nature of sacred syllable Aum?

It has already been stated on the authority of Māndūkyopanisad that sacred syllable Aum is the symbol of Brahman and stands for manifested world, the past, the present and the future as well as the Unmanifested Absolute. It can also be said with certainty that the Supreme Being being infinite has unlimited attributes and sacred syllable Aum is His highest attribute.

Moreover Ṛgveda (III-62-10) and Yajurveda (XXXVI-3) specifically mention three utterances namely, Bhūh, Bhuvah and Svah as main attributes of Aum the Almighty. Bhūh in this context means Omnipresent and Bhuvah gives the sense of Omniscient and Svah denotes Bliss-all. These three utterances certainly constitute the innate nature of Aum.

These are very subtle ideas and cannot be easily understood. In ancient times gurus used to resort to 'Neti-Neti' rule for explaining these complex thoughts to their pupils. If you go on counting one by one, all things of the world before your preceptor and asking him every time whether that thing constitutes Aum, every time the typical answer would be no. When at long last in the end, the list of all worldly things gets exhausted and every thing has been duly counted and inquired about and unequivocally denied, signifying that none of them stands for Aum, what remains in the end unasked and undenied, decidedly constitutes Aum.

“The process of uttering word ‘Neti-Neti’ in answer to the same question asked repeatedly, in respect of different things and in the end arriving at or leading to some sure conclusion, concerning a complex problem is called ‘Neti-Neti’ rule. The terminology ‘Neti-Neti’ meaning “No this is not- No this is not” has given this rule the name ‘Neti-Neti’.

Later on Vedic phraseology of defining Aum got altered altogether. The preceptors now started using three word formula *Sat-Cit-Ananda* for expressing the most sublime qualities of the Almighty. Sat stands for eternalness; Cit denotes the state of Omni- science and Ananda signifies All-Bliss. This changed terminology too was soon found lacking, for it over-lapped the attributes of Jiva the Soul. The real difficulty in this respect is how to express the inexpressible Aum faultlessly and infallibly? It is some thing very hard to arrive at, it seems. The definition of Aum “Āpo jyotiḥ raso mṛtam brahma bhūrbhuvah svarom svāhā” found in Taittirīya Āraṇyaka (X- 15) seems to be the most appropriate. The author of the Āraṇyaka here says “ I honestly believe that Aum which is generally represented by three utterances bhūr, bhuvah and svah in Vedic literature can suitably be expressed as Āpo jyotiḥ raso mṛtam brahma in present day parlance”.

Āpojyotiḥ rasah these three attributes of Aum when modified by two adverbs amrtam and brahma express the sacred syllable Aum in its entirety. Adverb amrtam signifies endlessness and adverb brahma denotes utmost greatness. Both these adverbs jointly sparkle forth hugeness of size and depth of intensity.

The above quotation when translated into English would read as “ Aum, which is generally, defined as Bhūr, Bhuvah and Svah in Vedic Literature really means ĀPOJYOTIḤ RASO-MṚTAM BRAHMA in present day parlance”.

The Vedic terminology “Bhūr, Bhuvah and Svah” is generally translated as All-pervading, All- consciousness and All-bliss. It can also be rendered into English as Omnipresent, Omniscient and Bliss-all. In the phraseology given by the author of Taittirīya Āraṇyaka the epithet. ĀPAḤ has been derived from the root āp, to pervade and gives the meaning of All-pervading or Omnipresent, the epithet JYOTIḤ can be translated as All -illuminating or Omniscient and the epithet RASAḤ can be rendered as

All-elegant conveying the sense of Bliss-all. The Vedic terminology and the new phraseology suggested practically convey the same sense. The author of the *Āranyaka* of course, thinks it necessary to convey that qualities of Aum should be viewed as limitless in size and intensity. Thus “Sacred syllable Aum is OMNIPRESENT, OMNISCIENT and BLISS-ALL, His qualities always being LIMITLESS IN SIZE AND INTENSITY”.

It may not be out of context to describe here a deep-rooted tradition, with regard to the utterance of syllable Aum in the beginning and at the end of every Veda-mantra, prevalent amongst Brahma-vadins (students of Vedic studies) in ancient times.

Vedic scholars consider Vedas as repository of all right knowledge necessary for the well being and survival of the human race. In their opinion syllable Aum too is the epitome<sup>xiv</sup> of that right knowledge. In order to keep this concept always in focus and to make it the central point of their studies, a tradition had grown up amongst students of Vedic studies to pronounce syllable Aum in the beginning and at the end of every Veda-mantra while reciting Vedic texts.

Emphasising this tradition Manusmṛti<sup>xv</sup> (II-74) points out that if syllable Aum is not pronounced in the beginning and at the end of the Vedic texts all endeavour made in regard to the recitation of the Mantra fizzles out. Gopatha Brahmana too has described a legend<sup>xvi</sup> in which syllable Aum promises to devas to protect them against asuras on the condition of making it obligatory for them to pronounce Aum’s name in the beginning of all Veda-mantras. In case Aum’s name is not pronounced in the beginning, all merit in regard to the recitation of the Mantras would be considered Abrahma (devoid of merit).

To lay further stress on this point sage Panini in his grammar Astadhyayi has given two sutras which make it incumbent on all to adhere strictly to this tradition. One sutra is Aum abhyādāne (VIII-2-87) and the other is Praṇavasteh (VIII-2-89). The first sutra makes it obligatory for the student of Vedic studies to pronounce Udatta Pluta Aum in the beginning of all Vedic texts while reciting. The second sutra says that Pluta Udatta Praṇava (Syllable Aum) should be invariably pronounced in place of the ti<sup>xvii</sup> part of the Mantra while reciting in yajnas. It should be kept in mind that ‘ti’ is the last portion of the Mantra which commences with the last vowel, and Praṇava expresses syllable Aum according to Yogadarsana<sup>xviii</sup>. Thus according to sage Panini too, syllable Aum should be pronounced invariably in the beginning and at the end of all Veda-mantras.

## DIVINE NAME

Brahman the Supreme Being is all in all in the universe. All existence is manifestation of HIS DIVINE POWER.

Syllable AUM is the symbol of Brahman and stands for the manifested world.

- the past, the present and the future
- as well as the Unmanifested Absolute.

Brahman being infinite has unlimited attributes. Syllable AUM is HIS highest attribute. Combining within itself nine other sublime attributes namely, Vaiśvānara, Taijasa, Prājna, Ívara, Hiranyagarbha, Virāt and also Agni, Vāyu and Āditya, syllable AUM connotes Brahman entirely in all states and forms.

Brahman has four phases [quarters], viz first; Vaiśvānara, the waking phase wherein the soul accepts the universe as it finds it; second; Taijasa, the dream phase which is the subject of mental states, wherein the soul fashions its dreams according to the earlier predispositions; third; Prājna the phase of dreamless sleep which is full of bliss and enjoys bliss; and the fourth; Turīya, which is the phase of spiritual consciousness.

In the first three phases [quarters], the soul comes in contact with Brahman and gains partial view of HIS being. Beyond that is TURĪYA the fourth phase of Brahman, which has no element. Syllable AUM is the element of this phase. This unique position makes syllable AUM; the defacto fourth phase, the last God head and the ultimate reality of Brahman. Syllable AUM in this capacity connotes Brahman in all its four phases.

It must be kept in mind that unlike previous three phases TURĪYA is not an attribute of Brahman. It is a name given to the FOURTH PHASE wherein Prājna the God head of the third phase has been separately described in its ABSOLUTE REAL ASPECT, when it is free from all phenomenal relationship and is not viewed as the cause of the world.

It must also be noted that TURĪYA is the fourth phase of Brahman [unmanifested], who is PURE BEING and as such beyond all word and thought and therefore terms like ALL PERVADING and ALL POWERFUL cannot be used for HIM, nor HE can be treated as having objects of knowledge or powers.

That being the situation PRĀJNA the God head of the third phase, who with the quality of pure wisdom is the knower of all, the Lord of all and the inner controller [see verse six of Mandukyopanisad) is designated as ÍVARA and functions as PERSONAL GOD manifested in human beings and nature.

“Though in ordinary parlance syllable AUM is said to be the name of ÍVARA and represents Personal god who is the God head of the first three phases; but Syllable AUM also represents the fourth phase of Brahman in the capacity of being its God head. Thus syllable AUM is capable of connoting Brahman in all its four phases.”

From Personal god ÍVARA proceeds Hiranyagarbha [Demi-urge], who fashions the universe and from that develops Virāt the totality of all existence. Besides these, there are other three sublime names VIZ; Agni [DIVINE VIGOUR], Vāyu [DIVINE DYNAMISM] and Āditya [DIVINE INDESTRUCTIBILITY] mentioned in Yajurveda [XXXII-I]

It is now clear that -

A] Syllable AUM connotes Brahman in all its four phases [quarters]. No other attribute of the Supreme Being has the ability to do that,

B] Syllable AUM is a derivative of root **av** with nineteen different meanings and has the capacity to include within itself the connotations of all other attributes of the Supreme Being,

C] No other attribute of the Supreme Being except syllable AUM has the ability to connote the Unmanifested Brahman [ of the fourth phase].

These facts not only endow syllable AUM with unparalleled sublimity but also proclaim and confirm its DIVINITY which has been there throughout the ages. Thus syllable AUM is the Divine Name of the Almighty and expresses the Inexpressible Absolute entirely in all states and forms and this relationship is eternal and for ever.

### **THE REALTY**

AUM [ What is it ?]

- There is no visible matter of AUM [ i.e. of which AUM comprises of ].
- AUM represents the UNKNOWABLE [One which cannot be known, seen or communicated with, through physical organs such as eyes, tongue., or the likes].
- AUM is the FINAL RESORT of all matter and beings.
- AUM is ONE [without a second].
- AUM is the DIVINE NAME of the Almighty .
- DIVINE NAME and the NAMED DIVINE both are ONE and the same.
- Thus AUM is the UNIVERSAL SOUL , ALL PERVADING , ALL KNOWING, ALL BLISS.

### **GOD**

- 1 -God is the most *subtle entity* and does not comprise of any gross matter.
- 2 -God is the *unknowable [neti neti]* and cannot be known, seen or communicated with.
- 3 -God is the *final Resort* of all matter and beings.
- 4 -God is *all bliss*.
- 5 -God is *One* [without a second].

He who through meditation realises in his heart the unknowable God as such, the moment he does so, he enters the Universal Soul with his soul and attains salvation [sadṛsya mukti].



## UNIVERSAL SOUL

Universal Soul is ATMAN in his PURE STATE , the awakened life of supreme consciousness.

He is neither outer nor inner consciousness, neither semi nor sleeping consciousness, neither mere consciousness nor unconsciousness.

He is ATMAN Himself, that cannot be seen nor touched , that is above all distinctions and beyond all thought and word.

He is the Final resort of all matter and beings.

He is non –duality.

He is PEACE and LOVE .

Union with HIM is the Supreme Proof of His Reality.

AUM , Brahman , Atman Universal Soul are synonymms according to Upanishadic terminology and connotes the Most Supreme Being the Almighty God.

ओ३म

SYMBOL AUM

Let us now consider the written character representing the sacred syllable Aum. The simplest and the oldest way of writing Aum was **vSka** According to Sanskrit grammar its fully developed form was **vsk3e** or **vSk3Wa** .This last form later on went on reforming and after a long time became **mWa9** . This symbol **mWa9** is surely a wonderful letter. It combines in itself the principal elements of all the vowels and consonants. Its curious formation is such that can easily adapt itself to the alphabet of any language in use in the world.

Some scholars even say that symbol Aum is a short hand representation of Gayatri Mantra. May be or may not be. But undoubtedly Aum is a very artistic symbol indeed. India seems to be the only country that can boast of such a beautiful and unique one lettered symbol to represent the most important name of the Supreme Being. Just as God is unique and is outside the universe, though the whole universe is sheltered in Him, symbol Aum also is unique and outside the alphabet, though all the letters of the alphabet are made of elements which can be easily developed from it.

How old is this written Symbol Aum ? Nothing can be said with certainly in this regard. However Ganesa Purana<sup>xix</sup> declares that Lord Aumkāra-rūpaḥ (*Aum*) came into vogue in the beginning of the Vedas (Vedā-dau pratiṣṭhitaḥ), implying that this happened during early Vedic period. Shri V.S.Apte while explaining the implications of word atha in his lexicon has quoted a verse, which says that word atha and Aumkāra (*Aum*) both connote auspiciousness<sup>xx</sup> and are of divine origin. This verse too in an indirect way corroborates the pauranic view that symbol Aumkāra (Aum) is of very ancient origin.

The study of the Bhagavadgita provides enough evidence to see through clearly the long drawn process syllable *Aum* had to go through, before becoming single syllable utterance. The attainment of single syllable status enhanced its prestige immensely and turned the written character representing it into a sign of sure success and great fortune. Not only that, it also ultimately gave it a form (Aum) of great artistic beauty.



The Bhagavadgita refers to syllable Aum at six places. At two places it is referred to as merely Aum (XVII-23 and XVII-24). At one place it is referred to as **ekam aksaram** namely, (**girām asmi ekam aksaram X-25**). At another place it is referred to as ekākṣaram namely, (**Aum iti ekākṣaram Brahma VIII-13**). Still at another place it is shown as Aumkāra namely, (**vedyam pavitram Aumkārah IX-17**). It is also hinted to be Praṇava, a holy utterance meaning Aum namely, (**Praṇavaḥ sarvavedesu VII-8**).

From the data given above it is clear that at the time when the Bhagavadgita was being composed *Aum* was still in the process of establishing itself as a single syllable utterance, instead of two syllable utterance which grammatically it really was. This is why in the Bhagavadgita (X-25) Aum is referred to as “**ekam aksaram**”, signifying that Aum is One and imperishable”.

Along with this, it may also be noted that in some circles Aum was also being called ekākṣaram {vide Bhagavadgita (VIII-13)} and that had a special significance. The word ekākṣaram had a pun on it, which per force sparkled forth two facts at the same time. One that Aum was One and Imperishable and second that Aum was a single syllable utterance. In the latter sense Aum was attracted by a grammatical aphorism “Varnāt kārah” a varttika on Astadhyayi sutra (III-3-108) and got suffix kāra added to it and became Aumkārah (Bhagavadgita IX-17).

When Aum had established itself as a single syllable utterance, people started looking at it as a sign of sure success and great fortune. It became a fashion to inscribe Aum at the start of a new endeavor or a new enterprise. Authors too began to display Aum prominently at the beginning of their new treatises. The practice of inscribing the mangalic Aumkāra generated a tendency among devotees to display it in as short a form as would be possible, which later on resulted in abridging its size and embellishing its form. This was more or less a necessity in order to make it look like a single syllable. Syllable Aum started reforming itself and after a pretty long period adopted a beautiful and artistic form just looking like *Aum*.

This artistic symbol *Aum* came to be pronounced as Aumkāra instead of Aum. This obviously happened when written character representing Aum had already adopted the shape of *Aum*. This development it seems took place during the latter Upanisadic times.

In Upanisads, word Aumkāra is used for syllable Aum at many places (vide Māndūkyopanisad verses 1,8,&12). But that Aumkāra is the element of the fourth quarter of Brahman. In that capacity it is the purifier and an object of knowledge and not an inscribed figure of Aum supposed to be a sign of good luck and sure success.

According to two verses in Ganesa Purana ‘Lord Aumkāra-rūpaḥ when UKTAḤ (orally invoked) for success or victory is called GANANĀYAKAḤ. But LORD Aumkāra-rūpaḥ when PŪJYATE (worshiped) ŚARVESU KARMEṢU (in all works) is called ‘VINĀYAKAḤ’. It may be noted that the word Karmeṣu means in rituals.

These verses clearly bring out the distinction between the two Aumkāras. The former Aumkāra is an utterance for invoking (through the performance of japa or otherwise)

the Almighty for success or victory. It is an object of knowledge the purifier (vide Bhagavadgita IX-17), while the latter Aumkāra is a figure generally inscribed by devotees and then worshiped with dhupa (fragrance) dipa (light) puspa (flower) and naivedya (offerings) etc. in various rituals.

The simultaneous mention of two Aumkāras , one real (symbol of Brahman) the purifier and object of knowledge and the other unreal (an inscribed figure of Aum), considered to be a sign of sure success and great fortune, in two consecutive verses of Ganesa Purana encourages us to hazard the following guesses: -

- (a) Symbol Aum came into vogue during the last phase of Upanisadic times and continued to be worshiped in rituals. It used to be considered a sign of sure success and great fortune also.
- (b) Symbol Aum is not worshiped these days, but as a sign of auspiciousness and sure success and great fortune, it is still held in great esteem.
- (c) Symbol Aum has further developed itself into very many mangalic signs (Svastikas) which are worshiped as symbols of various regional deities but are not invoked as Aumkāras.
- (d) The last fact gives added support to the unchanged shape and identity of Aum as the symbol

As pointed out above, from this very artistic symbol Aum later on originated symbol Svastika of very many regional variations ( etc.), representing Ganesa , Ganapati, Gananāyaka and Vināyaka etc.

Christian symbol of cross too emanated from this very symbol **Aum**, it is presumed. The ancient Greek alphabet had Omega (Ω) as its last letter. Omega written in the lower case of the Greek alphabet, if turned to its side, looks quite similar to the Sanskrit way of writing Aum. It is from the Greek alphabet "Omega" that we have the English phrase "the Alpha and Omega", which means, "to include everything". It is said that the word Aum has been used to make other words. The Christian term "Amen" is said to have some link with "Aum" as also the Islamic term "Amin". Both of these terms are similar to Aum.

## MEDITATION

Kathopanisad<sup>xxi</sup> (I.2.17) says “ The support of Aum is the strongest support, surely, it is the most excellent support, knowing this support one becomes great in the world of Brahman (attains salvation)”. Again Mundakopanisad<sup>xxii</sup> (II.2.6) says “Do meditate upon God by reciting Aum. It will dispel ignorance”. Yogadarsana<sup>xxiii</sup> also extols meditation of Aum and says” It liberates soul and puts an end to all difficulties”. Vedic injunction Oh active soul do remember Aum [Aum Krato Smara(Yajurveda XXXX-15] has already been mentioned in this respect earlier. Hence it is essential for a true devotee to gain enough proficiency in meditating upon Aum. While performing this devotional

exercise he should not think any thing else, except God and His glorification, and should straight away engage himself whole heartedly in the worship of the Almighty.

The first thing which the devotees should pay attention to, is the external cleansing of his person with water etc., and the internal mental purification by adhering to truthfulness and renouncing all ideas of hate and inordinate attachment. The purification of the internal self being *sine qua non* for right and fruitful meditation, should be given more attention to.

Having insured in this way the purification of the body and soul, the devotee should take to some quiet secluded place for getting his whole self fully composed. He should then sit at ease in a convenient posture as the siddhasana ( the easiest way of sitting on the haunches), straighten and erect his whole body and should not lay any pressure and also should not exert any force anywhere on his person. But on the other hand, he should let it loose and try to feel himself at complete ease and comfort.

Having thus acquired complete composure of his whole self and active wakefulness of his mind, the devotee should perform three pranayamas, without uttering any mantra what so ever. This can be done by first expelling the breath forcefully through the nostrils and then stopping it there as long as possible. The second step is to inhale slowly as much fresh air as possible and retain it there for some time. This completes one *pranayama*. For three pranayamas the devotee should repeat this process thrice. This deep breathing is performed in order to achieve concentration of mind, which is very necessary for attaining success in meditation.

After taking his seat on the *asana* the devotee should shut his eyes and fix his vision between the eyebrows, keeping inhaling and exhaling as usual. He should make a determined effort to ensure that his hearing and touching senses have turned inward and have slowed down outward functioning. Holding his body, head and neck erect and still, looking fixedly on the tip of his nose, without looking around, he should start recitation of sacred syllable AUM, without uttering any word or making any sound. Here utmost coordination of his tongue, mind and body is required. His tongue should not move, but all the time continue reciting *Aum Bhūh*, *Aum Bhuvah*, *Aum Svah* silently. His ears must be fully attuned to the unvoiced voice of his tongue. And of course his mind, without which nothing can be achieved, should not go passive, but remain concentrated upon the signification of the recitation “ Lord is All pervading, All consciousness, All bliss”. Serene and fearless, firm in the vow of celibacy, subdued in mind, let the devotee sit harmonized, calm, contented and still as long as he can, meditating upon Aum all the time.

This devotional exercise should be performed regularly and constantly with determination without being dismayed. Its irregular practice may not be that helpful. Freedom from desires and passions is a must for success. Those who practice in life five *Yamas*<sup>xxiv</sup> and five *Niyamas* side by side attain smooth success in discarding away the lure of desires and passions. If one performs this meditation regularly, he is sure to achieve contentment in life and face the inevitable end quite peacefully.

The devotee is advised to keep the following instructions in mind while performing meditation: -

- (a) It should be performed regularly and continuously at a fixed time, preferably in the early morning hours. Its daily performance over a long period will raise devotee's consciousness to a higher level.
- (b) It should be performed in a lonely place where perfect calm prevails. Solitude of a riverbank or a mountainous place is considered conducive to lifting of hearts and exalting of mind. It also provides moments of thoughtful stillness to the devotee to achieve purity of vision.
- (c) It should be performed alone. Presence of other persons tends to disbalance devotee's consciousness. Loneliness makes the devotee to feel the gentle pressure to hear the quiet voice of the higher self.
- (d) While performing meditation the devotee must divest his mind of all sensual desires. He should abstract his attention from all external objects and absorb it in the object of the meditation.
- (e) The devotee should not rest assured that he has succeeded in giving up the enjoyment of sensual pleasures. It is not enough for success in meditation. Even craving for these pleasures must be curbed and rooted out.
- (f) Aparigraha means non-possessiveness. The devotee must control the appetite for possessions. One cannot hear God's voice if one is restless or self centered.
- (g) The devotee should strive hard to acquire self-control. He must not feel excited, strained or anxious. To learn to be quiet before God means a life of control and discipline. There should be no restlessness or turbulence in devotee's mind, while performing meditation. Through thought we appeal to intellect, through silence we touch the inner layers of being. The heart must become clean, if it is to reflect God.
- (h) While practicing meditation, posture should be kept steady and pleasing, so as to aid concentration. A right posture gives serenity of body. The body must be kept in good form, if God is to be reflected in mind. For attaining a firm and stable posture full control over sense organs, eradication of craving for sensual pleasures, complete cut-off from worldly affairs and perfect mastery over mind are inevitable essentials.
- (i) The devotee remains under a constant fear, lest objects of sense-organs may succeed in degrading him any time. This fear persists till he acquires full concentration of mind. It is only then that the path to gain experience of essential self becomes some what easy.
- (j) Brahmacarya means doing things in a way which makes a man brahma i.e. great. In other words it means performing tasks at the highest level with utmost skill, which may bring name and fame. Because such deeds require great energy, intellect, knowledge and vision which only absolute celibacy can endow, the devotee therefore must exercise full control over his sexual impulses, if he wants to succeed in meditation.
- (k) Ívara-pranidhāna means complete surrender to God. It does not imply passive acceptance of fate. On the other hand it demands active and selfless participation in

all activities for the service of God (or his creatures) without any desire what so ever, for any kind of return, or personal gratification. Once the *Karma* is performed, whatever God gives in return, should be joyfully accepted without any hint of complaint.

If the devotee observes these instructions to the best of his capacity, he is sure to lead a regulated life. He will be temperate in food and recreation and restrained in actions. His sleep and waking too will be regulated. These habits will inculcate in him a discipline which will end all his sorrow and difficulties. There will then be no cause for iconoclastic taunt of Bhakta Kabir and consequent fear of falling on bad days.

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i^^nq%[k esa lc fleju djsa  
lq[k esa djsa u dks;]  
tks lq[k esa fleju djsa  
rks nq%[k dkgs dks gks;A\*\*

DUKH MAIN SABH SIMARAN KAREN  
SUKH MAIN KARE NA KOY  
JO SUKH MAIN SIMARAN KAREN  
TO DUKH KAHE KO HOY

ii ^^bZ'oj rsjs HkqYYk;kaW O;kis lkjs jksx \*\*  
ÍSVAR TERE BHULLAYAN VYAPE SARE ROG

iii \_^^,d vkse~dkj lr~ uke izlkn \*\* EK AUM KĀR SATTANĀM PRASĀD

iv From time immemorial AUM is taken as a single syllable and suffix **dkj** [kāra] is added to it.

v ^^losZ osnk ;RinekeufUr  
rikafI lokZf.k p ;n|onfUr  
;fnPNUrks czgep;Z pjfUr  
rRrs ina laxzgs.k czohfHk AA  
vksfeR;srr ~A [dBskifu”n(1-2-15)]

SARVE VEDĀ YATPADAMĀMANANTI  
TAPĀMSI SARVAṆI CA YADVADANTI  
YADICCHANTO BRAHMACARYAM CARANTI  
TATTE PADAM SAMGRAHENA BRAVIMI OMITYETAT  
( KATHOPANISAD{I-2-15} )

[ whom all the Vedas declare worthy of homage , whom all the devotion and religious deeds lead to and for whose realization brahmacarya is observed through out life , oh Naciketa , in a nutshell; I tell you it is AUM]

vi ^^ lksR;kekRek v/;{kjsadkjsRf/kek=e~

iknk ek++=k ek=k'pk iknk

vdkj mdkjks edkj b~fr (ek.M~D;k;fu”n verse eight )

SO – YAMĀTMĀ ADHYAKṢAROMKĀRO- DHIMĀTRAM,

PĀDĀ MĀTRĀ MĀTRĀṢCA PĀDĀ,

AKĀRA UKĀRO MAKĀRA ITI [Māndūkyopanisad verse 8]

[This is the self , which is of the nature of syllable AUM in regards to its elements. The quarters are elements the elements

are quarters , the letter A, the letter U and the letter M.] Also see Manusmṛti [II-76]

vii TRAYĀNĀM VIŚVĀDINĀM

PURVA- PURVA -PRAVILĀ PANENA

TURĪYASYA PRATIPATTIḤ (Shankaracharya)

{ The knowledge of the fourth quarter is attained by merging the previous three such as Viśva etc., in the order of the previous one in the succeeding ones }

viii<sup>^^</sup> NĀRĀYAṆA is IŚVARA obviously.

ix<sup>^^</sup> | i;ZxkPNqdze dk;ecz.k;~-----

SA PARYAGĀCCHUKRAM- AKĀYAM- AVRANAM .....Yajurveda [XXXX-8]

[He (the Almighty) is pervasive everywhere . He is the fashioner of the whole universe. He is bodiless. He is indivisible.....]

x<sup>^^</sup>vo j{k.kxfr dkfUr izhfr r`flr&voxe izos'k

Jo.k LokE;FkZ ;kpu fdz;k bPNk nhflr vrkflr

vkfyaxu fgalk nku Hkkx o`f)\*\*\*

AV RAKṢANA- GATI-KĀNTI-PRĪTI- TRPTI-

AVAGAMA-PRAVEŚA-ŚRAVANA-SVĀMYARTHA-YĀCANA-KRIYĀ-

ICCHĀ-DĪPTI-AVĀPTI- ĀLINGANA-HIMSĀ-DĀNA-BHĀGA- VRDDHISU

[Panini's Dhatupatha]

{The root **av** connotes protection, motion, desire , love , satisfaction, attainment, entrance, hearing, owning, entreaty, action, wish, light, obtaining embracing, killing, giving, division, and development }

xi<sup>^^</sup> dks /kkrq bfr \ vklyq /kkrq] vofrer;sds A

:ilkekU;kn~ vFkZlkekU;e~ usnh;%]

rLeknkisjksadj%] loZekizksrhR;FkZ% \*\*

(xksi;czkgzk.kiZwoHkkx izFke izikBd Ncchloha df.Mdk)

KO DHATU ITI ? ĀPL DHATU AVATIMAPYEKE , RŪPASĀMĀNYĀD

ARTHASĀMĀNYAM NEDĪYAH

TASMĀDĀPEROMKĀRAH

SARVAMĀPNOTĪTYARTHAH

[GO PATHA BRAHMANA PURVA BHĀGA , FIRST PRAPĀTHAKA , TWENTY SIXTH KANDIKĀ]

[What is the root? **āp** is the root, however some say **av** is the root. But as the affinity of connotations is more distinct , than the similarity of forms, it is therefore more appropriate to derive AUM from root **āp** than root **av**, on the basis of affinity of connotations. Aum then will mean One who pervades all and as such is everywhere].



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<sup>xii</sup> Influenced by the reasoning of the author of the Gopatha Brahmana most of the European languages have accepted AUM [om=omni] as a combining form [meaning all] and have included words such as Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Omniscient, etc., in their vocabularies.

<sup>xiii</sup> AUM is nearer to root **av** than to root **āp**, so far **a** its derivation is concerned. In the case of root **av** its letter **v** **O~** can be converted into vowel **u** **Ṁ** through the process of samprasāraṇa. And word AUM can be formed.

But in the case of root **āp**, first of all its letter **p** **Ḍ** is to be converted into letter **b** **C~** and then this letter **b** **c~** is to be equalised with letter **v** **O~** in accordance with the aphorism bvyorabhedah “**co;ksj Hksn**”. meaning **b** and **v** are considered equal. Again letter **v** **O~** is to be converted into vowel **u** **Ṁ** through the same process of samprasāraṇa. Only then word AUM can be formed, This latter process is surely more cumbersome and protracted one.

<sup>xiv</sup> iz.ko loZosns'q

PRANAVAH SARVAVEDEṢU

[Bhagavadgita vii-8] { I am Syllable AUM in all the Vedas }

<sup>xv</sup> czkgzk.k% iz.ko dq;kZnknkoUrs p loZnk A  
LroR;uksM+~d`r iwoZ iqjLrkpq foizh;Zfr%(euq0<sub>II</sub> –  
74).

BRĀHMANAH PRANAVAM KURYĀD

ĀDAVANTE CA SARVADĀ

SRAVATYANOM KRTAM PURVAM

PURASTACCA VISĪRYATI [Manusmṛti II-74]

[Brahmanas should utter Aum [Pranava] in the beginning and at the end of the Veda mantras ( while reciting these texts) . In case Aum is not uttered in the beginning and at the end of the texts , the whole endeavour loses its purpose]

<sup>xvi</sup> ^^ u ekeuhjf;Rok czkgzk.kk cgzk ons;q:

;fn rns;q% vczgzk rr~ L;kr (xksikFk czkgzk.k

iwoZHkkx 23oha df.Mdk)

NA MAMANĪRYITVĀ BRĀHMANĀ

BRAHMA VADEYUḤ, YADI VADETUḤ

ABRAHMA TAT SYĀT

[GOPATHA BRAHMANA PURVABHĀGA , first Prapāṭhaka twenty third Kandikā]

[Without reciting my (AUM'S) NAME in the beginning Brāhmanas should not utter Veda mantras. In case it is done without reciting my name in the beginning , the whole endeavour would be considered as devoid of merit]



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<sup>xvii</sup> ACONTYĀDITI [ASTADHYAYI]

{The part of a word beginning with the last vowel is called TI}

<sup>xviii</sup> TASYA VĀCĀKAH PRANAVAHA [YOGADARŚANA]

[PRANAVA is synonym of syllable AUM]

<sup>xix</sup> vksadj:iks HkxokU;ks osnknkS izfr”Br%A

;a lnk equ;ks nsok LejUrksUnzkn;ks AA

vkssdj:iks HkxokuqrFkLrq x.kuk;d%A

;Fkk loZsa”qdesZ” iwT;rs lsk fouk;d%AA (f’ko iqjk.k)

AUMKĀRA –RŪPO BHAGAVĀN

YO VEDĀDAU PRATIṢṬHITAḤ

YAM SADĀ MUNAYO DEVĀḤ

SMARANTĪNDRĀDAYAḤ

AUMKĀRA-RŪPO BHAGAVĀN

UKTASTU GANANĀYAKAḤ

YATHA SARVEṢU KARMEṢU

PŪJYATE SO VINĀYAKAḤ [Ganesa Purana]

[The majestic lord in the form of AUM established in the beginning of the Vedas is always borne in their hearts by Indra and all the gods and by sages. This Lord in the form of the Aumkāra is called Gananāyaka the leader (Lord) of hosts and as He is invoked with reverence in all works, He is called Vināyaka (true guide) ]

<sup>xx</sup> vksadj’pkFkiwkCn’p )kosrkS czgzk.k iqjk A

d.Ba feRok fu;kZrkS ekaxfydkoqekS AA

rL;okpd% iz.ko%

AUMKĀRAŚ CĀTHAŚABDAŚCA

DVĀVETAU BRAHMANAḤ PURA

KANTHAM BHITTVA VINIRYATAU

TENA MĀNGALIKAVUBHAU (Apte’s Lexicon)

[Aumkara and word ATHA both are indicative of auspiciousness, as they are supposed to have emanated from the throat of Brahman]

<sup>xxi</sup> ,rnkyEcuā Js”BesrnkyEcuaije~ A

,rnkyEcuā KkRok czyyksds egh;ls AA

ETADĀLAMBANAM ŚRESTHAM

ETADĀLAMBANAM PARAM

ETADĀLAMBANAM JNĀTVĀ

BRAHMALOKE MAHĪYATE [Kāthopaniṣad I-2-17]

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{The support of AUM is the strongest support. Surely it is the most excellent support , knowing this support one becomes great in the world of Brahman [attains Salvation]}

<sup>xxii</sup> vksfeR;sr ?;k;; vkyekua LofLro% ikjk;  
rel% ijLrkr~ (eq.M0 m02A2A6)  
rr~ izR;d` psrukf/kxeks I;Urrks;keku'p  
(;kssxn'kZu 1-1=21)

AUMITYEVAM DHYĀYATHA

ĀTMĀNAM SVASTI VAH

PĀRĀYA TAMASAḤ PRASTĀT [MUNDAKOPANISAD II-2-6 ]

[Do meditate upon God by reciting AUM . He alone can lead to salvation far beyond the ignorance of the world.]

<sup>xxiii</sup> rr% izR;d psrukf xe vfi vuzjk;kHkko)

TATAḤ PRATYAK CETANĀDHIGAMAḤ API ANTARĀYĀBHĀVAŚCA

[Yogadrasana]. It liberates soul and puts an end to all difficulties.

<sup>xxiv</sup> [i]YAMAS are five

- 1- Ahimsā vfgalk = nonviolence
- 2- Śatya IR; =Truthfulness in thoughts words and deeds
- 3- Asteya vLrs; =Non coveting of other's property
- 4- Brahmacharya czgkzp;Z =chastity
- 5- Aparigraha vifjxzg=Non possessiveness, control of desires

[ii] Niyamas too are five

- 1-Śauca 'kSSksp= internal and extenal purity
- 2-Santoṣa larks" -contentment
- 3-Tapas – austerity
- 4-Svādhyāya Lok ;k;- which is of two types

### Special references

#### Vedas

Vedas [*Rg., Yajur, Sama and Atharva*] are divine revelations. They are repository of all right knowledge, revealed to the Rsis in the beginning of the creation of this universe, for the well-being and survival of mankind. In Yajurveda [XXX II-I] eight names of the Supreme Being have been mentioned including Brahman. Out of these eight; Agni Āditya and Vāyu have been included in these nine names.

#### Upanisads

In ancient times Vedic seers used to give discourses to explain the divine knowledge of the Vedas. Devotees used to sit at their feet out of respect and to imbibe the real import of the knowledge. *Upanisad* means the inner or mystic teaching. The term Upanisad is derived from *upa* (near), *ni* (down) and *sad* (to sit), i.e., sitting down near; hence the compilations of these discourses are known as Upanisads. Only eleven Upanisads are considered as authentic namely, Īśa, Kena, Katha, Praśna, Mundaka, Māndūkya, Aitareya, Taittirīya, Chandogya, Brihadāranyaka and Śvetaśvatara. The main figure in the Upanisads, though not present in many of them, is the sage Yajnavalkya. Most of the great teachings of later Hindu and Buddhist philosophy derive from him. He taught the great doctrine of "*neti-neti*", the view that truth can be found only through the negation of all thoughts about it. Other important Upanisadic sages are Uddālaka, Aruni, Śvetaketu, Śāndilya, Aitareya, Pippalāda, Sanat Kumara. Many earlier Vedic teachers like Manu, Bṛihaspati, Vyāsa and Nārada are also found in the Upanisads.

#### Guru Nanak Dev

By the end of the 13-century A.D. muslim invaders had established their kingdom in north India. In the beginning there was much animosity between Hindus and Muslims. But gradually there grew a feeling of amity between them. When closer contact developed and cultural interaction came into play, both the groups felt the need of comparing their religious practices. This thinking gave rise to the saints and sages in the country who reformed the society and encouraged Hindu Muslim unity. Out of these Bhakta Kabir and Guru Nanak Dev stand out prominently. The followers of both of these reformers came from both the communities. Guru Nanak Dev's followers generally were from Punjab who later on consolidated themselves as Sikhs.

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### **Bhakta Kabir**

Bhakta Kabir was a pioneer saint who initiated Bhakti movement in northern India. He himself was a poet of great merit. His iconoclastic sayings in poetic language became very popular all over northern India and brought to the fore the need for immediate reforms in Hindu society. He addressed the masses through his poetry directly in brief style and effectively. These were the days of *Temur Lain's* invasion. (Temur Lain was a warrior who invaded India during those times). Bhakta Kabir's poetic

compositions provided great solace to Indian masses during these difficult days of decadence defeat and sufferings. One of his couplet is:-  
JIS MARANE SE JAGA DARE MERE MAN ĀNAND  
MARANE SE HI PAIYE PURAN PARMĀNAND  
[ Oh death of you all are dreaded, I welcome you. Come and bestow on me salvation]

### **Word of Caution on verse 2 of Māndūkyopanisad**

Though Brahman (The Supreme Being) is all in all in the universe and all existence is a manifestation of His divine power, yet besides Him there are two other eternal entities, functioning under his directions cooperating with Him and always at His disposal. One of them is MAHAT (Mūla Prakṛti) with which Brahman creates the cosmos and the other is innumerable JIVAS [souls]. Both of these are eternal without origin and without end.

### **Māndūkyopanisad**

Māndūkyopanisad belongs to Atharvaveda and contains twelve verses. Though very small in volume it presents a scientific exposition of AUM, the most important name of Supreme Brahman. Brahman is the main theme of Vedānta, for the realization of which, knowledge regarding AUM in its various aspects is very necessary. This knowledge is described in Māndūkyopanisad, hence is the importance of this Upanisad. That is perhaps why, Gaudapādāchārya [Shankaracharya's teacher's teacher] chose this Upanisad for the exposition of his sentiments and convictions. His commentary on this Upanisad known as Māndūkyā-Kārikā brought a minor change in the Vedic thought of Vedānta [which formerly meant meditation of God and life of activity (Yajur Veda XXXX-15)] resulting into altogether a new philosophy known as *Advaita Vedānta*, [which stressed on meditation of God for casting away ignorance in order to achieve salvation].

### **Shankaracharya**

One of the greatest philosophers and savants of India. He propounded the vedantic tenet that Brahman the Supreme and man are of one essence and that all people should strive to cultivate this vision of oneness. If a Hindu deeply immersed in materialism still longs for some spirituality, it is all due to Shankaracharya's great personality. His great scholarship, firm dedication to truth he perceived and unique endeavors he made to propagate this truth have been a source of great hope to Indian masses. The establishment

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of monasteries known as dhams in four extremities of India and founding of *Dasanami* order of monks bear out his sagacity, keen foresight and great organizational skill and capacities. He wrote commentaries on Brahma Sutras, Māndūkya Kārikā of Gaudapādāchārya, Bhagavadgita and Upanisads. Acharya Gaudapāda was the teacher of Sankaracharya's teacher Acharya Govinda Bhagavatpada.

### **Mundakopanishad**

The name Mundaka is derived from the root "mund" meaning to shave. If a man fully understands the teachings of this Upanisad and leads his life according to these teachings, it is presumed that he is shaved or liberated from errors and ignorance. This Upanisad

clearly states the distinction between the higher knowledge of the Brahman the Supreme Being and the lesser knowledge of the empirical world. It is by the higher wisdom and not by sacrifice or worship that one can reach Brahman.

### **Kathopanishad**

The Katha Upanisad narrates a conversation between a truth seeking sage named Naciketa and Yama an Acharya of great learning and piety, in which various details concerning Inner Nature of Man are presented. The first section of this Upanisad deals with the presentation of this Inner Nature of Man as being like the arrangement of a horse-drawn chariot, while the second section of the Upanisad delineates a dialogue regarding the knowledge by which Naciketa could conquer death and could attain *apunarṁrtyu*. The gist of this dialogue is as follows; Death is inevitable. With purity of mind curbing senses the learned start their journey to salvation. By practicing piety they become pure and that way come near the Supreme Being who is also Pure. Kathopanishad used the setting of a story found in Taittirīya Brahmana and Mahabharata, about the unreality of a *yagya* performed by a poor and pious Brahman in which the old and feeble cows were given as gifts. Vājasrava performed an elaborate sacrifice, which terminated with parting of all his possessions as gifts to the guests. Vājasrava's son, Naciketa, watched the proceedings. Feeling disturbed he proposed to his father that he himself be offered as *Dakshina* to the priests. Enraged his father says "I give you to Yama". Following his father's directions, Naciketa went to Yama's abode. As Yama was not available, Naciketa waited there for his host for three nights and days without taking any food. Yama on his return offered three boons in recompense for the delay and discomforts caused to Naciketa. The first and second boons Naciketa asked were not that important. Third boon which Naciketa asked was to get the knowledge by which he could conquer death. Explaining this complex and subtle thought process to Naciketa Yamacharya quoted the verse under review.

### **Manusmṛti**

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Maharsi Manu is the first law maker of the human race. His laws have reached the present generations in the form of Manusmṛti. *Smṛti* means the knowledge that is specially kept in memory and passed on from generations to generations. Manusmṛti has greatly influenced the structure of the human society. It outlines regulations governing the organization of society, sources of revenue and method of conducting trade etc., four stages of life [ashrams] have been detailed in this book.

### **Yogadarsana**

The word darsana means observation. The Vedas and the Upanisads contain spiritual knowledge. They explain relationship between God, Soul and the Matter. These topics have been discussed very deeply in six darsanas. The idea of complementarity was at the basis of the systematization of Indian philosophic traditions. This way complementary approaches were paired together. We have the groups of: logic (nyāya) and physics (vaisheshika), cosmology (sankhya) and psychology (yoga), and language (mimāṃsā) and reality (vedānta). Efforts have been made here to make an intelligent quest for truth, which is supported, by logic and arguments. There are six darsanas namely Nyāya, Vaisheshika, Sankhya, Yoga, Mimāṃsā and Vedānta. The sutras referred to here occur in Yogadarsana written by Patanjali Muni, which draws at realizing the Supreme Being by practicing Aṣṭanga Yoga.

### **Brahmanas**

Ancient books dealing with rules and directions for the utilization of appropriate Vedic texts in various yajnas are called Brahmanas. Vedas collectively are known as **Brahma** and because these books mainly deal with Vedic texts and explain their various significances, therefore they are called Brahmanas. They show us how to recreate the ritual action of life itself, to portray the cosmic ritual in a few special actions. The Brahmanas are considered as the earlier most commentaries on the Vedas. They are very many in numbers and Gopatha Brahmana is one of them. It stresses that God's most sublime quality is Pervasiveness [hugeness, vastness, greatness]. Important **Brahmanas** are the *Aitareya, Shatapatha, Kausitaki, Taittiriya and Chandogya*.

### **Aranyakas**

Aranyakas are religious or philosophical writings connected with the Brahmanas, which were either composed in a forest or were studied there. They are very many in numbers. Taittirīyāranyaṅka is one of them. It stresses that attributes of the Almighty should always be viewed as endless in size and intensity.

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## Guru Arjun Dev

Guru Arjun Dev is the fifth in succession in guru śisya paramparā after Guru Nanak Dev. It was he who got the *vani* [writings] of the previous four gurus [Guru Nanak Dev , Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amar Das and Guru Ramdas] searched and collected, compiled and bound for the first time for the benefit of the devotees. He was the first martyr of the great Sikh tradition of martyrdom .

## Puranas

The *Puranas* are the richest collection of mythology in the world. There are eighteen major *Puranas* . They are supposed to have been composed by sage *Vyāsa*. They contain the whole body of Hindu mythology. Each is a big book consisting of various stories of the Gods and Goddesses, and hymns , an outline of ancient history, cosmology, rules of life, rituals, and instructions on spiritual knowledge. Besides Puranas there are a few Upapuranas also, which seem to have been compiled during the period starting from Harshavardhana's reign right up to the rise of Muslim rule in north India. Ganesa Purana seems to be one of these Upapuranas.

## Sage Panini

Sage Panini is the greatest grammarian of the world. He marvelously succeeded in regulating the grammatical formation of all words, not only of the Vedic scriptures but also of spoken Sanskrit of those times. And brought them all within the rigid scope of his word- building scheme, with the help of a few thousand sutras of his own making. His creative genius has endowed Sanskrit language more or less an endless longevity. Sanskrit has not changed much since then and will not change in future also. Besides his main grammatical treatise Astadhyayi ; sage Panini also compiled Unādikosa, Dhatupatha, Ganapatha, Linganusasana, which serve as important limbs of his all comprehensive scheme of Sanskrit grammar.

**Unādikosa :**The Unādikosa is an appendix to Ashtadhyayi. Words which could not be dealt within the scope of Astadhyayi have been accommodated in Unādikosa by sage Panini.

**Ganapatha :**Ganapatha consists of a collection of groups of words belonging to the same grammatical rule . These *ganās* or groups are named after the first word of the gana.

**Dhatupatha :**Dhatupatha is the collection of all roots of Sanskrit language. It contains ten different groups. Every group is named after the first root of the group. These groups follow different procedures for conjugating roots of different groups. Within the same group the procedure for conjugation is the same.



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## Kārikā

Acharya Gaudapada's Mānūkyā Kārikā though not voluminous is superb in Vedantic literature for its theories and depth of meanings. Māndūkyopaniṣad of which this kārikā is a commentary too, is very small and consists of only twelve kandikas. This Upaniṣad provides a scientific explanation of AUM the highest epithet of the Supreme Being to the readers for adoration and realization. Because this subtle subject matter has been very convincingly argumentated and discussed in the kārikā, hence scholars take this book as the basis of all Vedantic theories now a days known as Shankara's Vedanta.

### Word of caution on verse 12 OF MANDUKYOPANISHAD

The wordings SAMVIṢṬE ĀTMANĀ ĀTMĀNAM YA EVAM VED literally means he who knows it thus, enters the self [God] with his self [soul]. This does not imply that the human soul is dissolved in the undefinable Absolute by entering into it and loses his entity and becomes one with it. It only connotes that the human soul grows into the likeness of the Divine and attains the freedom of spirit which is lifted above the empirical movements. The soul now becomes one in nature with what it has been seeking for and attains Sāḍṛṣya mukti . In Yajurveda XXXII-10 the same thing has been described as YATRA DEVĀ AMṚTAMĀNASĀNĀH TRṬIYE DHĀMANNADHYAIRYANTA. When translated into English it means that after having attained AMṚTAM the state of deathlessness that is salvation, Devas the learned men rightfully stroll wherever they like, in the third sphere of existence [Supreme Being] .The Most Supreme Being God is Omnipresent . He is devoid of all blemishes [such as birth , death and other ailments ] and possesses infinite bliss in its very essence. He is the most subtle third sphere of existence with reference to whom space , time and matter have no relevance , wherein the righteous and the learned ones freed from all shackles and interferences, having attained full enlightenment and having become completely devoid of sins ever revel by their own sweet will. The other two spheres of existence are namely the first gross corporal sphere of worldly life on this planet and the second the subtle material sphere wherein the unliberated soul merges in primordial matter after cessation of its own gross corporal life.

### Word of caution on verse 7 of MANDUKYOPANISHAD

On cursory reading we find that seventh verse which defines the fourth quarter seems to be rather mystical in thoughts . It is only in the end that one finds the following wordings "... the essence of the knowledge of the one self , that into which the world is resolved , the peaceful , the benign , the nondual such they think , is the fourth quarter. He is the self .He is to be known". In fact the fourth quarter is the reality of Brahman . As it is difficult not only to perceive the reality but also far more difficult to practically describe, that is why the author of Māndūkyopaniṣad describes it not authoritatively but as indirectly and mildly using the words "such they think is the fourth quarter...."These are rather delicate and subtle matters to imbibe easily. One life span may not be enough to comprehend these . The yatra of the author of Māndūkyopaniṣad is



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the like of the journey of a bodhi satva or a yogi , who cleansed of all sins , perfecting himself through many lives , then attains to the highest goal [Bhagavadgita VI –45]

### **Commentary on BRAHMA-SŪTRAS by Shankaracharya**

It is a composition of par excellence . In clarity of thoughts and beauty of language it is very difficult to surpass the author, who has shown immense capacity to convey the desired sense to the readers. Lucidity of style prevails through out the whole treatise. This marvelous piece of literature was written by Acharya Shankara during his student life.

### **Bhagavadgita**

Bhagavadgita [ The Song Divine] has assumed a position of universal interest . Its teachings have gained appreciation not only in India but in the entire world. Among Hindu scriptures it is the most read and esteemed holy book. In the battle of Kuruksetra when Arjuna was about to engage in a final battle against his enemies; he was overpowered by the fear of shedding the blood of his kith and kin. He put this question before Lord Krishna , who cleared his doubts saying “Arjuna you must do your duty as a warrior; Life and death are of little worth when compared with eternal values”. Lord Krishna also told Arjuna in the end that it was only action without desire which conducted human beings to liberation and nothing else. Arjuna’s doubts were cleared and he fought valiantly and won the war.

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**TAITTIRIYA ARANYAKA**

**ASTADHAYAYI**

**UNADIKOSA**