

## OM Honored in Ancient India 5000 Years Ago

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

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

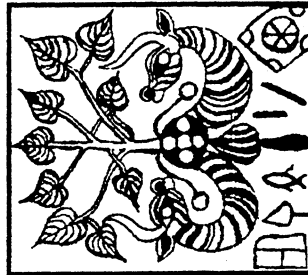
Harappan OM — Original and Rotated



Harappan Seal



Original Harappan OM



Rotated by 90° gives  
Devanagari OM

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

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

The description of this seal is found in the Muṇḍaka Upanishad<sup>1</sup> as the 'bow-shaped Praṇava Akṣara'. (Praṇava means OM). Other Upanishads, notably the Kaṭha Upanishad, contain similar descriptions. Even the Bhagavadgītā has such a reference. The written message on the seal can be deciphered as 'varadaḥ saḥ redhate' which is a reference to a famous verse<sup>2</sup> in the fourth book of the Rigveda.

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>1</sup> See our page # 14.

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

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

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

The *Mantra* reads :

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

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

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

### ॐ Why Aśvattha ?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### सनातनोऽश्वत्थः

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

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

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

Svami Nikhilananda translates the *Kaṭhaśruti* as follows:

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

And he further presents Shri Shankaracharya:

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

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

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

*Kaṭhopaniṣad*, Sixth vallī. Tr. by Robert Ernest Hume.

The world-tree rooted in Brahma.  
Its root is above, its branches below--  
This eternal fig tree<sup>1</sup>

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

ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ

### भगवद्गीता

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

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

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

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

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

Shri Shankaracharya explains :

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

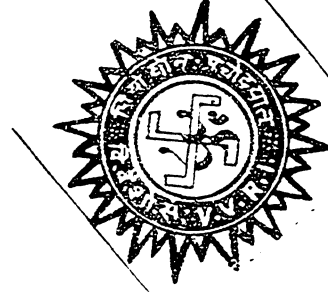
श्रुतेश्च :—

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

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

पुराणे च :-

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



अधःशाखं महदहङ्कारतन्मात्रादयः शाखा इवास्याधो भवन्तीति सोऽयमधःशाखस्तमघःशाखम्। न श्वोऽपि स्थातेत्यश्वत्थः, तं क्षणप्रध्वंसिनमश्वत्थं प्राहुः कथयन्ति। अव्ययं संसारमप्यदिमयमनादिकालप्रवृत्तत्वात्। सोऽयं संसारवृक्षोऽव्ययोऽनाद्यनन्तदेहादिसन्तानाश्रयः, हि सुप्रसिद्धस्तमव्ययम्। तस्यैव संसारवृक्षस्येदमन्यद् विशेषणम्। छन्दांसि यस्य पर्णानि, छन्दांसि छादनादृश्यजुस्सामलक्षणानि, तस्य संसारवृक्षस्य पर्णानीव पर्णानि। यथा वृक्षस्य परिरक्षणार्थानि पर्णानि तथा वेदाः संसारवृक्षपरिरक्षणार्थः, धर्माधर्मतद्भेदतुफलप्रकाशनार्थत्वात्। यथाव्याख्यातं संसारवृक्षं समूलं यस्तं वेद स वेदविद्वेदवेदार्थविदित्यर्थः। नहि संसारवृक्षादस्मात् समुलाज्ज्ञेयो अन्योऽणुमात्रोऽप्यवशिष्टोऽस्ति, अतः सर्वज्ञः सर्ववेदार्थविदिति समुद्रसंसारवृक्षज्ञानं स्तौति ॥ 1 ॥

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### छान्दोग्योपनिषद्

Chāndogyopaniṣad (8. 5. 3) says :

ब्रह्मलोके . . . अश्वत्थः सोमसवनः ।

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

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

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### वाचस्पत्यम्<sup>1</sup>

तस्य वाचकः प्रणवः (27)

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