

AUM, Great OM

For thousands of years, Indian rishis, munis, and sages have been meditating on *aum*. In *samadhi*, they felt very subtle Universal Vibrations—*anahata nada*—and they associated this with *aum*. Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, and Sikhs all revere and recite *aum*. This is the only mantra which can be called a Universal Mantra. It is made up of letters A, U, M, or O, M (A+U=O). Islam reveres a form of *aum* called “amin.” Christians say “amen.” Jews use “shalom.”

The Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads, Smritis, Tantras, Yoga Darshana, Brahamanas, and the Bhagavad Gita all point to the great strength that *aum-pranava* has, and all give special techniques for meditation on *aum*. From Brahma Himself, to Manu the first man and lawgiver, to many rishis throughout the ages—all have done japa of *aum*. Even Shri Rama and Shri Krishna used to chant the *gayatri* and *om* mantras. Meditating on *aum*, Brahma reached *brahmatva* (the essence of Brahma), Vishnu reached *vishnutva* (the essence of Vishnu), and Shiva reached *shivatva* (the essence of Shiva).

When you **look** at *aum*, your brain waves calm down from beta levels to alpha level and eventually further down to gamma and delta levels. When you **hear** *aum*, the same thing happens. Chanting *aum* allows the mind to become blissful and quiet so that very few new thoughts originate in your mind. *Aum* is the sound of *kundalini shakti* moving through the body, the sound of the purification of the nervous system. *Aum* is the sound of Mother Nature in us. It is the supreme mantra, an ultimate mantra. Nothing can replace this mantra; nothing is greater than *aum*.

It is very easy to pronounce *aum*. *Aum* is very delicate, extremely sweet, and easily attainable. *Omkar* is medicine for the soul. It gives us salvation (*nirvana, moksha*). It is also known as *pranava, omkar, or udgitha* (‘worthy of singing in higher notes’).

‘A’ represents *rigveda*, water, earth, *rajas*, Brahma the Creator, and the past
‘U’ represents *yajurveda*, space, air, *sattva*, Vishnu the Preserver, and the present
‘M’ represents *samaveda*, fire, *tamas*, Mahesha the Destroyer, and the future

AUM-OM is Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesha all in one. It is a single syllable mantra. It is made up of *akar, ukar, makar, ardhmatra, bindu* (dot), *nada* (sound), *kala* (crescent), and *shakti* (energy).

Many mantras start with *aum*, and many end with *aum*. In meditation, I have visualized many types of *aum*. *Aum* which has all the religious symbols, as in the *panchshila* or unity *aum*. *Aum* which has all numbers, many organs of the body, all mathematical symbols. In future issues of our newsletter, I will share those with you.



Unity AUM

Two Techniques of AUM meditation

1. Lord Shiva's 16th technique of meditation, as given in the *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra*

*pranavadisamuccarat plutante sunyabhavanat
sunyaya paraya saktya sunyatam eti bhairavi (39)*

“O Bhairavi, by perfect recitation of *pranava* or the sacred syllable *aum*, and by contemplating over the void at the end of the protracted phase of it, and by the most eminent energy of the void, the yogi attains the void.”

There are three *pranavas*:¹

- 1) the *vedic pranava*, AUM
- 2) the *saiva pranava*, HUM
- 3) the *sakta pranava*, HRIM

Each should be chanted 7 or 11 times.

2. *Trataka* Meditation on AUM

Place an *aum* on the wall at eye level. Sit in cross-legged or *padmasana* (lotus pose) with the head, neck, and trunk in a straight line. Look at *aum* for a few seconds without blinking the eyes. Do not strain the eyes. When tired, gently close the eyes and visualize *aum* or the after image of *aum*. Eventually, increase the duration of *trataka* to 1 minute, and then to a maximum of 3 minutes.

References:

1. Book of AUM, Shantilal D. Parakh (unpublished manuscript, 1972).
2. www.shanti-yoga.ca
3. Vijnanabhairava Tantra, tr. Jaideva Singh, Motilal Banarsidass, 2003.
4. Omkar Siddhi, Dr. Chamanlal Gautam, 1979
5. Advanced Yoga Practices, Yogani, 2005.

¹ We chanted these three sacred *omkaras* at our temple a few months back