The concept of ‘OM’: (with special reference to chāndogya upaniṣad)

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Abstract:
‘Veda’ is considered as mine house of spiritual knowledge. The ‘Veda’ is worshiped as one “Veda Purusa”. The word “VEDA” is derived from the root word “Vid” which means “to know”. Thus, ‘Veda’ means “knowledge”. Each Veda has been sub-classified into four major texts and the Upaniṣads is a part of Vedas and are ancient Sanskrit texts that contain some philosophical concepts and ideas of Hinduism. This paper deals with the concept of ‘OM’ especially in Chāndogya Upaniṣad we found that, Meditation of ‘OM’ became a person fearlessness and immortality because by entering it, Gods became fearless and immortal. Not only in Chāndogya Upaniṣad but also in many Upaniṣads like Praśnopaniṣad, Taitiriyā Upaniṣad, Brihadāranyaka Upaniṣad etc. the concept and Significance of OM has described. And in the most popular scripture of Hinduism Srimad Bhagvat Gitā the concept of ‘OM’ or the Significance of ‘OM’ was clearly described by Lord Sri Krishna. In Chāndogya Upaniṣad the OM is described as Brahman and Ātman. And ‘OM’ is called Omniscient, Omnipotent. When you will start chant Om then it will creates a positive vibrations in you. You feel happy for no reason. So in Taitirīya Upaniṣad mention that: Deevevob yeéïeCees efJeÜeve ve efJeYesef

When you will chant ‘OM’ on a regular basis it will take you on a spiritual journey to greater happiness and positivity, but only if it is done in daily for a longer period of time. Mantras are not an overnight fix to your problems you must have patience and learn the correct techniques of chant. There is no right and wrong method when it comes to chanting; everyone can do it and everyone may sound a little different. Sometimes I will chant ‘Om’ a couple times and after practicing yoga. It helps me calm my mind and turn inward, remembering love we all have within us. So don’t be afraid to step out your comfort zone and try it too.

Key Words: Om, veda, upanisads, atman, brahma etc.

Introduction
In the Bhāratiya tradition coming down to us through the ages, the ‘Veda’ is considered as mine house of spiritual knowledge. The ‘Veda’ is worshiped as one “Veda Purusa”. It antedated all the other scriptures like the Puranas, Smritis, Darśanas and so on. In other word, the Vedas as the most precious and voluminous literature on the earth, deserve an outstanding place in the history of world literature. As per the modern scholar view, the language of Veda is the oldest Indo-European literary monument. The word “VEDA” is derived from the root word “Vid” which means “to know”. Thus, ‘Veda’ means “knowledge”.

i) According to ‘Sāyaṇāchārya’ ‘Veda’ means इन्द्रायननिधिपित्तियोत्तरतीलकिमूत्राय यो उच्ची वेददर्शित्व स सेवनः। 1ii

ii) In Rigvedabhāsyabhumi ‘Veda’ means अलौकिक युक्ताविप्रयोगानीयदयानाय न तथा च चोवित्यः।

Pratyakṣaumānya वा सत्त्वपुत्रो न उपति।

एव दिक्षित बदेन तस्मादवेददय वेददेश।

एवं

मननमाहायोवेददायित्यः। 1iii
The Vedic literature is organized into four sectors which are as follows
i) **Rigveda**, the *Veda* of the verses
ii) **Yajurveda**, the *Veda* of sacrificial texts (*Yajus*)
iii) **Sāmaveda**, the *Veda* of songs (*Sāman*)
iv) **Atharva Veda**, named Sage of *Athravan*, a magical priest of the Past ages.

Each *Veda* has been subclassified into four major text types
i) The Samhitā
ii) Brāhmaṇa
iii) Āranyaka
iv) Upaniṣad

The *Upaniṣads* is a part of *Vedas* and are ancient Sanskrit texts that contain some philosophical concepts and ideas of Hinduism. One of the great insights of *Upaniṣads* is *Ātman* and *Brahman* that are made of same substance. The *Upaniṣads* tell us that, the core of our self is not in our body or mind, but *Ātman* on self. And *Ātman* is the core of all creatures, their innermost essence. When a person wants to archive *Moksha* or liberation *Ātman* returns to *Brahman*. *Upaniṣads* is also called *Vedānta*.

I. **Division of upaniṣads**

Although there are over 200 surviving *Upaniṣads*. Only 14 *Upaniṣads* considered to be the most important. The names of these *Upaniṣads* are:-
1. **Isa**
2. **Kena**
3. **Katha**
4. **Prāṣna**
5. **Muṇḍaka**
6. **Māṇḍukya**
7. **Taittīrīya**
8. **Aitareya**
9. **Chāndogya**
10. **Bṛihadāraṇyaka**
11. **Śvetāśvatara**
12. **Kausitaki**
13. **Mahānārayana**
14. **Maitrī**

But according to “*Mundakopaniṣad*” there are 10 *Upaniṣads*. And by one mantra shows the division of *Upaniṣads* on *Mundakopaniṣads* that is:-

**ईश-केन-कथ-प्रश-मुप-माण्ड-तैत्ती-माई:**
**एश्वर्य च अन्तर्य भूतदर्शनम् दश।**

The *Chāndogyopaniṣad* is a Sanskrit text which is embedded in the *Chāndogyopaniṣad of Sāmavedik*. It is one of the oldest *Upaniṣads* in *Vedic* literature. *Chāndogyopaniṣad* is the number 9 in the *Mukti* of 108 *Upanishad*. This *Upaniṣad* belongs to the *Tānḍya* School of the *Sāmaveda*. This name is derived from the Sanskrit *‘Chanda’* means “poetic meter” and *‘Upaniṣad’* means “sitting at the foot of Guru or teacher.

It is one of the largest *Upaniṣad*ic compilations and consists of eight chapters (Prapāṭhakas). Each with many volumes and each volume contain many verses”. The over theme is the significance of chants, speech and song to human salvation and knowledge. The “*Chāndogyopaniṣad*” discusses the primordial syllable of ‘*OM*’ that is regularly used in the practice of meditative yoga. Within eight chapters, the *Chāndogyopaniṣad* describes many aspects of Hindu philosophy including concepts of chanting ‘*OM*’: good and evil, Space, the universe as a whole, the soul and self, Oneness with the world and *Brahman* and so on.

II. **Significance of “OM”**

‘*OM*’ is an Omnispotent and Omnipresent sound of the Cosmos. For this reason it is also referred as ‘*Prana*’; the energy that runs in our *Prāna*. ‘*OM*’ is the source of all religions and also religious scriptures, The uttering of the sacred and mystical ‘*OM*’ is called ‘*Omkar*’ or ‘*Aumkar*’. It is the sound of *Brahma*. It is the predominating force and power.

For this chant, chanting ‘*OM*’ is essential before every auspicious activity. Most mantras start with ‘*OM*’ and much written on this topic in the scriptures. Eight of the *Upaniṣads* have sections dealing with ‘*OM*’. These are:
1. **Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad**
2. **Chāndogyopaniṣad**
3. **Katha Upaniṣad**
4. **Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad**
5. **Mundaka Upaniṣad**
6. **Prāṣna Upaniṣad**
7. **Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad**
8. **Taittīrīya Upaniṣad**

‘*OM*’ is also discussed in the
1. **Srimadbhagvad Gītā**
2. **Yoga Sutras of Patanjali**
3. **Gopatha Brāhmaṇ**

‘*OM*’ is a part of an iconography which is found in ancient and medieval era of *Mānascripts*, temples, monasteries and spiritual retreats in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism”. The syllable of ‘*OM*’ is first mentioned in the *Upaniṣads* and with the *Vedānta philosophy* the mystical texts associated. The etymological foundations of ‘*OM*’ are repeatedly discussed in the oldest layer of the *Vedāntic* texts of early *Upaniṣads*.

The nature, the constitution, the structure and the glory of ‘*OM*’ described in *Manusmṛiti*, the *Mahābhārata*, *Purāṇas* and the *Upaniṣads*. With *OM*, *Brahma* created this cosmos, and from ‘*OM*’ constituted of the three isolated letters “*A*”, “*U*” and “*M*”. From these three *Vyāhritis*, the three *Pādas* of the *Gāyatrī-Mantra* emanated. And the meaning of the three sections of the *Puruṣa -Sukta* emerged, the meaning of the entire *Vedas* emanated, and from this vast meaning of the *Vedas*, *Brahma* created this cosmos, say the scriptures.

*OM* (“*AUM*”) is sacred mantras and sound it’s a mantra that anyone of any religious or spiritual path can chant to align their mind, body, and spirit. The sound of the universe represents by the Syllable of ‘*OM*’, and for the individual who chant it, it can mean almost anything to them. ‘*OM*’ chanting has more benefits than our expectations. In fact, scientific studies have been conducted to observe the physical effects of the sound’s vibration of ‘*OM*’ and meditative effects on the body.

*Anne Dyer*, the Yoga expert explains in an interview with *Rodney yee*, that *Patanjali* taught this:-

“Chant ‘*OM*’ and you will attain your goal. If nothing else works, just chant *OM.*”

The syllable is also referred to as ‘*Omkara*’ (अोमकार, *Aumkāra*), ‘*Aumkara*’, (ॐकार, *Aumkāra*), and ‘*Pranava*’ (प्राणव, *Pranava*).

It’s called so because it is the meaning of Life. So in *Chāndogyopaniṣad* mentioned that:-
It is somewhat difficult to explain with words but ‘Om’ represents everything. It’s said to be the seed of all of creation. A bit like an acorn seed has the immense power and wonder of a mighty oak tree. This seemingly small word contains all the ability of the universe. It’s the start, middle and therefore the end of it all or the past, present and future. Chanting of ‘Om’ brings into your awareness the physical reality of this world and your body, the subtle impressions of the mind and emotions and therefore the thoughts and beliefs of your life and this world.

The A (aahh) sound represents the creation aspect of the universe and every one of the gross objects within it. ‘Ahh’ is that the beginning of all sounds.

The U (oooh) sound signifies the maintaining energy of the universe and thus the subtle impressions of the mind. It connects us to an inner sense of something greater than that which we will see and feel with our senses.

The M (mmmm) sound characterizes the transformative energy of the universe and therefore the thoughts and beliefs of your being. This sound unites you to the notice of oneness.

This is why ‘Om’ is imagined to represent God, Brahman, Source, Universal Consciousness. Because it’s the power to form everything. When chanting ‘Om’ aloud, the sound will naturally evolve through the three phases corresponding to the three letters A-U-M. Just like the experience of Om as a way of completeness and pure consciousness, the three syllables don’t seem to be distinct or separate phases, but an endless motion of the body, breath and awareness.

III. Pronunciation Of ‘OM’

The “O” sounds like the “a” sound within the word “saw,” combined with the “u” sound within the word “put.” Blend the “m” into the top. These sounds should all merge together into one sound kind of like the “ome” in “home.”

1. Position your mouth you say the vowel “U”.
2. Along with your mouth position unchanged, start pronouncing ‘AUM’. This can be where throaty “O” comes from.
3. Finish with “M” as deep humming.
4. Wherever you are sitting right away, adjust your posture to take a seat up straight, and shut your eyes.
5. Take a pleasant long, deep breath and let it go.
6. Along with your next deep breath, let an “Ooooo” slip out low and rumble from your belly.
7. When you’re half-way through your breath, slowly bring your lips together into an “Mmmmmmmmmm”
8. Then taper off and revel in the silence.
9. That’s one Om! You will do as many as you would like. After chanting 10 minutes, and embrace the stillness.

IV. The concept of ‘OM’ in chāndogya upaniṣad

a) Chant of ‘Om’, the Essence of All

The Udgītha, the most business of the Chief Soma-priest is placed as identical with the holy syllable ‘OM’ (forming the start of the Udgītha). The Udgār who glorifies this syllable as the Udgītha, makes there through his work more practical.

The Chāndogya Upaniṣad opens with the recommendation that “let a person meditate on Om”.

It calls the syllable ‘Om’ as Udgītha (GodierLe, song, chant), and asserts that the importance of the syllable is thus: the essence of all beings is earth, the essence of earth is water, the essence of water are the plants, the essence of plants is man, the essence of man is speech, the essence of speech is that the Rigveda, the essence of the Rigveda is Śāmaveda, and the essence of Śāmaveda is Udgītha.

Rik (स्रोत) is speech, states the text, and Śāman (समन) is breath; they are pairs, and since they need love and desire for each other, speech and breath find themselves together and mate to produce song. Speech and thus the Prāṇa, or the Rik and therefore the Śāman, form a couple.

And that couple become united within the syllable ‘Om’. When a pair comes together they fulfill each other’s desire.

He who knows this as stated above and meditates on the syllable of ‘Om’, the Udgītha, becomes, indeed, a fuller of desires.

This syllable ‘Om’ is used to convey assent, for wherever one assents do something, one says ‘Om’ (yes). Now, what’s assent is gratification. He who knows this and meditates on the syllable ‘Om’, the Udgītha, becomes, indeed, a gratifier of desires.

By means of this syllable the threefold knowledge proceeds. When Adhvaryu priest gives an order in an exceedingly sacrifice, he says ‘Om’. When the Hotri priest recites the hymn, he says ‘Om’. When the Udgārī priest sings the Śāman, he says ‘Om’. All this is often in a deep trouble the glory of the Imperishable Ātman by the greatness of that syllable and by its essence.

b) Meditation of ‘Om’ as the Prāṇa

The second volume of the primary chapter continues its discussion of syllable ‘Om’ (Aum), explaining its use as a struggle between Devas (gods) and Asuras (demons) both
being races derived from one Prajāpati (creator of life). The legend in section 1.2 of Chāndogya Upaniṣad states that gods took the Udgītha (song of ‘Om’) unto themselves, thinking, “With this (song) we shall overcome the demons”. They (i.e. the gods) meditated the Udgītha (Om) because of the Prāna which functions through the nose. But the demons pierced it (i.e. the Prāna) with evil. Therefore with it (i.e. the breath) one smells both what is pleasant smelling and what is foul smelling. For the breath is pierced by evil.

ते ह नासिकवे प्राणमुद्रमपापार्जिते ते हस्युः। प्राणवा विविधस्मर्नान्नुमस्य-निःशरीर द्वैदृश्ये प नामस्य त्रिविष्णु। ।

Ayasya mediated on the Udgītha because the principal prāṇa. People call it (the Prāṇa) as Ayasya; because it comes (ayate) from the mouth (asya). Vaka, the son of Dalbhya, knew it (the Prāṇa); he became the Udgātri priest of the sacrifices dwelling within the Naimisha forest. By singing the Udgītha he fulfilled all their desires. He who knows this as described above and meditates upon the imperishable Udgītha (Om) obtains all his desires by singing the Udgītha. So much for the Udgītha as meditates on with reference to the body.

आगात्यं ह वै कामानं भवति य एवदेव विद्यन्त्रमुद्रभुपक्रयाः इत्येतादाय।

C) Meditation of ‘Om’ as fearlessness and immortality

The syllable of ‘Om’, called the Udgītha, should be meditated upon; for people sing the Udgītha, beginning with ‘Om’. Now follows the detailed explanation of this syllable.

ओमेतसन्तरस्तरमुद्रभुपक्रयाः इत्येतादाय।

When a person has mastered the Rig Veda he loudly utters Om; he does the identical when he has mastered the Sāma Veda and also the Yajur Veda. The Svara is that the syllable Om; it’s immortal and fearless. The gods, by entering it, became immortal and fearless.

यदा वा यज्ञायस्यस्त्रिविष्णुवाच्चरतार्यथमेव साधृतेऽयुर्वेदो- यवद्विश्वमदुमन्नमर्यमन्यत्वाविद्यविद्याय देय अमृता अभया अभवनः।

He who, knowing this, sings the praise of the syllable ‘Om’ enters this same syllable, called the Svara, which is immortal and fearless. Having entered it, he becomes immortal because the gods are immortal.

स य एवदेव विद्यन्त्रमुद्रभुपक्रयाः स्वरमदुमस्यप्रायस्यत्वाविद्यविद्याय देय अमृताय भवति।

D) Meditation of ‘Om’ as the Sun and also the Prāna

Now, verily, that which is the Udgītha is that the Prāṇa; that which is that the Pranava is that the Udgītha. Yonder sun is that the Udgītha. It’s the Pranava, because it moves along uttering ‘Om’.

अमुक्तं द उद्धे: स प्राय: य: यात्रा; स उद्धी इप्यो: आदित्य उद्धी एव प्रायो भवति त्रिविष्णु।

Now with reference to the body: One should meditate on the Udgītha because the principal of the Prāṇa, for (i.e. the Prāṇa) moves within the body uttering ‘Om’.

अः अः यात्रा श्रवणेऽयं एव एव एव त्रिविष्णु।

e) Praise of ‘Om’ unassociated with any ritual

There are three divisions of dharma: Sacrifice, study and charity form the primary. Austerity is that the second. Dwelling within the house of the teacher as a Brahmacarin, always mortifying the body within the house of the teacher, is that the third. All people who practice these Dharmas attain the worlds of the virtuous. But one who is established in Brahman obtains Immortality.

जयेत प्रजापतिः यहोऽधिभालोकवृत्त्यं प्रार्थते द्विभेदः प्राणायुस्तकलसी अतिरिक्तः तत्ततदनावनादानस्वाभिस्व एतेऽण्वोको भवति प्राणसंयोगायाहरित।

Prajāpati brooded on the worlds. From them, thus brooded upon, there was revealed in his heart the threefold knowledge. He brooded on that and from it, thus brooded upon, there issued forth these syllables: Bhuh, Bhuvah and Svah.

ढार्मिकार्यानन्यानुपादनोऽहृदः संसारविद्याधृताहृद-अतिरिक्ताना एतातस्तिथिः स्मरणक्षत भूष्ण: स्वर्गितस्।

He brooded on them (the three syllables) and from them, thus brooded upon, there issued forth Om. As all leaves are held together by a midrib, so is all speech held together by Om (Brahman). ‘Om’ is all thus, yea, ‘OM’ is all this.

तत्तात्त्वकोऽधिभालोकवृत्त्यं अतिरिक्तः संसारविद्याधृताहृद-अतिरिक्ताना एतेऽण्वोको भवति।

A person who is seen within the eye, that’s the Ātman (Soul, Self). The Ātman is that the immortal one, the fearless one, the Brahman. The Upaniṣad asserts in verses 4.15.2 and 4.15.3 that the Ātman is that the “stronghold of love”, the leader of love and affection which is assembles and unites all that inspires love. Those people who find and realize the Ātman, find and realize the Brahman, states the text.

एवं द एवं वामनीर्ष हि स्वरीणि सामान्य नर्ति स्वरीणि सामान्य नर्ति एवं एवं

f) The noblest and the best

The fifth chapter of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad opens with the declaration, ‘Om’. He who knows what is the oldest and greatest becomes himself the oldest and greatest. The Prāṇa, indeed, is the oldest and the greatest.

अतिरिक्तः संसारविद्याधृताहृद-अतिरिक्ताना एतेऽण्वोको भवति।

Means that Indeed, he who knows the noblest and the best, becomes the noblest and also the best.

g) Oneness in the world, the immanent reality and of Man

The Chāndogya Upaniṣad in volume 6.9, states that each one the souls are interconnected and one. The inmost essence of all beings are same, the full world is One Truth, One Reality, One Soul.
Living beings are like rivers that arise in the mountains, states the *Upaniṣad*, some rivers flow to the east and a few to the west, yet they end in an ocean, become the ocean itself, and realize they are not different but are same, and thus realize their Oneness.

Uddālaka states in volume 6.10 of the *Upaniṣad*, that there comes a time when all human beings and all creatures know not, “I am this one, I’m that one”, but realize that they’re One Truth, One Reality, and also the whole world is one Ātman. Living beings are like trees, asserts the *Upaniṣad*, that bleeds when struck and injured, yet the tree lives on with its Soul as resplendent as before. The Ātman, that despite all the suffering inflicted on someone, makes him to square up again, live and rejoice at life. Body dies, life doesn’t.

The soul and body are like salt and water, states the *Upaniṣad* in volume 6.13. Salt dissolves in water, it’s everywhere within the water, it can’t be seen, yet it is there and exists forever regardless of what one does to the water. The Sat is forever, and this *Sat* is that, the soul, the essence, it exists, it is true, asserts the text.

Final thoughts

Much of the identical content within the Chāndogya Upaniṣad is additionally found within the “Bṛihadāranyaka Upaniṣad”, though not in poetic form. Most of the students believe that the text was composed before the beginning of Buddhism. In step with many philosophical principles outlined within the “Chāndogya Upaniṣad” are the yoga philosophy. In other words a great and an excellent Sage Patanjali said that, ‘Om’ is that the voice of God, chanting of OM which should be done in depth, understanding its significance and from that come introspection and disappearance of all obstacles.

Klaus Witz in his review of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad states that, “the opulence of its chapters is difficult to communicate: the foremost diverse aspects of the universe, life, mind and experience are developed into inner paths. Chapters VI-VII consists of Vidyās of great depth and profundity”. John Arapura states, “The Chāndogya Upaniṣad sets forth a profound philosophy of language as chant, in a way that expresses the centrality of the Self and its non-duality”. The great Philosopher ‘Arthur Schopenhauer’ admired and quoted from Chāndogya Upaniṣad, particularly in the phrase “Tat Tvam Asi”, which he would render in German as “Dies bis du”, and equates in English to “This art thou.” One important teaching of Chāndogya Upaniṣad according to Schopenhauer is that compassion sees past individuation, comprehending that each individual is merely a manifestation of one will; you are the world as a whole. Each and every living creature is understood, in this Chāndogya Upaniṣad inspired some fundamental doctrine of Hinduism, to be a manifestation of the same underlying nature, where there is a deep sense of interconnected in every person and every creature, and that singular nature renders each individual being identical to each other.

In Chāndogya Upaniṣad it is clearly notified that the concept of OM is considered in first Prapūthaka in first Khanda is the OM is called Udghita or Suman. In Mundakopanisad ‘OM’ is described as the Brahman. And also if we chant OM then it’s some scientific benefits like Mental Alertness, Reduces Negativity, Detoxifies body and Rejuvenating & Pacifying, Improved Pulmonary and Cardiovascular function, Environmental Awareness, Potential relief from Stress and Depression, Improve Concentration, Ensures Sound Sleep, Gives Strength to Spinal Cord and so on.

In the above discussion about the concept of ‘OM’ especially in Chāndogya Upaniṣad we found that, Meditation of ‘OM’ became a person fearlessness and immortality because by entering it, Gods became fearless and immortal. After some days may be some months or years any one can do anything without any fear because of his or her inner power which comes from by meditation of ‘OM’. Not only in Chāndogya Upaniṣad but also in many Upaniṣads like Praśnopaniṣad, Taṭṭīrīya Upaniṣad, Bṛihadāranyaka Upaniṣad etc. the concept and Significance of OM has described. And in the most popular scripture of Hinduism Srimad Bhagvat Gitā the concept of ‘OM’ or the Significance of ‘OM’ was clearly described by Lord Sri Krishna.

In Bhagvat Gitā, Sri Krishna states that; When a person controls his mind and knowing that the soul resides in forehead repeats the word Om and knowing it as representing Brahma, then thinking about Me his soul leaves the body and that person shall attain the supreme goal.

If you are looking at spiritual eye while chanting, at that time your eyesight will start improving. When the Mantra ‘OM’ is chanted in any group, then the effects are amplified and will produce immense positive vibrations which charge up entire vicinity. When you will chant ‘OM on a regular basis it will take you on a spiritual journey to greater happiness and positivity, but only if it is done in daily for a longer period of time. Mantras are not an overnight fix to your problems you must have patience and learn the correct techniques of chant. There is no right and wrong method when it comes to chanting; everyone can do it and everyone may sound a little different. Sometimes I will chant ‘Om’ a couple times and after practicing yoga. It helps me calm my mind and turn inward, remembering love we all have within us. So don’t be afraid to step out your comfort zone and try it too.
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