

OM: The mystical symbol OM is the most primeval of all mantras having its origins from before the foundations of the world, having given birth to all other mantra formulations. Its healing power cannot be underestimated, when meditated upon and experienced, both as struck and un-struck sound. The letter 'O' symbolises the smallest circumscribed zone of being as well as the largest, and by silently meditating on OM, we can imagine the vibrations reaching out to the edge of the known universe and beyond. This all inclusive mantra encompasses the vast regions of unformed space as well as all the stars, planets and material elements of the cosmos, represented by the consonant 'M'.

We are familiar with voiced sound, as the vibrating airwaves reach our ears yet in yoga cosmology there is such a thing as unvoiced sound, this is not unlike the wind blowing across a reed flute and producing clear unscripted notes, or blowing through different structures to produce varying harmonics. This analogy for free spirit represents the qualitative changes to free moving energy as it traverses the vastness of space.

These variations of tonal quality are felt rather than heard and represented by the vowels AEIUO, which represent clear unformed spirit, as there is no closure of the mouth when uttering the sounds. The consonants represent spirit individuating and manifesting, and just as the vowels or free spirit give life to the mantra, so the consonants give it form and structure.

The mantra 'OM' represents the voice of the eternal, as its vibratory tone traverses the whole of space, its nodal points, patterning and giving rise to the living dynamic world in which we live. This means that God as intelligence and power is closer than we think, as we are all of the body of God.

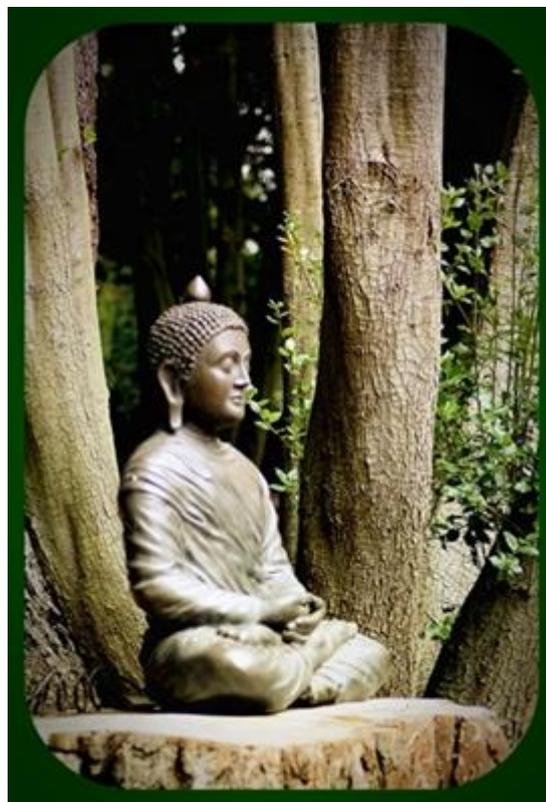
In ancient times, man was much closer to the world of spirit, as indicated in the books of the 'Old Testament', when there was more direct communication between God and His messengers, an ability now lost to us in the confusion of the vibratory turmoil of the modern world, Not unlike the loss of the stars in the night sky from the light pollution of the big cities.

OM the eternal word of God organises the whole of creation, into the conscious manifestation of the Will of God. Man in his ignorance closes his ears to the divine imperative and therefore has to learn many lessons, before returning, like the prodigal son, to his father's house.

The mantra OM, when practised as an internal humming, is both energising and healing, and the more subtle the internalisation of the sound, the better. We are all manifestations of the absolute sentient power of the universe, and everyone is unique, with their circumference in eternity. For Self-healing, feel at one with your won inner centre, and 'LET' the almost imperceptible vibrations of the eternal OM guide you back to the original pattern of your being.

Integral to, and beyond all the forms of creation, is the Will of God, which arises from a profound stillness in which there is neither past nor future, and yet within which lies all the possibilities for mankind. To experience the hidden potential that lies within, "LET" the bow of the sacred "OM" (*Mundaka Upanishad*) carry you beyond the surface waves of the ocean of life, into the eternal presence of the Omnipresent, Omniscient, Omnipotent.

For the Yoga student, who lives in the world and has to cope with the activities of everyday life, the OM mantra is the guide and vehicle to carry them briefly into the refreshing stillness of the eternal, then safely return them, re-energised, with the promise of eternal life, able to face the world anew.



The Breath of Life: We are all spirit eaters in that matter which is a modification of power and power is spirit. This power of life is called by the Yogi, “Prana”, and defined by Swami Vivekananda as the infinite manifesting power of the Universe. In its free running form, Prana is Ananda, the blissful free running energy, that serpent like rises and falls, as it traverses the whole of space.

It is the rise and fall of this pulse of life that stimulates each breath, and by attuning and harmonising each breath to its undulating rhythm, is to energise, refine and bring peace to body and mind. This life giving breath is experienced by the Yogi in the still space between each breath, in which the silent voice of spirit can be sensed and heard. It is the silent voice of spirit that gives form to the whole of creation and is known to the Yogi as Prajna, that is the wisdom that posits and guides all living things.

The Yogi works to achieve Union with the intelligence that has generated all life, and acknowledged by Jesus, is the creator or Father of all, (“I and my Father are one”). To achieve this Union, we are advised by Patanjali (popularly referred to as the Father of Yoga), to follow a developmental process that starts with ethical principles, and then taking a step at a time until Samadhi is attained; that is meditative union with the absolute.

Purity of heart is essential when embarking on the path which is Yoga, hence is required a thorough understanding of the Yamas and Niyamas, the ethical principles of Yoga. Purity of heart is to Will one thing, and distractions along the way are less than helpful.

For most people their first introduction to Yoga is exercise with Postures, with some relaxation and a little meditation. Asana were originally seated Postures for Meditation and these gradually developed into a series of Postures for health. These Postures or gestures (Mudra), focussed on the spirit of life through such forms as the Tree, Cobra, Lion etc., until we arrive at the variety of Postures that we have today. There are still a few discerning Yoga teachers who are aware that the Postures are only a step along the way toward spiritual transformation, and teach Yoga as a means of gathering together the scattered energies within the body, by co-ordinating Mind, Feeling and Will.

An essential link with the body is the breath, as it conveys more than oxygen to the lungs and is a vehicle for spirit. The breath and the emotions are closely linked and to calm the breath is to calm the emotions. The energy of the breath under the direction of the mind and when controlled by the Will, can

guide energy to areas in the body where it is needed. Intuition is tuition from the inside, and in time, the yogi learns to be guided by this wisdom.

There is revelation in stillness and the yogi, by learning the art of inner stillness, discovers the source from which the energy patterns for life arise. This level of awareness requires a degree of sensitivity and inner quiet that is heart centred. Meditative breathing exercises give rise to an awareness that is fundamental to each breath. It is at this level that Prajna, the wisdom of the breath becomes operative and guides the in-flowing and out-flowing breath.

This is when the intelligence of life becomes operative, with no sense of urgency, the breath becoming slow and peaceful, and retention when it occurs, a natural intermission during which the transformative power of the breath can be experienced and enjoyed.

It is this awakening to the power of spirit and the inner light of intelligence that releases the Genii from the bottle. This commenced with the Yamas and Niyamas or Governing Concepts of Yoga, providing the sure foundation for the work ahead, followed by Asana as an aid toward Spiritual integration, then pranayama as the health giving and refining Breath of Life.

There arrives a point in the development of the Yoga students, in which the Guru or Yoga Teacher no longer exists on the outside, but is discovered within, and this is when the true understanding of Pratyahara or Sense Withdrawal arises. No longer is trust placed in the time worn responses to life's situations, and there is a new and emerging consciousness, which sees the world in a new light and makes all things new. This important stage in the work is further clarified in a book written by Eugene Halliday, "Reflexive Self Consciousness", (contact Tan y Garth Hall, Study and Meditation Centre, N. Wales: www.hermeneutic.co.uk).

According to Patanjali's Eight Limbs of Yoga, the next step after Pratyahara and the establishing of a centre within one's Self is Concentration, when mind is trained to focus on a subject for meditation. Meditation is essentially meditation between the object of meditation and one's inmost Self, in which there is not only full exercise of thought during meditation, but a point reached which transcends thought and from which arises an intuitive awareness far greater than can be arrived at with mind alone.

Yoga works to restore the original Unity between Man and God, as man has been the arbiter of his own downfall, by choosing worldly considerations, rather than responding to the prompting of inmost spirit.

All matter exists with an infinite field of Sentient Power and we read the Chandogya Upanishad (7:6), of the boy who split the fruit and seed of the Banyan tree, only to discover nothing. Then his father spoke to him: 'My son, from the very essence in the seed which you cannot see comes in truth this vast Banyan tree. Believe, my son, an invisible and subtle essence is the spirit of the whole universe. That is Reality. That is Atman. THOU ART THAT!'

With self re-cognition arises the ability to guide one's life from within. From ancient times light has been represented of Consciousness and it is within the light of consciousness that the yoga is able to heal his own life and move forward with certainty and clarity.

The essence of the life breath is very subtle therefore meditation on the breath and quietening the breath is important. With inner stillness the light of Consciousness can be extended to every part of the body and just as a star sends its light throughout space, so can the light of healing be directed world-wide to all nations and help heal the planet.

Yoga is holistic in that it works to discover the link factors between all levels of existence both subtle and manifest. We have a great deal to learn from each other and it is working with likeminded and spiritually motivated people that gives purpose to life. Life does not end with the limits of the physical body and death is simply a door from one level of reality to another. We are surrounded by energy fields and I am reminded of a friend who kept an acorn in his pocket, as the acorn is within the field of the oak tree and it reminded him of its strength. Meditation is the principal means by which we can discover the unity that binds us all together and there is no one method, whether meditating on the breath, sitting with your back to a tree, or back-to-back with a friend, or meditating in a group and experiencing the moment when thoughts subside, like many ripples on a lake until only the unifying stillness remains.

