

1. OMKAR

OMKAR IS THE BEST PRANAYAMA

We start our practice of Yoga by doing prayer 'Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih !'

First of all we do prolonged pronunciation of Pranav Omkar for three times. Then we speak very well known and old Mantra "Om Saha Navavatu..." But before doing this we explain the purpose of doing Omkar. People carry a wrong impression that we do propaganda of Hindu religion. Indeed we do Prachar of Manavdharma (humanity). It is the duty of the Yoga teacher to explain everything regarding the education given in the Ashram and its purpose.

The prime necessity of the child the moment it enters the world is its breath, not even its own parents. Omkar is our first Pranayama. Generally we breathe in for 12 to 18 times in a minute in a comfortable sitting position. There is a saying that we breathe for twelve times in a sitting position, for eighteen times during walking, for forty times while running and for seventy two times during anger. But on an average we take breath for fifteen times every minute. So it is one breath for every four seconds.

We breathe in and out in these four seconds. Can we hold our breath during this period ? God knows how it is possible but yet we can definitely do it. We do Omkar

for four times in a minute. So the pronunciation of one Omkar takes fifteen seconds.

It will be excellent if we practise Omkar for five minutes to start with and gradually increase it to twenty minutes in the morning after waking up. Because during each Omkar we get extra oxygen for eleven seconds in comparison to routine breathing; so within five minutes we can get extra oxygen for 220 seconds. If we practise prolonged pronunciation of Omkar for three times in a day in the morning, afternoon and evening (each for fifteen minutes) we can get extra oxygen for 33 minutes in a day.

The purification of blood occurs by oxygen. The brightness of the eyes, beauty of the face, the shining of the skin, hearing and breathing capacity, speech, digestion power as well as our nervous system will function systematically. Our liver, kidneys, pancreas, intestine, adrenal glands, spleen, bladder, the vital organs like cerebrum, cerebellum, pituitary gland, heart, lungs etc. can function systematically and healthily due to this oxygen. The blood gets purified in the lungs. So the only key of good health, long life and balanced life is the regular practice of Omkar.

The control of our blood pressure, emotions, and the cooling down of anger is possible by regular and life-long practice of Omkar.

**“Omkaram Bindu Samyuktam Nityam Dhyayanti Yoginah
Kamadam Mokshadam Chaiva Omkaraya Namah”**

The Yogis regularly practise Omkar with Bindu. Bindu means the moon like curve in the upper part of the letter OM. There is a spiritual reason. It is said that there is an existence and leadership of the worlds – Bhuvah, Swaha, Maha, Jana, Tapa, and the will, deed and knowledge power or Brahmaa, Vishnu and Mahesh in Omkar. Yamadharma says to Nachiketa in Kathopanishada, ‘Trinachiketas Tribhihi Retya Sandhihi Trikarma Kruta Tarati Janma Mrityuhu.’

‘O Nachiketa, make connection of all three and you will be free from birth and death.’

There are three different places for the origin of the sound ‘A’, ‘U’, and ‘M’ when we pronounce Om and we have to join them. According to Panini, ‘Akuh Visarjaniyanam Kanth’. It means the origin of ‘A’ is from throat. But stop the reading for sometime. Sit in a cross leg posture. Now keep your right hand on the abdomen. Do the prolonged pronunciation of Omkar for once. See what has happened to the abdomen. The abdominal wall moves in till the pronunciation of Om continues and it moves out as soon as it is completed. What does it mean? The origin of ‘A’ is from navel and not the throat. ‘U’ originates from the throat and ‘M’ is from the nose. This way by doing Omkar, the abdomen connects both throat and nose. The navel is the area of digestion and excretion of urine and stool. There are thyroid and parathyroid glands in the throat. The nasal part of the pronunciation has effect on the head. Therefore Omkar does the reawakening of the cerebrum and cerebellum, which are the head quarters of our nervous system.

After having this much understanding, do Omkar again and practise Mulabandha simultaneously. Mulabandha means contraction and pulling in of the muscles surrounding anal canal. During second or third Omkar try to push the same muscles outwards which will not be possible. This is very scientific. If it is practised systematically and scientifically a new door will open in the life. Life is not easy. There are many ups and downs as well as good and bad experiences like spring and autumn during the journey of life. But it is an art to balance life during these difficulties. It is Yoga, which enables you to do it. The regular practice of Omkar in the morning, afternoon and evening highly increases the breathing capacity, circulatory capacity, digestion power, functioning capacity of excretory system and nervous system.

The newer vitality, pleasure, freshness and enthusi-

asm are the results of the practice of Omkar. But question may arise, will there be any problem ? But Shri Krishna has given the answer,

**“Nehabhikramanashosti Pratyavayo Na Vidyate,
Swalpamapyasya Dharmasya Trayate Mahato Bhayat.”**

(Geeta 2:40)

There is no harm (Pratyavayo Na Vidyate), if we put in practice even the little part of the knowledge (Swalpamapi Dharmasya), it protects us from a great danger (Trayate Mahato Bhayat). Hence the Omkar should be practised everyday.

The habit formation depends upon us. Make a new habit. Go to the washroom after waking up. Wash the face and sit in the room to practise Omkar where nobody else is present so that others don't get disturbed. It will be good if everyone young as well as the elderly start doing it. By learning Omkar, one's intelligence and psychological power improve. They develop patience to handle bad times in their life. It controls blood pressure. “Trayate Mahato Bhayat.” They are protected from a great danger.

PRACTISE OMKAR REGULARLY

Immediately after birth of a child its first pronunciation is 'A', then 'U' and after that 'Mammam'. Therefore Shri Krishna says in Geeta, “Aksharanam Akaarosmi”. I am 'A' among the letters. The saints sing that,

**“Pratham Nam Omkar Payo Nahi Koi Par
Tu Hai Adi Tu Anadi, Tu Eka Brahmakar,
Pratham Nam Omkar”**

The first name is Omkar, nobody could understand its greatness. You are since beginning and original in the world as well as you are without beginning. You are Brahma. At the time of child birth the graph of the brain is taken. It is known as EEG of the brain as there is ECG

for the heart. It shows theta waves. The seekers who practise Omkar regularly in the morning, afternoon and evening show the theta waves in their EEG which report that their minds are peaceful. Their minds are not wavering. Their intellect is stable and never faulty. Their hearts are clean. There is no wickedness in their lives. There is no dirty thought in their minds. They believe that living beings and nonliving things in this world are the manifestation of Rama.

**“Adveshta Sarva Bhutanam Maitrah Karuna Eva Cha,
Nirmamo Nirahankarah Samaduhkhasukhah Kshami”**

(Geeta : 12:13)

Their lives are free from malice but full of compassion and friendliness for the universe. They are free from infatuation and ego. They have an equality in life. They always live satisfying Yogic life. Their soul is of firm determination because they have fully offered their minds and intellect to God. People who are in the shelter of Omkar (Pranava) Sadhana are free from joy, fear, anger or agitation. They are proficient and expert but they don't have any expectation of anything from anybody in this world. They complete their work in the best way whenever they are given any kind of work. They don't have any habit of pretending or showing their abilities. They are free from happiness, attachment and malice. They are ever cheerful. In their minds friends and enemies are equal. There is no difference in honour and insult for them. They are free from the dualities of winter and summer, happiness and sadness. They can maintain equanimity in defamation and praise. The biggest of all wealth they have is satisfaction and internal joy.

Which is the other precious capital to live for a man ? Can you trust the people who can change their side anytime for any reason ? People who praise you today may defame you tomorrow. Such people become unhappy and make others unhappy too. Ignorant people are empty and dry from inside.

Omkar enlightens the inner self.

**‘Na Tatra Suryo Bhati Na Chandra Tarakam
Nema Vidyuto Bhanti Kutoyamagnih,
Tameva Bhantam Anubhati Sarvam,
Tasya Bhasa Sarvamidam Vibhati.’**

Those who have maintained regular practice of Omkar attain enlightenment. No outer light can enter such enlightened soul.

OMKAR SADHANA IS THE PRANA OF SPIRITUAL SADHANA :

IMPORTANCE OF OMKAR IN DHAMMAPADA.

Human life is not a straight line. There are ups and downs; there is spring and autumn. As there is spring, autumn will also be there! Omkar is the magical medicine for the life. Our lives with hidden fire cause trouble for ourselves only. Therefore Dhammapada says,

**“Attana Va Katam Papam Attajam Attasambhavam
Abhimanthati Dummegham Vajiram Va Mhamayam Manim,
Atmanaiva Krutam Papam Atmajamatmasambhavam
Durmedhasam Hi Mathnati Vajramivashmano Manim.”**

(Dhammapada Prasada, 2:7:35:161)

As the weapon made from the stone cuts the stone itself, the sin, which is done or originated from one's own heart, destroys that wicked person.

**“Atta Hi Attano Natho Ko Hi Natho Paro Siya,
Attana Hi Sudantena Natham Labhati Dullabham,
Atma Syadatmano Nathah Ko Hi Nathah Paro Bhavet,
Atmana Hi Sudantena Nathamapnati Durlabham.”**

(Dhammapada, 2:7:36:160)

The man is his own master. It is said in Geeta, ‘Uddharet Atmanatmanam... Atmaiva Hyatmano Bandhur Atmaiva Ripuratmanah.’

Who else could be his master? The person, who controls own self properly, achieves the lordship, which is difficult to

obtain.

Dhammapada says further,

**“Yo Sahassam Sahassena Sangame Manuse Jine’
Ekam Cha Jeyyamattaanam Sa Ve Sangamajuttamo.**

(Dhammapada Prasada, 2:7:38:33)

The person who wins over own self is a greater battle winner than one who wins against thousands of fighters in the battle.

The path for this achievement has been explored here :

**“Fandanam Chapalam Chittam Durakkham Dunnivarayam,
Ujum Karoti Medhavi Usukaro Va Tejanam**

(Dhammapada Prasada, 2:7:38:33)

It is difficult to engage the active and unsteady mind at one place and to prevent it from wandering. As the skillful archer straightens the arrow, the practice of Omkar concentrates the mind and it makes it soft, simple and straight.

Dhammapada also says other nice teachings : “As the rain water cannot enter into the house from a well arranged roof, the thoughts of worldly pleasure don't enter the mind which is filled with good sentiments by the regular prolonged practice of Omkar.” It is because our mind is the first reason for the happiness and sorrows in our lives.

“Mana Eva Manushyanam Karanam Bandha Mokshayoho” Our own mind is the reason of freedom and attachment. Here the meaning of ‘Mana’ is Mana, Buddhi, Chitta and Ahamkar, that is intellect, inner mind and egoism. That person doesn't know righteousness whose mind is unstable. That person's intellect is not stable whose faith is disturbed. The mind wanders wherever it likes according to its will due to its unsteady nature. As the elephant driver controls the mad elephant by a hook, the practice of prolonged pronunciation of Pranava (Omkar) controls the mind.

Addictions and living modern licentious life are the

reasons for premature ageing. Unfortunately we are devoid of spirituality and lost in physicality. In such circumstances the teachings of Maharshi Patanjali are :

‘Sa tu dirghakala nairantarya satkarasevito dridha-bhumih’ One should do sincere efforts for a long time to achieve the target or to complete the aim. It is important as well as essential to have knowledge of basics of Yoga. It is not true if we mean Yoga as Yogasana only. Maharshi Patanjali has told in the beginning in Yogasutras :

“Yogaschittavritti nirodhah” - Yoga means to control the inclination of the mind.

Swami Vivekanandaji has explained this subject in a simple language in his lectures on Rajayoga. We have eyes but it can see only due to its connection with the center in the brain. The eyes will not see if this connection is cut down. The eyes are minor. The center of vision is in the brain. The same arrangements are there for the ear, nose, tongue, hands and legs. The control of external sensory organs is by the internal power and the mind is attached with it. The mind carries sensations to deeper centers. This way the mind is attached with the senses, the intellect is attached with the mind and ultimately all are attached with ego. They are called as ‘Antahakarana Chatushtaya’.

They all are collectively known as mind. The wave in the mind is just like a whirlpool in the water. One can see the image in the clean and stable water but not in the disturbed and unsteady water. But all these conditions are regularized by the regular, long time practice of Pranava-Omkar. The blood moves from below upwards during Omkar and due to that, waves are produced in the cerebral fluid which circulates around the brain and the centers become powerful. This is like the feelings, which we have by the massage on the exhausted body, followed by taking shower. What freshness we feel ! The blood circulation has increased, so all the joints are lubricated. The working capacity of the

cycle, motor and machines increases after the lubrication. The same way the brightness, intelligence and light appear in our system. So the practice of Omkar calms down the unsteadiness of the mind. There are different conditions of the mind. They are Kshipta, Mudha, Vikshipta, Ekagra and Niruddha. Kshipta means unsteadiness. It manifests as happiness and unhappiness. Mudha means inert, motionless or without feelings or energy (as opposed to spiritual). During that condition the mind has the tendency to damage other people. The first condition is divine and another condition is evil. In Vikshipta condition there is struggle to achieve stability. When there is stability during concentration and if this stability remains for prolonged time one can enter in to Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. Therefore it is said that Yoga is to control the tendencies of the mind, which is made possible and easy by Omkar. But the practice of Pranava-Omkar should be done regularly for a long time with confidence, faith as well as with interest. It is also possible to calm down different tendencies like affliction, confusion, suspicion, and sleep and to improve memory and reasoning. Maharshi Patanjali says that, ‘Abhyasa vairagyabhyam Tannirodhaha’ everything is possible by practice and dispassion.

We have discussed that the origin of Omkar is from the navel and its vibrations go up towards the head gradually. In the language of Yoga it is said to be a journey from Manipur to Sahasrar (the names of the centers in our body) – lowest and highest. Patanjali Yoga Darshan says that ‘Naabhichakre Kayavyuhajnanam’ – the knowledge of the anatomy of the body is realized by concentrating on Naabhichakra. ‘Kanthakupe Kshutpipasa Nivrutih’ – by concentrating on the place of origin of ‘U’ while doing Omkar hunger disappears. ‘Murdhajyotishi Siddhadrashanam’ – by concentrating on the flame in the head one gets knowledge (Praatibhadvaa Sarvam). ‘Hridaye Chitta Samvita’ – it means one is able to know the ideas of other person’s mind. ‘Kurmanadyam

Sthairyam' – one becomes mentally and physically stable.

Ultimately Omkar is Nadabrahma. It is the sound. Sound is the first incarnation of Parabrahma.

In Chhandogya Upanishada, Omkar is known as Ekakshara or Udgitha.

So we call the practice of Pranava as Omkar Pranayama. The same way many Yoga teachers call it as Udgitha Pranayama.

Swami Sivanandaji Maharaja tells us to remember OM repeatedly. Soham, Om, Soham, Shivoham, Aham Brahmasmi or Anal Hakka (it is from the book Kurane Sharif and emphasises that man is not different from God.) etc. should be thought. Omkar Sadhana is the Prana of Adhyatmic Sadhana or spiritual practice.

BHRAMARI PRANAYAMA

Upanishadas say that the word OM is the bow, MIND is the arrow and BRAHMA is the target. The person, whose mind and thoughts are concentrated, can pierce it. Its continuity can convert and establish the person into Brahmic complexion.

The pronunciation of Bhramari Pranayama is like Omkar. The mouth remains open during practising Omkar while it remains closed during Bhramari. The voice that is produced during Bhramari is like the humming sound of the black bee. The practice of Bhramari Pranyama can be continued till the body becomes wet with perspiration. The deep inhalation should be done and then the voice like humming of the black bee is to be produced from throat. The voice comes out through the nose. As it happens during Omkar it produces high velocity waves in the cerebrospinal fluid. It gives all the benefits of Omkar. The longtime practice of Bhramari Pranayama gives good and deep sleep. People who have the problem of insomnia should practise Bhramari Pranayama by closing the ears by first index finger. The elbow should point downwards and it should not be horizontal. Do not touch the face. It can be

practised on empty stomach. But it is beneficial if it is practised before going to bed at night. We should think for others' benefits too.

The inner lining of the main bronchial tube has hair like structure, which is known as cilia. It shows to and fro movement and creates very slow current from below upwards. It removes mucus, inhaled particles and unwanted materials with breath.

The regular practice of Omkar and Bhramari increases the working capacity of this lining, so that the external unwanted material which has entered through the nose, as well as mucus can be removed. This mucus may interfere with the movement of air in the bronchial tubes. Therefore the practice of Omkar and Bhramari has been proved very helpful to the patients of bronchial asthma and bronchitis. The vibrations, which are produced during Omkar, can be experienced in the throat, head and forehead. It sweetens the voice, increases the memory, enlightens the thought power and brings precision in intelligence. It also relieves headache and sinusitis.

The practice of Omkar helps the seekers of meditation to concentrate the mind. There is a great contribution of Omkar to lead the mind on the spiritual path. The practice of Omkar destroys Tamasik thoughts and converts the Rajasik thoughts into Sattvik thoughts. In long term if the people living in all four directions on the earth start practising Omkar regularly, the mental conflicts can be eliminated. Selfishness will retire. Benevolence will be originated. The whole world can become a family. The contradiction will decrease and smooth conversation will be possible. The wind of pure selfless life will flow. Omkar is the highway of world peace and welfare. Let us practise Omkar and make our life successful.