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## How to chant Om mantra and its benefits

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### Abstract

In this Paper I would like to present importance of chanting OM mantra, its methods and benefits of chanting and also my own experience of chanting 'OM' Mantra. When I first started practicing yoga, I was relatively surprised at how easy and natural it felt to participate in chanting. I had seen it in Temples and heard of chanting within religious practices, but I'd never actually engaged in it until being in a yoga class. It's a mantra that, without a doubt, holds a strong and high vibration, as you can literally feel it! There are numerous mental, physical, and spiritual benefits to chanting Om, and even some scientific studies have proven the health benefits. According to the Vedas, typical sounds such as waves crashing against the shore, wind tossing leaves, etc., occur when they strike against each other, forming waves of air molecules that we then perceive as sound. However, the sound of Om evolves on its own, so it is seen as the sound of the universe, made up of all that it is. As Maharshi Yoganand put it, to chant Om is "to represent all of consciousness."

**Keywords:** Chant Om mantra, yoga

### Introduction

The Sanskrit word Om is pronounced like "Aum," and is said to represent the threefold division of time (waking state, dreaming state, and deep sleep). Om also represents God, Source or Universal Consciousness. It is considered the sound of creation, representing all that is in creation, and it allows for its practitioners to cultivate energy that flows upward through the chakras and then outward through the crown (Sahasrara Chakra). According to yogic texts and scriptures of Hinduism and Buddhism, Om is also the mantra related to the third eye chakra, as chanting Om can help to cleanse and balance your third eye (Ajna Chakra). Om also relates to the crown chakra (Sahasrara Chakra), which represents one's connection to Source.

The Om Mantra or "AUM" is the highest sacred symbol in Hinduism.  
It is finite as well as infinite. It contains everything from Vedas.  
AUM is the representation of the Hindu trinity Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh.

This single word produces the sound and vibration which allows you to feel at one with the universe.  
It is considered so divine in Hinduism that it is placed before and after every other Mantra.

**OM symbolizes deep realities:** OM Mantra itself is not a mere human invention, going along with particular cultures or groups. Rather, the OM Mantra (or AUM Mantra) is a symbol of deep realities that already exist. For example, the deep vibration quality is definitely experienced by the mystic traveller, whether or not one has ever heard of the OM mantra as such. The levels of gross (A), subtle (U), and causal (M), and the states of waking (A), dreaming (U), and deep sleep (M) are definitely there, regardless of the symbolism captured in the mantra when stated as AUM Mantra. It is these realities that are most useful in our spiritual practices.

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## OM Mantra and different Methods of Practice

### 1. Pulsing Repetition

**Use a speed that is natural and comfortable:** There are many rhythms in the body and mind, both gross and subtle. Imagine the sound of OM, rising and falling, at whatever speed is comfortable and natural. It may be very fast, several cycles per second. Or it may be slower, several seconds for each cycling of OM Mantra. Or it might become extremely slow, with the mmmmm... sound continuing in the mind for much longer periods, but still pulsing at that slow rate.

Imagine it somewhat like one of these vibrations:

- OMmmOMmmOMmm...
- OMmmmmOMmmmmOMmmmm...
- OMmmmmmmmmOMmmmmmmmmOMmmmmmmmm...

**Meditation time and daily life:** This kind of awareness of the OM mantra can be used both at meditation time and during daily life. The OM mantra is allowed to be somewhat of a constant companion. It brings a centering, balancing quality to daily life. This does not mean being in a dull, lethargic state. Rather, done well, it brings clarity of mind and a greater ability to be in the world, and selflessly serving others.

**Breaking habit patterns:** This is not intended as a blocking mechanism to prevent dealing with one's thought process or with the challenges of life. It is not a method of escapism. However, it definitely can have the effect of bringing focus to the mind, which can break a pattern of disturbing or distracting thoughts coming from the noisy or chattering mind. In this way, one has a greater openness to being aware of positive thoughts and spiritual realities that are always there.

### 2. with the Flow of Breath

**One method:** Imagine the sound of OM Mantra internally, in the mind only, making no external sound. Allow the mantra to flow with the breath. Repeat like this:

- Exhale: "OMmmmmmmmm..." Inhale: "OMmmmmmmmm..."
- Exhale: "OMmmmmmmmm..." Inhale: "OMmmmmmmmm..."
- Exhale: "OMmmmmmmmm..." Inhale: "OMmmmmmmmm..."

**Another method:** Alternatively, imagine the OM mantra only on exhalation, if that feels more comfortable:

- Exhale: "OMmmmmmmmm..." Inhale: "(silence)"
- Exhale: "OMmmmmmmmm..." Inhale: "(silence)"
- Exhale: "OMmmmmmmmm..." Inhale: "(silence)"

**Mind, breath, and mantra in unison:** In this practice, you come to experience the mind, breath, and mantra flowing in unison. This synchronization has a beautiful effect on meditation. Simply allow the OM Mantra to come and go with each inhalation and exhalation. Allow there to be no gap, no space, no pause between inhalation and exhalation, or

between exhalation and inhalation.

**The speed naturally slows:** As you gently allow the OM mantra to flow with the breath, the mind becomes calm. When the mind becomes calm, the body relaxes, and the breath becomes even soother and slower. That rate of speed at which the OM mantra is being repeated naturally slows down. It is not a matter of forcing the mantra to slow, but rather, this slowing comes quite naturally. Allow the mind to stay wide awake and alert, as the OM mantra and breath become naturally slower and slower. Meditation will deepen.

### 3. As the Object Called Universe

**Words have an object and meaning:** Words usually have a corresponding object and meaning to go with that word. If you hear the word *chair*, then the concept of *chair-ness* arises in your mind. Some *specific* chair will probably come to mind. It may be a wooden chair or a metal chair, for example. It may be large, small, or this or that style, and it may be new or old. So, three things are there: 1) the word *chair*, 2) the concept of *chair-ness*, and 3) a *specific* chair.

**The object that goes with OM is the universe:** When the word *OM* is heard, what is the concept and object that comes to mind? What is that *thing* that goes along with that word, *OM*? The *concept* that goes with OM is the one-ness or entirety of the universe. The *object* that goes with the word OM is the entire universe, as a single unit, including the gross, subtle, causal planes of reality, both manifest and unmanifest. It means that *whole*, as if it was one, single object. It is that infinitely huge *object*, which is the *object* that goes with the word *OM*.

**Awareness expands to contain the object:** With attention turned inward, and reflecting on *chair*, the concept and image of chair arises. In the same way, do the same thing with the word *OM*, and allow your awareness to expand, as if it could contain the whole universe to go with that word.

**Stretching the attention:** There is a feeling of stretching, as if the attention had to get bigger and bigger, to contain the whole, the same way as the chair has a back, a seat, and legs, yet is collectively a *chair*. Continue to repeat *OM*, and continue to expand, so as to allow your attention to contain the whole of the object called *OM*.

### 4. As Sound Vibration of the Universe

**The subtle sound is always there:** A vibration exists, underneath all of the grosser aspects of being, like a substratum. The subtle sound of OM Mantra is constantly there, and when heard in deep yoga meditation, sounds like a continuous vibration, ever sounding out mmmmmmm... At a deeper level, it is extremely loud and serene.

- **Emerging from OM:** The reality symbolized by OM Mantra is the ground vibration out of which all other vibrations, sounds and mantras *emerge*.
- **Receding into OM:** That vibration represented by OM Mantra is the substratum into which all those vibrations, sounds, and mantras *recede* when followed back to their source.

**Similar words:** Some say that this everlasting, all pervasive vibration of OM Mantra is also the source and intent of *Amen*, *Amin*, and *Shalom*. Some say that this sound is the Word of God.

**Silence from which OM emerges:** Eventually, this leads to a deep stillness and silence, which paradoxically, is experienced as the silence *from which* the sound of OM itself emerged. In the sections below, the silence is described as being the *fourth* state, beyond the three sounds of *A*, *U*, and *M*, which are contained in OM Mantra. However, in this practice, as you internally repeat the sound of OM, imagine that underlying vibration of the universe, as if it were coming from all places, and through all things.

**Listen to the vibration while remembering OM:** There is a sound that can relatively easily be heard in your ears that is more surface level, coming from the brain. Some people experience this as a buzzing or ringing sound. By listening closely, the mmmmmmm... sound can be heard, like the end of the OM mantra (Or you might hear it as eeeeeeee....) Listening to this vibration, with the awareness of OM is a good way to start with the vibration aspect of OM. Gradually, it will expand to deeper sound of the mantra. Listening in this way can be particularly enjoyable and insightful when recalling some of the other meanings of OM Mantra at the same time.

**Allowing thoughts to come and go:** While listening, it is best to gently allow other thought patterns to come into the field of attention, and then allow those thoughts to drift away. There is not really any intent of *doing* anything with these thoughts, either engaging them or pushing them away. In other words, the listening for OM is not used to suppress thoughts and emotions. Rather, attention is allowed to expand, but at the same time, non-attachment is learned by staying with the vibration, and letting go of the thought patterns. This is one way to gain access to the ability to be a neutral witness of the stream of thoughts in the mind, as is sometime described as being like watching leaves, sticks, and logs floating by in a river.

### 5. Through Gross, Subtle, and Causal Planes

**Remembering four planes with OM:** The OM mantra designates the whole of the universe, including the gross, subtle, and causal planes (realms, or levels) and the absolute reality of which they are a part. The explanation below can sound a bit technical, but this truly is a very practical use of the mantra, once you understand the meaning. It does require working with the mantra and the meaning, but then it becomes clearer and quite insightful.

**Four parts of OM:** The OM Mantra has four parts. First, is the sound like "Ah," then "Uuuu," then "Mmmm," and finally the silence beyond the mantra. Thus, the mantra is also written as AUM, as well as OM. The three sounds, and the silence have the following meanings:

1. The A sound refers to the *gross* world.
2. The U part refers to the *subtle* realm.
3. The M refers to the *causal* plane, out of which the gross and subtle emerge.
4. The Silence after these three, refers to the *absolute reality* that is the substratum for each of the other three realities.

**Start slowly in remembering the parts:** When using the mantra in this way, it is easiest to begin by remembering the mantra very slowly, allowing time to be aware of each of the

levels. Be aware of the four parts of the mantra separately (though forming a continuous sound), something like this:

*Aaaaaa Uuuuuu Mmmmm.....Silence.....*

1. When the "A" of OM mantra arises in the mind field, be aware of the *gross* world, including the objects of the world, the people, and your own physical being. Actually allow your attention to scan these aspects of the world. Do not get caught up in these objects; just be aware of this level of reality, and then let go of it, so as to go beyond.
2. When the "U" of OM mantra arises in the mind field, be aware, as best you can of the existence of the *subtle* or astral realm, including whatever objects you might intuit. As with the gross world, do not get caught up in these objects; just be aware of this level of reality, and then let go of it, so as to go beyond.
3. When the "M" of OM mantra arises in the mind field, be aware of the *causal*, the background stillness out of which the subtle and gross emerge, and into which they rest when not active. This can be difficult to imagine. It might help to think of it like being the canvas on which a picture is painted, or the screen on which a movie is projected.
4. When the Silence comes to the mind field, be aware of the *absolute reality* that permeates each of the other three layers. This fourth level of the mantra the absolute reality, is experienced in a shallow way at first, and only deepens with continued practice of contemplation and yoga meditation. (To better understand this, please refer to the paper on the Mahavakyas, the great contemplations. From that, you will see how the mantra and the contemplations go together.)

### 6. During Waking, Dreaming, and Deep Sleep

**Four states of consciousness:** The four parts of AUM also refer to the levels of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep, as well. The three sounds, and the silence have the following meanings:

1. The "A" sound refers to the *waking* state of consciousness.
2. The "U" part refers to the *dreaming* state of consciousness.
3. The "M" refers to the *deep sleep* state of consciousness.
4. The Silence after these three, refers to the *witness* consciousness that is observer of the other three states of consciousness.

The question can arise of why a spiritual seeker cares about the states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. It is said that the states of deep sleep, samadhi, and death are very close together, that they function at the same levels.

**Begin by remembering slowly:** As in the last practice, it is easiest to begin by remembering the mantra very slowly, allowing yourself time to be aware of each of the levels. With practice, it moves more quickly, as attention longs to rest in the silence.

1. When the "A" of OM mantra arises in the mind field, be aware of the *waking* state of consciousness. This does not mean thinking of the objects of the world, but rather, being mindful of your personal waking state, in relation to the world and your inner mental and emotional process. This simply means being aware of being awake.
2. When the "U" of OM mantra arises in the mind field, be aware of the *dreaming* state of consciousness. This does

not necessarily mean that you are experiencing those dreams, but that you are mindful of the dream state that is beneath the waking state.

3. When the "M" of OM mantra arises in the mind field, be aware of the *deep sleep* state of consciousness. Be aware of how the mind is in complete stillness in that state, where there is no active thought process, no images, no pictures, and no words. All of these have come to rest in a dormant, formless form.
4. When the Silence comes to the mind field, be aware of the consciousness that *permeates all* of the other three states of consciousness. In other words, consciousness flows through the waking state, the dreaming state, and even the deep sleep state (although there is no active content in deep sleep). Imagine that you can somehow be witness to waking, dreaming, and deep sleep from a higher vantage point that is aware of all.

**Focusing more inwardly:** When using the OM mantra in this way, notice how very personal the practice is, in that you are consciously cultivating awareness of the levels of your own internal states. It has an *in here* focus. By contrast, the use of OM with the levels of gross, subtle, causal, and absolute reality (above) has more of a focus *out there*. Ultimately, they merge into one awareness.

### 7. Experiencing Conscious, Unconscious, Subconscious Mind

**Levels of consciousness:** The four parts of AUM also refer to the levels of conscious, unconscious, and subconscious, as well as the consciousness that permeates these. (Note that some psychologies or systems use the words unconscious and subconscious in reverse, or use different terms. The meaning is what is important, not the particular choice of words). The three sounds, and the silence have the following meanings:

1. The "A" sound refers to the *conscious* level of mental functioning.
2. The "U" part refers to the *unconscious* level of mind.
3. The "M" refers to the *subconscious* level, the storage place of mind.
4. The Silence after these three, refers to the *pure consciousness*, which permeates the conscious, unconscious, and subconscious levels of awareness.

**Begin slowly:** Once again, it is easiest to begin by remembering the mantra very slowly. With practice, it moves

AUM	Name of level	States of Consciousness	Levels of Consciousness	Levels of Reality
A	Vaishvanara	Waking	Conscious	Gross
U	Taijasa	Dreaming	Unconscious	Subtle
M	Prajna	Deep Sleep	Subconscious	Causal
Silence	Turiya / Fourth	Turiya / Fourth	Consciousness / Self / Atman	Absolute Reality

### Benefits of Chanting Om

- **Helps Reduce Stress**

A study published in the International Journal of Yoga found that Om chanting reduced activity in the limbic system, which is the portion of the brain associated with stress, emotions, learning, and motivation. By monitoring brain activity using a functional MRI machine, researchers found that Om chanting relaxed the brain, and thus could reduce stress. Another study found that it could be used to treat depression.

- **Improves Concentration**

If you're familiar with meditation, I'm sure you can imagine

more quickly, as attention longs to rest in the silence.

1. When the "A" of OM mantra arises in the mind field, be aware of the *conscious* level of mind. The easiest way to do this, is to contrast conscious to the unconscious. There is the conscious that we are aware of here, in this external world, and there is the unconscious that is not seen in the deeper mind.
2. When the "U" of OM mantra arises in the mind field, be aware, as best you can, that your mind is presently functioning at an *unconscious* level as well. There is a tremendous amount of thinking process normally going on, that is out of view. This is what psychologists call primary process. It is going on behind the scenes, much like the microprocessor in a computer that is invisibly doing its work.
3. When the "M" of OM mantra arises in the mind field, be aware of the *latent* part of the mind, where all of the countless memories of people, objects, and day to day information is stored. It is there, like the information stored on a hard disk of a computer. Until it is needed, it just sits there in a latent, dormant form (It is actually in a formless form, somewhat like the data on the hard disk that is stored only as raw data, with no images as such). Be aware of that stillness that is the storage of your deep impressions and habit patterns.
4. When the Silence comes to the mind field, be aware of the consciousness that *permeates all* of the other three levels. In other words, consciousness flows through the unconscious functioning. Consciousness is there in the latent part of the mind, even though those objects are not awakened into action at the moment. Eventually, this Silence expands to being the awareness of the other three states. It is at this stage that one is called a Seer, in that all of the other levels of mind are witnessed from this vantage point.

### Integration of the Practices

**Three methods from same levels:** Gradually, one comes to see that the last three methods of using AUM (above) are manifestations of the same levels of being. Notice how the "A" represents, Waking, Conscious, and Gross levels. The "U" represents Dreaming, Unconscious, and Subtle levels. The "M" represents Deep Sleep, Subconscious and Causal. The Silence represents the fourth state, which is above or higher than the other three.

how chanting a mantra like Om could improve concentration. Yogic texts discuss the eight limbs or branches of yoga, and the sixth one is Dharana, the Sanskrit word for concentration. In practicing concentration, one can meditate and chant mantras in order to achieve maximum concentration. In this context, this means that the yogi is fully present and thus able to slow down the mind in order to either concentrate on one subject or to completely silence the mind.

- **Balance Your Emotions**

If you're ever feeling a little down or slightly off, chanting Om can help you connect to the Self and balance your

emotions. You may find that, as you chant, your mind starts to clear. This is because you're concentrating on one thing: the sound or vibration that Om gives off. Om holds the same frequency as that of everything in nature, allowing you to connect further and look inwards.

- **Improve Heart Health**

In the past, meditation has been proven to improve heart health. If one practices chanting Om multiple times in a row, this can be viewed as a form of meditation, especially because an integral part of chanting Om is the silence endured afterwards. A study performed in 2006 looked at the effects of transcendental meditation (TM), a form of meditation whereby the practitioner continuously repeats a mantra, and concluded that TM can improve blood pressure and cardiac autonomic nervous system tone and decrease risk of coronary heart disease.

- **Improve Mental Alertness**

A 2010 study looked into the effects chanting Om has on the mind. Researchers found that chanting Om resulted in a combination of both mental alertness and physiological rest. This makes sense given the fact that meditation and chanting can improve concentration!

- **Helps to Rid Yourself of Negativity**

Chanting Om creates a positive vibration in the body, which can then attract positivity into your life. Chanting Om allows you to focus on your third eye chakra and gaze inward, silencing your mind. If you find yourself engaging in negative self talk a lot or can't seem to stop thinking, try chanting Om a few times and see if that can help your mind slow down!

### **To Conclude**

In practicing Om chanting and above said (seven) methods, it is best to focus on one at a time, so as to capture its individual meaning and experience, eventually, the unity of the methods is experienced. During the practice one comes to experience that the all aspects of AUM are all manifestations of that one great vibration that is represented by OM mantra. There's no right or wrong method when it comes to chanting; everyone can do it and everyone may sound a little different! Sometimes I'll chant Om a few times while driving, or especially after practicing yoga. It helps to calm the mind and turn inward, and helps in remembering the love, gratitude and compassion what we all have within us as human beings. Hence, it is required to step out of your comfort zone to chant Om mantra to transcend all our inhibitions, negativity and find our true inner potential.

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