

Exploring Spiritual and Scientific dimensions of Om Chanting

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Abstract:

Om is considered to be the sound of the Universal Consciousness. Chanting Om aligns your small mind (you) to the bigger mind (the Universal Consciousness), creating more harmony in your life. Chanting Om creates vibrations throughout our body, elevating prana- the life force energy in the body. More energy translates into more connection with ourselves, more clarity of mind to make decisions, more awareness in our relationships. Essentially, a happier you. Chanting deepens the practice of yoga and elevates the consciousness. It helps to calm the mind. A calm mind is more responsive and acts out of its best potential. Om is the eternal sound. Om is the sound which is there in the Universe all the time. All the saints in the past, when they went deep into meditation, they just heard Om So, Om means many things, it means love, eternity, purity, peace. Om is made up of several dhatus: ah-ooh-ma. Just 'ah', has 19 meanings. You can derive some several thousand meanings from Om. All those meanings are attributed to Om, so Om is the seed of the whole creation. The best thing is that it is a complete vibration. 'Ah' - affects the lower part of the body, 'Ooh' - affects the middle part, 'Mm' - affects the upper part. The total prana is represented by one syllable Om. Before birth, we were part of that sound and after death we will merge with that sound; the sound of the spirit.

Aim and Objective: to explore the scientific and spiritual dimensions of Om chanting on the basis of spiritual texts and scientific researches.

Methodology- Research papers, articles, thesis related to scientific findings on Om chanting were reviewed through Google scholar, Pub med, Shodh ganga and for spiritual aspects Upanishads, bhagwad geeta and patanjali yog sutra and other ancient spiritual text were explored.

Conclusion- Chanting has the power to alter our state of mind. Chanting practitioners tend to be more at peace, composed, creative, and serene in their temperament. Further more practical research should be carried on impact of Om Chanting.

Keywords: Universal consciousness, Chanting, eternity, meditation, sound of spirit.

Introduction:

A sensation of vibration is experienced during audible 'OM' chanting. This has the potential for vagus nerve stimulation through its auricular branches and the effects on the brain thereof. The neurohemodynamic correlates of 'OM' chanting are yet to be explored (Kalyani et al., 2011).

In Indian scriptures the sacred syllable Om is the primordial sound from which all other sounds and creation emerge which signifies the Supreme Power. Autonomic and respiratory studies suggest that there is a combination of mental alertness with physiological rest during the practice of Om meditation. Evoked potentials studies suggest a decrease in sensory transmission time at the level of the auditory association cortices, along with recruitment of more neurons at mesencephalic-diencephalic levels. It is considered that a person, who realizes Om, merges with the Absolute. Scientific studies on Om suggest that the mental repetition of Om results in physiological alertness and increased sensitivity to sensory transmission (Kumar et al., 2010).

In Mandukya Upanishad, it has been described that Om is the syllable of the past, the present, and the future. From the original sound, Om, all things become manifest as its extension embodiments (Chinmayananda et al., 2015).

The analogy in Mundaka Upanishad describes that Om is the bow; the soul is the arrow; and Brahman is the target. The target is attained by an unerring man. One should become one with the target just like an arrow. This is to become one with the imperishable by eliminating the ideas of the body, ego, prana, hence being the self

with nothing less than union with the absolute (Śaṅkara, 1996).

Svetasvatara Upanishad describes that Om is like the fire which though potentially present in firewood is not seen until two sticks are rubbed against each other. The self is like that fire; it is realized by constant awareness of the sacred syllable Om. Let the body be the stick that is rubbed and Om be the stick that is rubbed against. Then the real nature is realized which is hidden within, just as fire in a sense hidden in the wood (Śaṅkara, 1996).

In Om meditation, the meditators first concentrate on a picture of Om and then mentally chant mantra Om effortlessly; this finally leads to a state devoid of effort and focusing, and is characterized by blissful awareness (Nagendra H.R. et al 1999).

The significant reduction of 14/05 mmHg in B.P and 6 beats of pulse rate was observed immediately after 5 min of Om chanting. Hence, Om chanting can also be added as supportive therapy with drugs in mild or moderate cases of HTN. Om chanting can be suggested as daily practice at least for 5 min for the better control of B.P along with regular medication (Arora & Dubey, 2018).

The practice of Om chanting in a traditional way can be used as one of the powerful means in calming down the mind, enhancing memory. We recommend further detailed studies for further supporting traditional Om chanting and to recommend it to include in our daily life style(Amin et al., 2016).

In Bhagvad Gita, it was described that Om means the Brahman or consciousness and who remembers it always, he attains the

supreme goal (Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, 1998).

Effective 'Om' chanting causes vibration sensation around the ears, which is transmitted through the auricular branch of the vagus nerve and stimulates vagal nerve. Vagal nerve stimulation is one of the most common treatments for depression (Kraus et al., 2007).

Chanting OM mantra results in stabilization of brain, removal of worldly thoughts and increase of energy. It means that concentrating on OM mantra and continuously doing it slowly shifts our attention. It is reflection of the most fundamental interlocking processes in our bodies...the harmony we play echoes the harmonic relationships of every vital system i.e. our heartbeat, our breathing, our brainwaves pulsing, our neuronal firing, our cells throbbing, our metabolic, enzymatic, and hormonal rhythms and our behaviour in our addictions and our habits (Gurjar et al., 2011).

The reduction in anxiety scores observed a study after Om chanting can be due to the vibrations produced due to Om chanting which affect vagus nerve shifting the autonomic balance toward the parasympathetic side. Om chanting also affects various parts of the nervous system including amygdala, hippocampus, and thalamus thus bringing about a change in autonomic functions resulting in the calmness of mind (Rankhambe & Pande, 2020).

**Spiritual Aspects of Om Chanting:
Origin, Concept and manifestation of
root sound and mixture of sounds:**

**A practical reference” Say ॐ without
using ॐ | is it possible?**

In Vaidic traditional knowledge Om is said to be Universal sound and It is the sound which is nearest used to address the Supreme Consciousness i.e. Brahman. Om is made of three sounds ‘A’ ‘U’ and ‘M’. These three sounds if you alter them, different things happening in the body. These three sounds are only sounds that

exist in the system naturally (Mead & Chatterji, 1991). These three sounds are capable of touching all the 72000 Nadis. Because every sound activates a certain dimension of your energy system. These are three fundamental processes in creation. So many things about you will change. These three sounds are only sounds that the human system is capable of. Other sounds are mixture of this. If you remove the tongue or just keep it still and not move it, you will see that only three sounds that you can alter are A, U and M. the only three sounds that you can make without the tongue. The tongue is being used to mix these three sounds and produce all the manifestation of sounds. Mixing these in permutation and combination you can produce millions of sounds. So these three sounds are known as the basic sound. They are the fundamental sounds of existence. The whole existence is reverberation. This modern science is vibration of energy. Where there is vibration there is bound to be a sound. Where there is sound there is bound to be a creation. So, all these sounds are manifestation of these three sounds. These three are root sounds. Like today we know that if you take a colour television, there are only three colour webs. Using these three colour webs we can produce every other colour. Similarly using these three sounds we can produce every other sound. A is the basic sound and it is not in one language. Across the world sound A is the basic sound. So these three sounds if you alter them, different things happening in the body. Carefully if you sit in a certain way and alter these three sounds, you will notice if you alter ‘A’ it carries reverberates right across the body. It starts just about three fourth of an inch below the navel and takes it right through the body. Because this is the only place in the body, there is energy body. This energy body comprises of 72000 Nadis. These 72000 Nadis meet only at one place that is just beneath the naval. So this is the main centre in the body. This is known as

Manipur in Yoga. This is the maintenance centre, even from your mother's womb, your maintenance pipe was connected right there. So this is the sound 'A'. if you say A It spreads across the body. These sounds have also been identified or described to different forms of divinity. These are three fundamental processes in creation. The sound A is concerned with maintenance. So people who are seeking well being start off with A. There are yogis who only sit and do MMM and nothing else because they are not interested in anything. So the Nadis themselves carry the reverberates. If you alter U the sound will spread in a certain way. If you alter M they will spread in a different way. These three sounds are capable of touching all 72000 Nadis. For every sound we can make conscious as to which part of the body touches. Because every sound activates a certain dimension of your energy system. So this sound together as a combination activates the whole system. Because these are the three fundamental sounds, all other sounds are manifestation. Even laboratory experiments have proven how these three sounds actually produce every other sound. Three instruments producing these three sounds, are there instruments that mix these sounds just like your tongue is doing. It produces every other sound. Sounds are creating not only emotions; they are also changing very chemistry of your system. So what kind of sound you are exposed to does various things to you or what kind of sound you are generating also does various things to you.

Technology of sound and you

Sound is an aspect of life that is close to us. We heard our mother's voice when we were growing in the womb, responded to the language of love when we were born and became more attentive to sounds as we grew up. We respond differently to different kinds of sound. Different sounds produce different responses in us. For instance, you will feel like dancing when you listen to rock or a peppy Bollywood

song, while light instrumental music will make you still and relax. Similarly, when harsh or abusive words are heard or spoken, they have a disturbing effect on our being, mental state and internal system. Imagine, if an abusive word can affect the system, what happens when we speak well? The Indian spiritual tradition of yoga and meditation has the best works of rishis – seers who mastered the mind and shared insights. Simple stuff, really. The mind responds to sounds that nurture and cultivate it and here is where chanting mantras come in.

Reference of Om from Yogic Scripture Patanjali Yog Sutra:

क्लेशकर्मविपाकाशैर्यपरामृष्टः पुरुषविशेष
ईश्वरः । (PYS 1.24)

In Patanjali Yog Sutra Maharshi Patanjali has given explanation of God. He says Ishwar is a special purush who is devoid of all misery, the result of all actions or desire (पतञ्जलि et al., 2017). The root cause of all the sorrow and misery is Avidya (lack of knowledge). There are five types of misery- Ignorance. Any person who does something from example people involved in crime and violence from their point of view they are right but it is because of Avidya i.e. lack of knowledge. Second form of misery is Asmita means Ego means I am the only genius or knowledgeable. Third form of misery is Raga that is being too much attached towards anything. Forth form of misery is jealousy towards anyone. Fifth form of misery is Abhinivesh meaning unnecessary fear towards anything. So Ishwar is devoid of all these misery. Ishwar is also devoid of all types of action, action which is done with the intention to get something in return or action done without expectation. Good action or bad action. Ishwar is also devoid of fruit of actions. Ishwar is also devoid of samskara or impressions.

तत्र निरतिशयंसर्वज्ञ बीजं। (PYS 1.25)

In that Ishwar the seed of all knowing, the highest form of knowledge or supreme knowledge is present. Knowledge is present in everyone but that is very limited on the other hand Ishwar has that supreme knowledge.

सः एषः पूर्वेषामपि गुरुः कालेनानवच्छेदात्।
(PYS 1.26)

Ishwar is beyond time and thus he is Guru of all the Guru's. All the Guru's who were born in the past, present and those who will be born in future are bound by time whereas Ishwar is beyond time. After certain period of time everyone has to leave this planet whereas Ishwar remains beyond time.

तस्य वाचकः प्रणवः। (PYS 1.27)

Om is the nearest sound which is used to address the Ishwar. When someone talks about Sun it represents light, similarly Om represents Ishwar.

तज्जपस्तदर्थभावनम्। (PYS 1.28)

The sound Om which represents Ishwar, our mind should be engaged constantly on that. We should understand the meaning and keep reciting Om. By reciting Om we can get over modulations of the mind.

ततः प्रत्यकचेतनाधिप्यन्तरायाभावश्च।
(PYS 1.29)

By recitation on Om, knowledge dawns into a seeker and he gets to know about true form of Ishwar and he gets over all the obstacles.

Reference of Om from Yogic Scripture
“Mandukyopanishad”(Chinmayananda et al., 2015)

ॐ इति एतत् अक्षरमिदम्
सर्वतस्योपव्याख्यानम् भूतम् भवत्
भविष्यत् इति सर्वो ंकारः एव च। यत्

त्रिकालातीतम् अन्यत तत् अपि ओ ंकार
एव। (१)

Verse-1: Om is the sound which represents god. This manifestation of entire creation is only reflection of God. Whatever has happened in the past, happening now and will be happening in future. Om is beyond the context of time. Om never changes in the context of time and space. The only thing which is beyond context of time and space and never changes is that Universal sound “om”.

जागरितस्थानो वैश्वानरो अकारः प्रथमा
मात्राप्तेरादिमत्त्वाद्वापनोति ह
वैसर्वानकामानदिश्च भवति य एवंवेद। (९)

Verse-9: Om the universal sound which represents God, the first syllable A, any name from this entire universe A is present in that. Shruti Says Akarovaisarva vaka meaning word A is present everywhere. In Geeta lord Krishna Says Aksharanamaakaroasmi (Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, 1998) In all the words I am the word A. In this entire universe God is present in every form. Any person who knows this truth about the Union between word A and God and worships it is bestowed by everything in abundance.

स्वप्नस्थानस्तेजस उकारो द्वितीया
मात्रोत्कर्षदूभयत्वाद्दोत्कर्षति ह
वैज्ञानसंतति समानश्च भवति नास्याब्रह्म
वित्कुलेभवति य एवं वेद। (१०)

Verse-10: Universal sound Om which represents God, the second word U is greater than A. Also word U is connected to word A and M. In the subtle body Lord Hiranyagarbh represents this form. Any person who understands Knowledge of Veda in this form and relationship between U and lord Hiranyagarbha gets and better knowledge of subtle consciousness form and progresses on the path of Knowledge tradition and propagates it. Also he learns

to maintain the equanimity in all circumstances.

सुषुप्तस्थानः प्राज्ञो मकारस्तृतीयामात्रा
मितेरपीतेरवा मिनोती ह वा
इदंसर्वमपीतिश्च भवति य एवं वेद। (११)

Verse-11: The Universal sound om, third word m. Meaning of third word m from it is to know and to merge into infinity. The one who understands this principle gets the vision to see the universal consciousness to see the divinity in everything.

Scientific Aspects of Om Chanting: Water Consciousness and its correlation with Mantra Chanting:

Dr. Masaru Emoto, the Japanese scientist who studied the scientific evidence of how the molecular structure in water transforms when it is exposed to human words, thoughts, sounds and intentions. Dr.

Emoto in his research demonstrated how water exposed to loving, benevolent, and compassionate human intention results in aesthetically pleasing physical molecular formations in the water while water exposed to fearful and discordant human intentions results in disconnected, disfigured, and “unpleasant” physical molecular formations. He did this through Magnetic Resonance Analysis technology and high-speed photographs. See the following water crystal photographs from Dr. Emoto’s work (Emoto, 2004). His research also showed us how polluted and toxic water, when exposed to to prayer and intention can be altered and restored to beautifully formed geometric crystals found in clean, healthy water. Each water crystal you see was exposed to the word it has written next to it prior to being photographed.

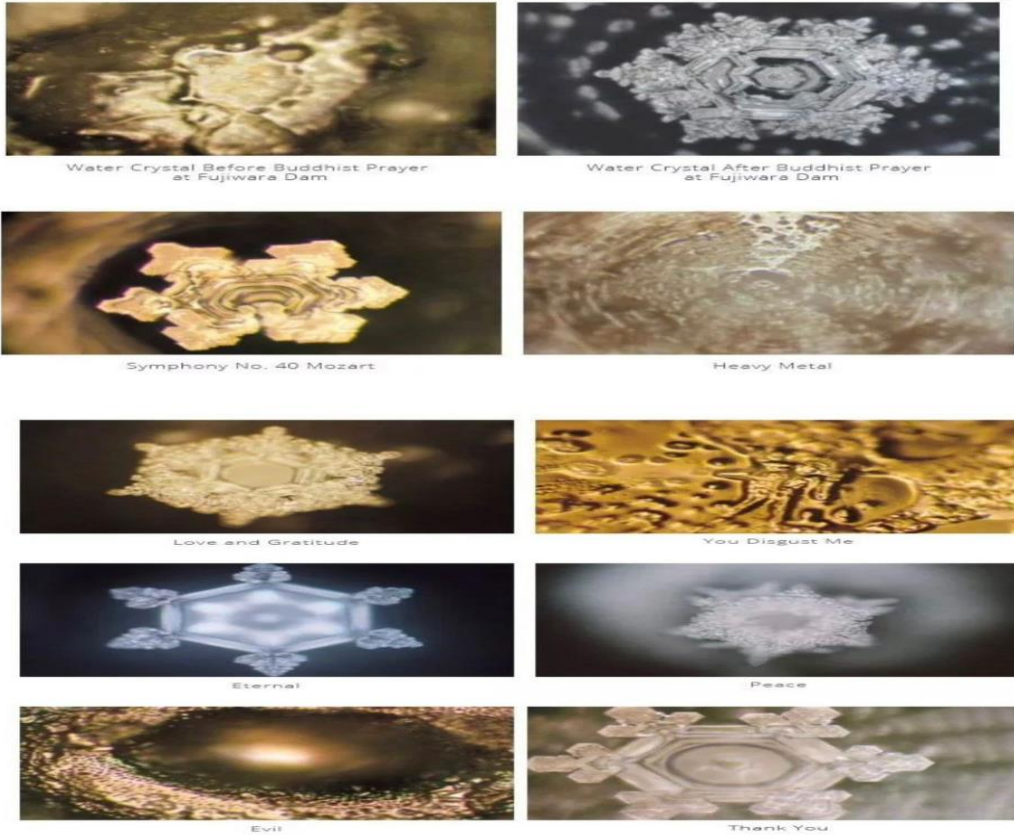


Figure: Water Crystals when exposed to different sound and emotions.

The Emoto music studies demonstrate how certain types of sound, like classical music, generate beautiful crystalline patterns, while heavy metal music, generate ugly and distorted crystalline formations. In the images below you see the crystalline formation resulting from water being exposed to Mozart's Symphony No. 40 and then in contrast what the water crystal image looks like after listening to heavy metal music. Dr. Masaru Emoto put Water as a Living Consciousness on the map for the scientific world. He showed us how water is an energy capable of more than we ever imagined. The power human thoughts, sounds and intentions has to strengthen and disempower is one of the greatest discoveries of our time.

Conclusion of Spiritual and Scientific Aspects of Chanting:

In our Vaidic tradition in Gurukul chanting has been integral part of studies, different rituals, Pujas, Vaidic Yagna's, performing Gayatri Sandhya every aspect includes chanting in it. Chanting has that ability to transform our consciousness. Gurukul students brilliant learning abilities and profound memorising abilities as one of the reason is chanting and recitation of Mantra's in daily routine. That brings brilliance in human being. Whatever our mind is focused that brings a permanent shift in our personality. That has been proven in modern science as well as human body consist of 70 percent of water element and Dr Emoto has demonstrated in his experiments practically the effect of sound on water. So, similarly chanting has

that impact on our consciousness. People who practice chanting in routine you will find them more peaceful, calm, composed, creative and serene by nature. Further more practical research should be carried on impact of Vaidic Chanting like Rudram Chanting, Gayatri chanting, Lalita Shahstranaam, Vishnu Sahastranaam, and chanting from Vaidic tradition and their impact on brain. Our Indian Vaidic tradition knowledge has rich science behind it. Only we need that broader vision to explore it practically. Om is the basis of creation and our origin and at the end we will merge into Om that supreme consciousness. As in Ishavashyopanishad it is said two senses which remains at the end is light and sound that's why in Hindu tradition there is a concept of recitation of mantra and vaidic scriptures. So that remains as a last impression and that merits goes to the next birth as well. The more a person meditates and does chanting becomes free from all the past impression, Karmas and Samskara's. Chanting must be practiced, promoted and propagated among all.

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