



As we saw in Part One of this study, Om (A-U-M) was chosen by the Sages of ancient times as a perfect formula for attaining God-Realization, a mantra of highly condensed philosophy. Meditating upon this formula implies focusing your mind sequentially upon A, U, M and the *ardha-matra* and reflecting upon the implications and subtle meaning of each of these aspects of Om.

In part One we explored the reflection upon A, U, and M. Now we have come to the final aspect of Om—the *ardha-matra*.

Ardha-Matra Aspect of Om

The fourth aspect of *Om* is the *ardha-matra*, a half-syllable that is represented by a *vindu* or point. It refers to the transcendental state beyond deep sleep, dream, waking and their positive counterparts of lower and higher *samadhi*. That state, wherein all these relative states of consciousness are transcended, is called *Turiya*, or the fourth state.

As we have seen in our previous study, in deep sleep the multiplicity of the world-process disappears. However, this temporary disappearance is not due to your realization of the fullness of the non-dual Self or *Brahman*, but to the fact that you are experiencing the absence of all knowledge of time and space. That state is called *avidya* (ignorance).

When you enter into dream you are experiencing three factors that Vedanta refers to as the “triad”—the dream subject, the objects of the world in which the subject finds himself, and the interacting experience between the subject and the objects through the mind and senses. All these three go to constitute the dream world, and all these three are unreal. The dream subject is unreal. The unreal you is involved in the unreal dream, experiencing pleasure and pain that are, rationally speaking, unreal. Although during dream you may have horrible experiences or very pleasant experiences, when you wake up all that

becomes nothing. For this reason, you will not let your mind become completely trapped in the dream state. You have an underlying inclination to wake up from it.

The same philosophical understanding must apply to the waking state. In waking state you again encounter the same triad—you as the subject, the world before you, and your interaction with that world through the mind and senses. Those perceptions you gather through your mind and senses become the fabric of your biography, your life story. Yet all the three aspects of the waking triad are unreal, just as they are in dream.

Your personality in the waking state is not absolute. In this very lifetime, it has undergone many changes and will continue to do so. You had a different personality in your last life, many personalities through many lives. Your interacting experience with the objects of the world—indeed, the world itself—is not solid reality. Therefore, you are unreal as an individual, you are operating in a world that is unreal, all your expectations of happiness are unreal, and your experiences of pleasure and pain are unreal. However, knowing this merely on an intellectual level gives you little comfort when you deal with difficult problems each day.

But this knowledge is necessary for leading your mind to Enlightenment, for promoting *vairagya* (dispassion). It gives you an inkling of the truth and a sense of inner joy and freedom to know that even though you find yourself cramped by practical realities, yet there is an inner dimension in which you are untouched by all this.

The state that transcends the three relative states of consciousness—sleep, dream and waking—is named *Turiya*, which means “the fourth.” That state is referred to as the fourth only because you are counting the relative states. It is in itself the Absolute Reality, the Self. That *Turiya* never changes. Waking, dream and deep sleep continue to come and go in a cyclical manner. *Turiya* is like a screen on which these three states are mere projections.

In a cinema show, projections create a world on the screen. Projections create the illusion of night, when everyone is sleeping. They create the illusion of dream-like experience—neither night nor day. And they create the illusion of day, when people are awake. But all that you experience on the screen is created by projections; nothing is real.

In the same way, all that you experience through sleep, dream and waking, as well as through a process of reincarnation, is in the realm of *Maya*, projections. And projections require a sustaining reality that is never affected. That sustaining reality is your Essential Self. To wake up from the world of projections, to discover “I am That” wherein the three states are transcended—that is called *Turiya*.

When you experience *Turiya* you realize nothing is real. Waking is not real, dream is not real, sleep is not real, the world of multiplicity is not real. If that is so, bondage is not real and Liberation is not real. You don’t talk of Liberation of the Self or *Brahman*. Liberation and bondage relate to the individual soul and the individual soul itself is unreal. Therefore, there is neither bondage nor Liberation.

However, this remarkable realization is experienced only through enlightened intellect. It is only upon waking up from a horrible dream that you realize there was no horror. While you are trapped in the dream world your experiences are very real to you. As long as the intellect has not been enlightened, even though you are in the state of *Turiya* all the time, your problems have not ended. You are trapped in a world, a dream within a dream. Only when you wake up from the long dream of the world-process through Enlightenment do you understand your true identity as *Turiya* Consciousness.

Thus, meditation on Om—A, U, M, and the *ardha matra*—leads the mind gradually to the higher levels of *samadhi* in which all sublime truths are revealed. In this meditation, one constantly reflects on his higher nature and affirms, “I am beyond the body, mind, senses, intellect, ego—even beyond

the vast realm of the unconscious. I am one with *Brahman*, the Absolute Self.”

Obviously, you should not expect to complete the entire process of this reflective meditation in one sitting. It may take some time even to become established in the “A” aspect. But even though you are not fully established at this level, you may go on trying the higher aspects of the reflection with the help of your feeling or *bhavana*. This is perfectly in order in *sadhana* (practice of spiritual discipline). Be patient and persistent and meditate on the formula of Om again and again. Gradually you will ascend the ladder of Vedantic wisdom in the proper way.

Meditation on Om in the Light of Kundalini Yoga

As a result of intense and profound meditation on the A-aspect of Om, you will gradually remove *karma granthi*, the involvement in karma that binds you to the physical body. That’s the first great obstacle or knot that is to be untied on the spiritual path in order to pave the way for subtler movement. In the language of Kundalini Yoga, this is the stage at which kundalini pierces the *Manipura Chakra* at the navel center and your spiritual journey has really begun.

As you advance in meditation on the U-aspect of Om, you begin to break *kama granthi*, the knot of subtle desires that exist in the unconscious and glue you to your astral body. This is the stage at which kundalini pierces the *Anahata Chakra* at the heart center. As you go on breaking that knot, Divine qualities (*daivi sampat*) develop: fearlessness, joyousness, serenity, equanimity of mind—all the great qualities that enable a human being to become a Saint.

As you continue your meditation on the M-aspect of Om, kundalini continues to move up from your heart to your throat, and then finally to the *Ajna Chakra* between the eyebrows. When the kundalini has pierced the *Ajna Chakra*, the

knot of *avidya* or ignorance is broken. There is intuitional knowledge.

As a result of all this, the kundalini moves up to the *Sahasrara Chakra*, the thousand-petalled lotus at the crown of the head, transcending the three knots of the heart: *karma* at the navel center, *kama* at the heart center, and *avidya* at the center between the eyebrows. Here there is full revelation of your identity with the Absolute. This is the highest fruit of meditation on the ardha-matra of Om.

Meditation on Om in the Light of Devi Puja or Worship of the Divine Mother

The insight presented above from Kundalini Yoga is drawn upon poetically in the nine days of Devi Puja or worship of the Divine Self in its Mother-aspect. To help an aspirant attain Self-realization, Devi or the Divine Mother tirelessly destroys all the obstacles on his or her path. In her aspect as Durga Devi, she destroys the gross obstacles (*mala* or impurities) that manifest in the physical plane. As Lakshmi Devi she destroys the subtle obstacles (*vikshepa* or distraction) that exist in the subconscious and unconscious mind. As Saraswati Devi she destroys the subtlest obstacle (*avidya* or ignorance)—the mystic veil obscuring the identity of the individual soul with the Universal Divinity.

As you meditate on the A-aspect of Om, mentally visualize Goddess Durga, who represents *kriya shakti*, the universal energy that operates in the physical world. Feel that you are becoming one with the Devi and together you are removing all sense of physical limitation within you. Feel that the Divine Hand of the Devi, manifesting at the *Manipura Chakra* at the navel center, is resolutely untying the knot of karma that binds you to the physical plane.

Next focus on the U-aspect of Om and mentally visualize Goddess Lakshmi, who represents *iccha shakti*, the universal mental energy. As you

feel increasing oneness with that Devi, feel her sublime power infusing your mind with spiritual strength and all Divine qualities. Feel your heart expand as the knot of subtle desires, which binds you to the astral plane, is lovingly broken by the Divine Mother.

Next focus on the M-aspect of Om and mentally visualize Goddess Saraswati, who represents *jnana shakti*, the energy of Divine wisdom, of Knowledge Absolute. Feel that Saraswati Devi, the giver of that Knowledge, is glowing radiantly at your *Ajna Chakra* between the eyebrows and that she is endowing you with the blazing light of intuition. Feel that Her divine Hand is shattering the illusion of the world-process with a single blow as the knot of *avidya* or ignorance is removed forever.

Now focus on the *ardha-matra* of Om and visualize the radiant Devi seated on the thousand-petalled lotus at the *Sahasrara Chakra* at the crown of your head. As your conditioned personality dissolves in her Divine Presence, you and the Devi become one in the bliss of *Turiya*.

Om Is Ideal for All Levels of Mantra Repetition and Meditation

Since ancient times Sages have exalted the profound science of mantra—repeating different names of the Divine Self. Mantras are formulas that link your soul with God. Om is the mother of all mantras. Most of the mantras begin with Om—such as *Om Sri Ramaya Namah*, *Om Namah Shivaya*, *Om Sri Krishnaya Namah*, *Om Namō Narayanaya*, *Om Sri Mahalakshmyai Namah*, *Om Mani Padme Hum*. All mantras are considered extensions of Om, which is the basic mantra and the highest mantra.

You may choose Om itself as your *mantra*, and as you repeat Om, feel the presence of the Divine Self enveloping you. This approach, however, requires more mental subtlety and an ability to enjoy abstraction. Otherwise, you may extend Om into a mantra such as *Om Namah Shivaya* and allow

your mind to enjoy the image and form of Shiva and all that Shiva stands for.

With Om you are invoking God according to your concept, understanding, faith—enjoying the Divine Presence in a way that is consistent with your personality and spiritual evolution. Thus, Om is used for *saguna upasana* (meditating on God as the epitome of all good qualities, with or without form) as well as *nirguna upasana* (meditating on God as transcending all human qualities, concepts, and forms while existing as the eternal and immutable Reality behind all these).

Om as the Basis for Nirguna Upasana



In *nirguna upasana* you are using Om for a reflective meditation—a meditation that is directed towards understanding “Who Am I?” Our reflection on the four aspects of Om (A, U, M and *ardha-matra*) is an example of such *upasana*. The fruit of *nirguna* meditation is the revelation that “I am not an individual personality. I am the Absolute Self”—that which has come down from ancient times in the biblical literature as God’s voice ringing in the ears of Moses: “I Am That Am I.” That “I am” is your target when you use Om.

In *nirguna nirakar* meditation, you meditate on God without qualities and without form. You come to that abstract understanding of God as the underlying Reality behind all, transcending all mental concepts, all names and forms. Upon such a God it seems trivial to superimpose any limited human concept of a quality. The human idea of compassion, for example, can in no way comprehend the mystic complexity of the all-compassionate Divinity. When you assert your identity with that transcendent Divinity or Self (*Brahman*) you are practicing *nirguna* meditation.

As you mentally repeat Om, reflect and meditate upon the following affirmations. When the meditation is intense, you may drop the repetition of Om and flow on with the profound feeling, experiencing increasing expansion of the Self.

Affirmations for Nirguna Meditation

I am Adwaita (non-dual) Brahman.....Om Om Om...
 I am Akhanda (indivisible) Brahman.....Om Om Om
 I am Akrata (non-doer).....Om Om Om
 I am Abhokta (non-enjoyer)...
 I am Asanga (without any association)...
 I am Nirguna (without attributes)...
 I am Nirlipta (without any entanglement)...
 I am Sat-Chit-Ananda (Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute)...
 I am Avyakta (non-manifest)...
 I am Ananta (endless)...
 I am Amrita (immortal Self)...
 I am Amala (taintless Self)...
 I am Satyam (true)...
 I am Shubham (all auspiciousness)...
 I am Sundaram (embodiment of beauty and harmony)
 I am Ashabda (without sound)...
 I am Asparasha (without the sense of touch)...
 I am Arupa (without sight and form)...
 I am Agandha (without smell)...
 I am Aprana (without the vital forces)...
 I am Amana (without the mind)...
 I am Atrindriya (the Reality that transcends the senses)
 I am Adrishya (the invisible self)...
 I am Kantam (the beloved Self)...
 I am Sampurna (the fullness of existence)...
 I am Sukha (the blissful Self)...
 I am Shantam (the peaceful Self)...
 I am Chaitanya (the pure consciousness)...
 I am Chidakasha (the ether of consciousness)...
 I am Sanmatra (Existence Absolute)...
 I am Chidanandarupa (of the form of consciousness and bliss)...
 I am Ananda (infinite bliss)...
 I am Nirmala (without impurities)...
 I am Nitya (the eternal Self)...
 I am Nirupadhika (without any limitation)...

Adopt some of these affirmations during the practice of meditation on Om. These powerful affirmations will promote the formation of *shubha samskaras*—the impressions of the perception of the Cosmic Self, or the impressions of the glorious expansions of the ego-transcending levels of consciousness. *Shubha samskaras* will destroy the *ashubha samskaras* (the impressions formed on the basis of ego-dominated consciousness). Thus, you will be led gradually to higher and loftier states of personality integration, and finally to the glorious goal of Self-realization.

Om As the Basis of Saguna Upasana



Many people find it easier or more delightful to practice *saguna* rather than *nirguna* meditation while mentally or vocally repeating Om. You can meditate on God as *saguna sakar*—God with good qualities and a form that enchants your mind. You may meditate upon your *Ishta Devata* (your chosen Deity such as Vishnu, Shiva, or Devi). Think of the Divine attributes of peace, bliss, compassion, beauty, infinite knowledge and power—all that the Divinity stands for in your awareness.

The Indian scriptures have generously brought out inspiring stories about Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Devi, and all gods and goddesses. In those texts the Vedic imagination is colorful and vivid. Not only does God speak to you, but he comes and dances before you, or sings, or plays a melody to delight your heart!

Therefore, as you mentally repeat Om, feel as if you have transported yourself to a sacred place far away from the world, a place where God is radiantly shining before you. Feel that your Deity is actually there with you and you are basking in the living presence of God.

The next level as you advance is *saguna nirakar*—God with wondrous qualities, but no form. You are thinking of God in an abstract way. At the same time, you are expecting that abstract God to give to you his grace, help you to bear your problems lightly, resolve your doubts, guide

you, lead you on to overcoming obstacles. That concept has been adopted in most major religions like Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, where God communicates with people but never appears in human form.

In all forms of *saguna* meditation, it is *bhavana* or feeling that is most important. Allow your imagination to expand and your heart to become magnanimous.

Try the following exercise in *saguna* meditation:

As you repeat Om mentally, form a picture of your Deity (Lord Krishna, Lord Shiva, Lord Rama, Lord Buddha, Lord Jesus, Divine Moses, or any religious ideal according to your faith) in the deeper part of your mind. You may focus your mind at the heart center.

Feel that a Divine temple grows within your heart, and in it, seated on a luminous throne, there exists the Divinity, the source of endless love, power, and wisdom. Feel that you are adoring the Divinity, and coming closer to his glorious presence. As you mentally repeat Om, reflect upon the glories of God and feel that you are entering into God, as a river enters into the ocean.

Feel that various Divine qualities—fearlessness, universal love, peace, bliss, wisdom, and dispassion—are flowing into your personality as an act of Divine Grace. Feel the sweetness of letting go the hold of the ego and relaxing in the infinite glory of God. Complete surrender to God leads one to the highest *samadhi* in no time.

Tatva on Om

Before you begin your meditation practice, you may keep a picture of the Sanskrit letter Om, and gaze at it, illumined by candle light. Gaze at it without winking. When your eyes are tired, close your eyes, then open them again. Gradually, you can develop steadiness of the eyes and mental concentration.

While gazing at Om, you may repeat Om mentally and feel its deeper implications along the lines of Jnana Yoga (the Yoga of wisdom) or Bhakti Yoga (the Yoga of devotion).

Om Is Ever new

Om is called *Pranava*, which literally means “ever new.” In the beginning of your practice of meditation on Om, you may erroneously think that you have understood all about it and have reached the limits of reflection and devotion. But as you advance, you realize that the boundaries of Om are limitless. Even the implications of the very first aspect—the A-aspect—are so profound that you will be amazed as you continue to practice reflection on this ancient formula for attaining Enlightenment.

Suppose you have repeated Om a hundred and eight times. If your repetition has been performed with proper sincerity and feeling, the one hundred and ninth Om will be new, different from the one before.

Om is the highest support in spiritual movement. As you learn the art of repeating Om, you gain immense mental strength. You realize that great obstacles move away from you in an amazing manner and the world becomes conducive to your advancement.

That mental strength endows your face, your personality with a special effulgence. Allowing your mind to think constantly of material things deprives you of a special glow, a glow that you cannot get from any cosmetic in this world. Meditation on Om restores that Divine luster.

Every meditative repetition of Om is a jewel of immense value. Let not the world distract you from your practice. Nothing that you are doing in the world is of much significance. But every moment that your mind has been involved in feeling the Presence of God will stand out and give your life meaning and purpose. If that is properly understood, then repetition of Om becomes a lamp in your hand, ever-shining, showing you the path leading to Enlightenment.