

Sūtra 27 तस्य वाचकः प्रणवः ॥२७॥

Tasya vāchakaḥ praṇavaḥ

Om is the word denoting God (Īśhvara).

तस्य	<i>tasya</i>	His
वाचकः	<i>vāchakaḥ</i>	denotes, signifies
प्रणवः	<i>praṇavaḥ</i>	the word Om

The word *praṇavaḥ* is made by *pra*, which means “excellently” and *ṇavaḥ*, which means “newness.” *Praṇava* thus means the most excellent, eternally new principle, the ever-present moment, which is the *mantra* Om.

The word Om denotes Īśhvara. Īśhvara is the supreme God, which is signified by the word Om. What is the relationship between significance and the signifier? Is it a conventional relationship that is created by the human mind, or is it a relationship like father and son, and lamp and its light, which are permanent and cannot be altered in any way? This man is the father of that boy, and that boy is the son of this man. The relationship of father and son never changes. The son never becomes the nephew or the brother of his father. In the same way, *praṇava* (Om) indicates Īśhvara. It is not a conventional relationship, created by the mind. It is a permanent relationship like light signifies a lamp.

How is the relationship of Om and Īśhvara eternal? Īśhvara is the infinite, all-powerful Lord of creation. Om is the primal sound, the primordial energy of creation that exists prior to the manifest activities of the three *guṇas*. The relationship between Īśhvara and Om is therefore eternal, as the Creator and the energy of creation cannot be separated.

If the relationship between a word and its meaning is eternal, natural, and not created by the human mind, then the word will signify the object. Om signifies Īśhvara. The meaning of Om is Īśhvara, the sound of Om is the primordial sound of creation, which is Īśhvara, and perfect concentration on Om brings the realization of Īśhvara.

Īśhvara is the union of *puruṣha* and *prakṛiti*. In that union, the creative energy, which is Om, also exists eternally. Īśhvara’s presence is experienced through his name, Om.

Īśhvara and Om, the Lord of creation and the energy of creation, exist before creation and also permeate the creation. The sound vibration is the vehicle for the manifestation of the subtle essences.

Sound is an evolute of *prakṛiti* and subject to creation and dissolution. The sound of ॐ (Om, also spelled A-U-M) has four parts: अ (A, pronounced as “awe”) represents Brahmā, the creative aspect of God; उ (U, pronounced as “oo” in tooth) represents Viṣṇu, the sustaining energy of God; म (M, pronounced as “m” in um) represents Śhiva, the destructive energy of God.

These three energies change according to the cycle of creation and dissolution of the manifest universe, whereas the fourth aspect of ॐ, which is the half mora ॐ of Om, represents the eternal, absolute, immutable, transcendent knowledge. It is a sound beyond the three, and is vocalized in the continuing nasal reverberation of the sound Om.

