

The Spiritual Scientist

An ezine for those who think!

Om and Hare Krishna



Question: What is the relationship between the two popular mantras *om* and *Hare Krishna*?

Hare Krishna

Answer: The divine syllable *OM* is often chanted by those practicing yoga, meditation or any eastern spiritual tradition. Though the seminal seed-mantra *omkara*, from which *om* is derived, originates in the Vedic literature, *om* is hardly a sectarian sound. *Om* prefaces most of the English descriptions of God, as in omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient. Indeed, the prefix, *omni*, can be seen as a covered reference to *OM*. Even the Judaeo-Christian utterance "amen" and the Muslim utterance "amin" are considered by Vedic scholars as variations on *om*. Patanjali's Yoga Sutras (1.23-1.29) describe that focusing on this sound removes obstacles on the spiritual path and takes one to the divinely-realized platform.

Om
nipotent
nipresent
niscient

Commonly written as "OM", the letters "A-U-M" better convey the deeper significance of this mantra. In the Sanskrit alphabet, 'A' and 'U' are the first and last vowels and 'M' is the last consonant. Vedic seers explain that these three letters together form "the perfect word" encompassing "all truths that words can convey."



Though *om* is widely chanted in almost all eastern traditions, it is often thought of as an abstract way to signify the impersonal Absolute Truth. *Bhaktas* see *om* as non-different than their beloved Lord, a non-difference that is confirmed by Krishna in the *Bhagavad-gita* (7.8, 9.17, 10.25). Thus, *bhaktas* consider both *om* and the holy names of God to be equipotent, yet because the holy names often evoke the remembrance of God more easily and directly, they prefer to chant the holy names.

The *Bhagavata Purana* (12.3.52) describes that the easy method of chanting the holy names of Krishna can bestow all the benefits that can be accrued by all other methods of God-realization. Among the various mantras comprised of the holy names of God, the mantra *Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare* is declared in the Vedic scriptures to be the *mahamantra*, the mantra that contains the potency of all other mantras. Krishna and Rama are universal names of God, which mean "the all-attractive one" and "the reservoir of all pleasure" and Hare is the vocative for Hara, the divine potency and consort of God. Thus the *mahamantra* is a direct call to God, a call by a lost child for his parents.



The *mahamantra* is simultaneously a prayer and the fulfillment of the prayer. As a prayer, it requests the grace-bestowing feminine energy of God to unite us with Him through service, and at the same time chanting itself is that union, for the names of God are non-different from Him.

