

# DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF ASTANGA YOGA IN TIRUMULAR'S TIRUMANDIRAM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PRANAVA-YOGA

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## Abstract:

In the IIIrd Mandiram Tirumular deals with Pranava Yoga or Prasada Yoga. It is esoteric in nature known to mystics and practitioners.

Omkara is the Pranava mandiram. Pranava is OM in vyasti (manifestation) state, where all components are merged and integrated. When the components of OM are looked upon as subdivisions, they are in the Samadhi state. The letters OM are divisible into subtle seed sounds (bija) placed at the adharas of the subtle body and are worshipped. Sakti as kundalini associates herself in her Pranava form at the adharas. This is known as adhara worship. An experienced practitioner goes beyond this and uses the subtle components of Pranava to elevate his consciousness to niradhara (support-less) meditation, made possible by the grace of the Goddess. Kalas are subdivided into 12 or 16 or higher numbers, and are experienced at greater levels depending on the spiritual maturity of the seeker. Basic to Pranava Yoga is skill in pranayama; because through pranayama the kundalini moves upward in the central nadi through the Pranava Kalas. The disciplines associated with the body and in the personal life are extremely important for the seeker to attain higher levels of self realization. It requires the highest form of worship to experience the Supreme God Lord Siva with His consort in the vast open space of jnana. As Tirumular stresses, such experiences are granted by the blessings of Lord Siva through His Grace.

**KEY WORDS: OMKARA, PRANAVA MANDIRAM AND YOGA.**

## Introduction

**Pranava Yoga** is meditation on the sacred mantra OM, as outlined in the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. It is also called OM yoga and OM yoga meditation. It is, simply put, fixing the mind on the sound of the mantra "OM" – the sacred syllable that both symbolizes and embodies Brahman, the Absolute Reality – as the mantra is constantly repeated in unison with the breath. The purpose of pranava yoga is to become free from suffering and limitation.

OM, according to Hindu philosophy, is the primordial sound from which the whole universe was created. OM, also called the Pranava, is the original Word of Power, and is recited as a mantra. A mantra is a series of verbal sounds having inherent sound-power that can produce a particular physical or psychological effect, not just something that has an assigned intellectual meaning. The word mantra derives from the Samskrit expression 'mananaath thraayathe' which loosely means "a transforming thought"; literally, "that which, when thought, carries one across (the worldly ocean of sorrow)". The power of a mantra lies in its ability to produce an objective, perceptible change in the yogi who repeats it correctly.

In the yoga tradition, OM is the most sacred of holy words, the supreme mantra. OM is also called the Pranava, a Sanskrit word which means both controller of life force (prana) and life giver (infuser of prana). "That which causes all the pranas to prostrate themselves before and get merged in the Paramatman, so as to attain identity with Him, is for that reason known as the Pranava." – Atharvashikha Upanishad 1: 10a. OM is called the Shabda Brahman – God as Sound/Vibration. According to yoga theory, the universe has emanated from this primal movement in God. By following the thread of OM back in meditation to more and more subtle levels of awareness, the yogi regains union with Brahman.

## Mandiram 712

### Transliteration

*Kadal valiceyda kannudal annalai-k  
Kadal valiceydu kannura nokkidil  
Kadal valiceydu kangai valitarum  
Kadal valiceydu kakkalum ame.*

### Translation

*Love, the path the three-eyed Lord showed  
Tread along that path, devouring Him with love  
The flood-gates of bliss shall open with Thy love  
Your savior will He be, who that enjoyeth Thy love.*

### Commentary

The yogins identify the location of bliss in the crown of the head, after they have shed all blemishes. Tirumular lays the path of love as the road to attain awareness (knowledge) of Lord Siva. Such effort calls for intense concentration and oneness of sensory occupation (or one-pointed concentration) that make subsequent disciplines easier.

### **Aims and Objectives**

This is the starting point of Pranava-Yoga or Mantra-Yoga, also known as Prasada Yoga; this Yoga is intended to secure ultimate liberation of the soul from worldly commitments. When Omkara is practiced as five subdivisions (kalas), it is panca-kala; shakala prasada, asta kala prasada, nava-kala prasada, dvadhasa-kala (12) and sodasa kala (16) prasada etc.

The *dvadasa kala prasada* is the most widely practiced form of Yoga. The *twelve kalas are: akaram, makaram, ukaram, bindu, ardha-candra, nirodhini, nadam, nadantam, Sakti, Vyapini, Samanai, Unmani*. The Yogins tell us, that there is empty space between certain kalas that will have to be crossed, while ascending the ladder in pursuit of Lord Siva and His Consort. At the state of unmani, the soul is freed from all passions and bonds. The seeker experiences divinity after crossing the empty space.

The twelve kalas are expanded into sixteen, between Vyapini and Samanai, and the space is filled with Vyomarpini, Ananthai, Anathai, and Anasathai. These kalas are located at manipuraka, anahata, visuddhi, ajna, the two sides of the frontal region, the crown, and the twelve inches above the crown.

The intense states experienced by yogins at these places have to be learned under a highly qualified Yoga guru. A short text named PRASADA NANMANIGAL clarifies many matters pertaining to Prasada Yoga published by the Dharmapuram Adheenam.

### **Mandiram 713**

#### Transliteration 713

Kakkalu magum karanangal nangaiyum

Kakklu magum kalailadi narayum

Kakklu magum kalandanal vayuvum

Kakkalu magum karuttura nille.

#### Tranlation

*Instruments four, protect you can*

*Kalas sixteen, guard you will. Well and true*

*Pranas, the beneficent, seen on the right track*

*When your attention is entrenched (in the Lord).*

#### Commentary

The practice of Pranava-yoga can liberate the inner instruments of mind, intellect, citta and ahamkara from enslavement by the three malas. Similarly, it is possible to control the movement of prana through the sixteen kalas, to dispense with lower urges. The moon's sixteen kalas are: mercy, gentleness, patience, detachment, constancy, spiritual prosperity, cheerfulness, rapture, and sense of propriety, meditation, quietude, gravity of demeanor, effort, emotionless, magnanimity, and concentration. The practice of Pranava-yoga helps direct prana upward. Single-minded devotion to Lord Siva and one-pointed concentration on the sixteen kalas in their various locations along the susumna nadi are all required.

### **Mandiram 714**

#### Transliteration

Nilaipera ninradu nertaru vayu

Cilaipera ninradu tibamum ottu-k

Kalaivali ninra kalappai ariyil

Alaivara vagum valiyidu vame.

Translation

Steady, let prana flow and stay fixed like a rock to the central nadi

Unwavering, the light of knowledge, too, discerns

The Lord's coming with the kalas

It knows the path, free from all doubts.

Commentary

The word "light" refers to the soul's light of knowledge or Jnana sakti that manifests through the subtle faculties of the body, like mind, intellect and discrimination. The verse describes the connection between the flow of prana, the soul's citsakti and the spread of subtle subdivisions (kalas) of Pranava. When lack of discipline unsteadies the flow of prana, man's awareness runs unsteadily from one worldly experience to another. When prana is steady and flows through the susumna nadi, the soul's power of discernment and concentration is clear and steadfast. One begins to experience the presence of the Lord within (in the subtle subdivisions of Pranava, mula nada) and an aspect of the magical energy (suddha maya) of the Lord. Once aware of the presence of the Lord, it is the soul's nature to follow the path leading to His grace and gnosis.

**Mandiram 722**Transliteration

Iraru kalkon delunda puraviyai-p

Peramal katti-p peridunna vallirel

Nira yiramum nilamayi rattandum

Peradu kayam piran nandi anaiye.

Translation

The horse, speeding away on legs twelve,

Hold it steady and enjoy the hearty repast

For a thousand years, neither water nor earth

Will degrade in body. Upon Lord Nandi's word.

Commentary

Prana is the horse with twelve legs, which moves out of the body twelve inches with every exhalation. When the yogin practices pranayama assiduously, he ensures prana is not wasted, maximizing life-span. The hearty repast is the flow of nectar in the candra mandala or the lunar sphere at the top of the head. "Water and Earth" and other elements are the panca maha bhutas, five great elements, which are the constituents of the gross body. When prana and soul leave the body, the gross elements involute into their subtle source known as tanmatras. The seeker controls the flow of prana, prolonging life and maintaining integrity of the five

elements of the gross body. According to Tirumular it is possible for the five elements to remain in the body fully integrated and functional for thousands of years. As such, the verse allows us to imagine that Tirumular and other Siddhas did in fact live for amazingly long periods.

**Sri Aurobindo** says that “OM is the mantra, the expressive sound-symbol of the Brahman Consciousness in its four domains from the Turiya to the external or material plane. The function of a mantra is to create vibrations in the inner consciousness that will prepare it for the realization of what the mantra symbolizes and is supposed indeed to carry within itself. The mantra OM should therefore lead towards the opening of the consciousness to the sight and feeling of the One Consciousness in all material things, in the inner being and in the supraphysical worlds, in the causal plane above now superconscient to us and, finally, the supreme liberated transcendence above all cosmic existence. The last is usually the main preoccupation with those who use the mantra.” Letters on Yoga, Vol. II, P.745-46

**Swami Dayananda Saraswati** says that “Om is the highest Name of God, and comprises many other Names of God. It should be borne in mind that Om is the Name of God exclusively-and of no other object material or spiritual-while the others are but descriptive titles and not exactly proper names.”

**Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa** says that, “What will you gain’, some sages ask, ‘by merely hearing this sound?’ You hear the roar of the ocean from a distance. By following the roar you can reach the ocean. As long as there is the roar, there must also be the ocean. By following the trail of Om you attain Brahman, of which the Word is the symbol. That Branchman has been described by the Vedas as the ultimate goal.”

## Conclusion:

“The Pranava is Omkara...the advaita-mantra which is the essence of all mantras.... In order to get at this true significance, one should meditate on the Pranava. ...The fruition of this process is Samadhi which yields release (moksha), which is the state of unsurpassable bliss.” - These are the words of **Sri Ramana Maharshi**.

Om Namah Shivaya is one of the most popular Hindu Mantra and the most important mantra in Shaivism. Namah Shivaya means “O salutations to the auspicious one!” or “adoration to Lord Shiva”, or “universal consciousness is one”. It is called Siva Panchakshara meaning the “five-syllab Shiva. It is a holy salutation to Lord Shiva Rudram hymn which is a part of the Krishna part of the Shukla Yajurveda.

This mantra is repeated verbally or mentally, drawing the mind in upon itself to Lord Shiva’s infinite, all-pervasive presence. Traditionally it is repeated 108 times a day while keeping count on a strand of rudraksha beads. This practice is called japa yoga. It is freely sung and chanted by everyone, but it is most powerful when given by a guru. Before this initiation which is called mantra diksha, the guru will usually require a period of study. This initiation is often part of a temple ritual, such as a puja, japa, homa (fire ceremony), dhyana or and while smearing vibhuti. The guru whispers the mantra into the disciple’s right ear, along with instructions on how and when to chant it.

This mantra is associated with qualities or prayer, divine-love, grace, truth, and blissfulness. When done correctly, it calms the mind and brings spiritual insight and knowledge. It also keeps the devotee close to Shiva and within His protective global fellowship.

Traditionally, it is accepted to be a powerful healing mantra beneficial for all physical and mental ailments. Soulful recitation of this mantra brings peace to the heart and joy to the Atman or soul. Many Hindu teachers consider that the recitation of these syllables is sound therapy for the body and nectar for the Atman. The nature of the mantra is the calling upon the higher self; it is the calling upon Shiva.

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