

Meaning of the Vedic Symbol ॐ (pronounced aum)

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The sacred symbol ॐ has four parts. Meaning of each part is as follows.

Note - Sanskrit words are provided in parenthesis or in italics:

1. This “3” part of ॐ means there are three modes (*guNa*) of material nature (*prakriti*). Krishna, the God incarnate, describes *prakriti* in Bhagavad Gita.
2. This “—○—” part means these three modes – goodness (*satva*), passion (*rajas*), and ignorance (*tamas*) – cause a human to do good or bad karma. The karma in life of a human in turn binds the soul (*jiva*) of the human in the cycles of birth and death among various life forms including human form. Only in the human form a soul has the ability to realize God, go to God’s abode, and get free from the birth-death cycles.

[Basic information about God and soul is this: God the Supersoul is one, but there are innumerable souls. God and the souls are eternal and there is eternal loving relation between God and soul. The various Vedic processes of yoga help in reviving this forgotten loving relation with God. The soul resides in heart. The Supersoul (only one) also resides in every heart, and stays just as a witness of what the soul is doing or thinking. The soul and Supersoul are qualitatively same, but if a soul is compared to a small spark of fire, the Supersoul then is infinite with infinite power. God knows everything (past, present, and future), and is everywhere, and is all powerful. No one can equal or exceed God. God loves all living beings.]

3. This “—” part above part #2 of ॐ says that one has to raise the self above the three modes of material nature by a Vedic yoga process. A yogi (one who does *yoga* regularly for spiritual advancement is called a *yogi*) who has raised the self above the three modes of material nature is called a *gunatiti*. In Bhagavad Gita Krishna describes the characteristics of *gunatiti* in chapter 14.
4. The “●” part above part #3 represents the Supreme God. (There cannot be two Supreme Gods.) This part, placed over part #3, says that only by raising the self above the three modes of *prakriti* one can realize God, or go to God’s abode, or attain *moksha* or *mukti*. *Mukti* means freedom from the cycles of birth-death. One who attains *mukti* is called a *Mukta*. A *Mukta* feels constantly bliss and stays with God or does God’s work.