

Yoga TTC Project:

Naada Yoga

An Exploration of Sound

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Table of Contents:

Introduction -----	3
Naada Yoga: What is it? -----	4
Existing Usage and Precautions -----	6
Bija Mantras and Toning -----	8
Pranayama in Naada Yoga Practice -----	10
Bandhas for Meditation -----	14
Mantras for Meditation -----	17
Bowls, Gongs, Bells and Feeling Well -----	22
Nadanusandhanam -----	23
Meditation Practice and Instructions -----	26
Health Benefits -----	29
Conclusion -----	30

Introduction

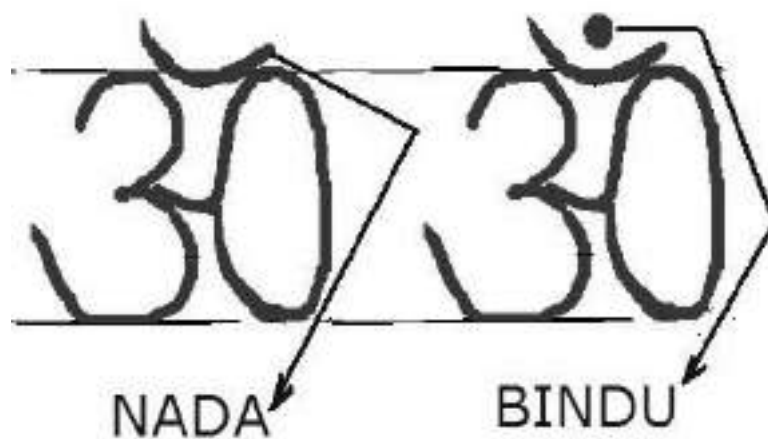
We know that sound is a phenomenon experienced through the vibration of objects carried by a medium. But such a simple definition obscures a deeper plane of understanding. The very transfer of sound through a medium requires it to affect and change its natural state. Sound then, is more than just an occurrence, it is an experience with the capacity for transformation.

It is with this belief that I became interested in Naada Yoga. With my background in music as an undergraduate pursuing his bachelors of arts degree, I have had the privilege of experiencing first hand the revelations music can bring about in a person, and how one can find themselves through sound. Through this project, I aim to consolidate information of this branch of yoga in order to emphasize its importance and relevance as a practice.

Naada Yoga: What is it?

Pronounced as one of the most effectual and potent meditative techniques to still the mind in the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Naada Yoga translates to 'union through sound', or 'Yoga of Sound'. It is a system of inner transformation through sound, founded upon the understanding of the entire universe being made up of vibrations. Its origin lies in the Shurangama Sutra, which features the bodhisattva himself, further bolstering the efficacy of this yoga as a path of meditation to attain Nirvana.

This belief is also expressed through its mention in the Naada Bindu Upanishad of the Rig Veda, 'Naada' refers to the sound one can hear in deep meditation, while 'Bindu' refers to the drop or starting point. It symbolizes the drop that creates ripples, similar to the manner a pressurized wave causes vibrations in the air. With context to the Upanishad however, Bindu could imply the 'Aum' sound – the beginning and end of the cosmos.



The system is divided into categories: anahata – silent vibrations of the self or internal music, and ahata – which is external music. Anahata naada deals with the noise that surrounds us; a good example is white noise in quiet environments. Ahata on the other hand involves natural external sounds such as the calls of birds or animals, rain, the ocean, or even instrumental sounds made by humans such as zen music using Tibetan singing bowls, handpans and other instruments.

These two categories consist of four different manifestations of sound. They are as follows:

- Valikhari (Manifested): audible sound that we all hear and use in our day to day lives, such as speech; serves as an expression of 'kriya shakti' - power of action.
- Madhyama (Through medium): mental sound such as that of an internal monologue or dialogue that is articulated but unspoken; comes under 'jnana shakti' - the power of knowledge and wisdom.
- Pashyanthi (Seen): the subconscious sound of ideas that one may have but remains unarticulated; comes under 'iccha shakti' – the power of desire.
- Para (Causal): transcendent sound that is considered pure intention, as it is a direct representation of the will of reality that is believed by many yogi to be endowed with the cosmic sound of 'om'.

Stages of Sound	Chakra/Organ Involved	State of Consciousness	Type of Body	Nature's Power
Paraa	Mooladhaara	Turiya – transcendental	-	-
Pasyanti	Manipooraka	Sushupti – deep sleep	Kaarana – Causal	Ikcha sakti – the power of will
Madhyama	Anaahata	Svapna – dreamful	Sukshma – psychic	Jnana Sakti – the power of knowledge
Vaikhari	Throat	Jaagrat - wakeful	Sthula - physical	Kriya Sakti – the power of action

The 'Aum' sound is more than a convenient way of engaging with sound and experiencing resonance while meditating. In fact, it can be broken down into three sections, each with its own significance as below:

- Akara: Represents the life force; while producing the sound, it to be originated from the navel or belly.
- Ukara: Represents the mind; while producing the sound, it is to be originated from the sternum.
- Makara: Represents the body; while producing the sound, it is to be originated from the pit of the throat.

Considered to be one of the 'pure' sounds of the body (a sound that does not require the tongue to be involved), its production involves the whole body and targets chakra centres. Thus, it is a central tenet of naada yoga, rendering itself a powerful tool to bring stillness to the mind.

Existing Usage and Practice

As opposed to the stereotypical understanding of yoga as movement routines, Naada yoga is an exploration not only of sound, but of space. It is also used in conjunction with other forms of yoga and works well in conjunction with physical practices too. After all, yoga is the preparation for meditation, and with Naada yoga and its similarities to meditation, they are often highly effective in routines when paired with each other.

Some instructors focus on sounds of instruments, others natural sounds around them, their voice or even inner sounds through a silent studio environment. It is even used as a purification process, with conscious awareness of the Nadis to increase the flow of prana.



Poses often adopted for Naada yoga include padmasana, Virasana and Sukhasana, and include beginning or concluding the practice with chanting 'Aum' - the most prominent sound in usage.



Virasana

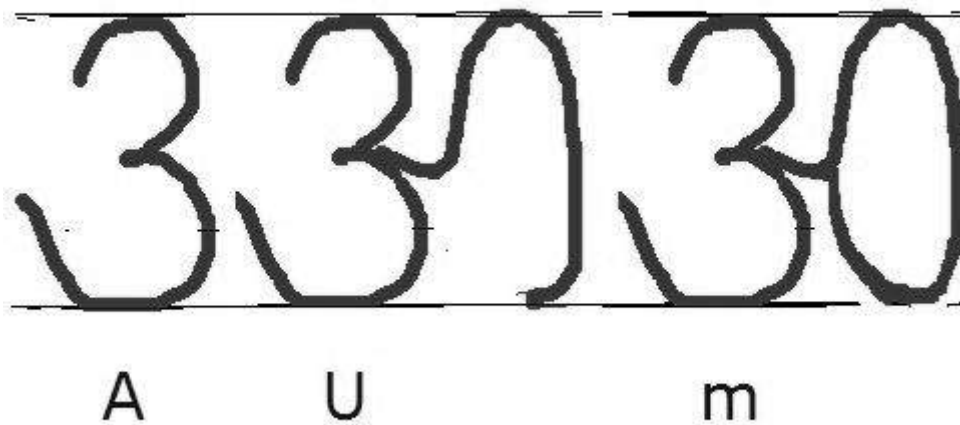
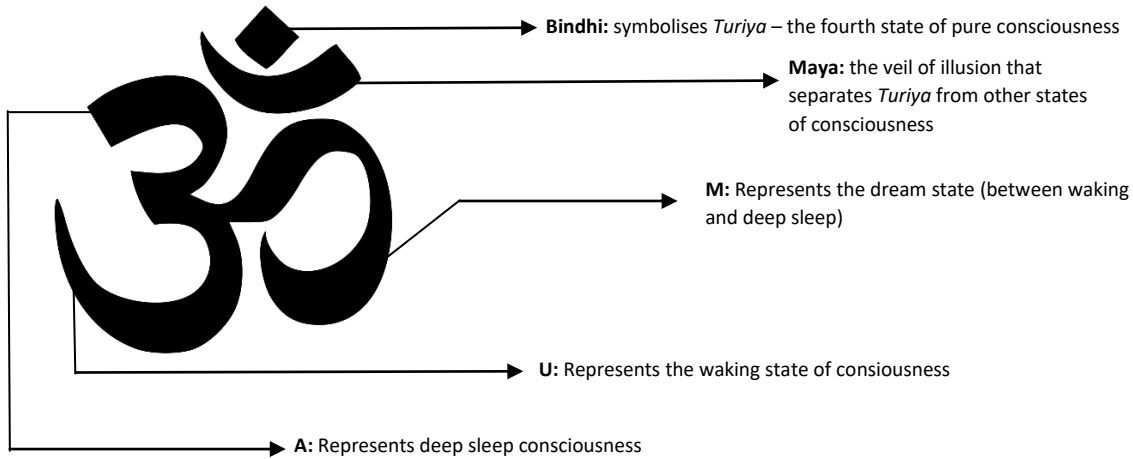


Padmasana



Sukhasana

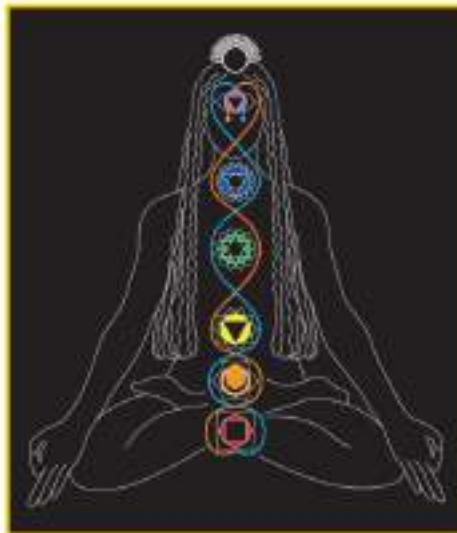
This monosyllabic mantra is often utilised as a tool in Naada yoga and has the ability to balance and bring together body, mind and spirit. A couple of things to keep in mind are the pronunciations and guidelines for the same. This is essential to experience the reverberation through the whole body and in the sinuses of the head. The chanting of *Aum* usually precedes mantras – sacred phrases repeated with intention.










Since it is a practice that involves the throat rather constantly, one must ensure appropriate hydration and precautions for the same. Furthermore, for those heavily pregnant, such practice is best avoided due to the discomfort that can arise from staying in a single position for long durations of time.

Bija Mantras

The one-syllable sounds that make up the Bija mantras are believed to reflect the chakras' "seeds" (energetic centres in the body). These sounds stimulate and purify these centres when recited aloud.



	Location	Mantra	Color
AH OM	Base of Spine	LAM	Red
HAM	Pubic Bone	VAM	Orange
YAM	Navel	RAM	Yellow
RAM	Heart	YAM	Green
VAM	Throat	HAM	Blue
LAM	Third Eye	OM	Violet
	Crown	AH	White

CHAKRA 7		OM	THOUGHT, SAHASRARA
CHAKRA 6		OM	LIGHT, AJNA
CHAKRA 5		HAM	ETHER, VISUDDHA
CHAKRA 4		YAM	AIR, ANAHATA
CHAKRA 3		RAM	FIRE, MANIPURA
CHAKRA 2		VAM	WATER, SVADHISTHANA
CHAKRA 1		LAM	EARTH, MULADHARA

Since everything in the cosmos is made of sound or vibration, discomfort, illness, and a loss of wholeness result when there is an imbalance in one of the sounds or when the sequence of sounds cannot continue as it should. For instance, the harmony of the entire piece of music is lost if one performer in an orchestra plays off-key. You can fix that by having an additional musician play the correct notes while standing next to the first one. The first musician will instantly start playing correctly just by hearing the right notes.

Similar to this, you can start to balance out any discord in your physiology by chanting or toning the appropriate vibration for that area if you are aware of it. For instance, if you have a problem with your eyes and are aware of the sound associated with the eyes, you can start the healing process for that area by reciting that sound (quietly or aloud) and focusing the vibration on the eyes. A list of such sounds and their specific healing properties are as follows:

Mmm -----	Sinuses
Nnn -----	Ears
Eemm -----	Eyes
Lmm -----	Nose
Paam -----	Stomach
Kaa Gaa Gha -----	Throat
Yaa Yu Yi -----	Jaw
Haa -----	Diaphragm
Mam -----	Reproductive organs
Ma -----	Heart
Sssss -----	Lungs and large intestine
Shhh -----	Liver and small intestine
Wooo -----	Kidneys and bladder
UU-AH-EE-MM -----	Energizing, wakeup
MM-EE-AH-UU -----	Relaxing, bedtime

Pranayama in Naada Yoga Practice:

Pranayama means "controlling the breath." Prana is the term for the body's life force or breath. Prana, which meaning life force or pranic energy, is represented by the word "ayama" on subtle levels. Pranayama, then, is the "Control of Breath."

With the help of pranayama, one can acquire a healthy body and mind by controlling the cycles of pranic energy. In his book of Yoga Sutras, Patanjali describes pranayama as a way to achieve higher states of awareness. He also emphasises the practise of holding one's breath as a key step to achieving Samadhi. There are a couple of pranayama practices that are closely related to Naada Yoga Practice. They are as follows:

Sheetkari Pranayama:

Both Sheetkari Pranayama (or hissing breath) and Sheetalī Pranayama are specifically practised during the summer to offer a cooling impact on the body and the mind. They are extremely similar to one another. Although both pranayama have the same ultimate goal, there are some key differences in the way they are executed. In contrast to the Sheetalī Pranayama, the Sheetkari Pranayama emphasises the use of the teeth. The hissing sound made by clenched jaws, which is remarkably similar to a python's breathing, gave rise to the name of this pranayama.



Sheetkari Pranayama

Steps:-

1. Sit up in a comfortable position, with the hands and legs folded comfortably
2. Try to observe the flow of the breath and center your focus on a particular area.
3. In the next sp. Open your lips and bring the teeth together
4. Use the gap in between your teeth's to take a long deep breath
5. Once you are done with the process of inhalation, bring your chest downwards and try to retain the breath for 6- 7 seconds or as long as you feel comfortable
6. When you feel comfortable, lift your chin and use your right nostril to exhale the air, keeping your left nostril closed with the thumb
7. Repeat the process at least five times every day if you are starting as a beginner.

Precautions:-

- This pranayama should only be practiced during the summer months, in a place which is not polluted.
- Do not perform this pranayama, if you have heart problems or a low BP
- Avoid Sheetkari pranayama, if you are patient of respiratory diseases- asthma and bronchitis
- This pranayama can lead to irregular bowel movements, so if you have problems related to chronic constipation, avoid practicing this pranayama.

Brahmari Pranayama:

The Black Indian Bee, Bhramari, is the source of the Bhramari Pranayama's name. It is known as Bhramari Pranayama because the sound we generate when we exhale while performing this asana resembles the humming sound of a bee in your throat cartilage. provides immediate relief from stress, rage, and anxiety. As it soothes the agitated mind, it is a very beneficial breathing method for patients with hypertension. It also provides comfort if you have a light headache and relieves migraine. Furthermore, it helps in lowering blood pressure and relaxing the mind before meditation and inducing deep sleep.



Brahmari Pranayama

Steps:-

1. Sit up straight in a quiet, well-ventilated corner with your eyes closed. Keep a gentle smile on your face.
2. Keep your eyes closed for some time. Observe the sensations in the body and the quietness within.
3. Place your index fingers on your ears. There is a cartilage between your cheek and ear. Place your index fingers on the cartilage.

4. Take a deep breath in and as you breathe out, gently press the cartilage. You can keep the cartilage pressed or press it in and out with your fingers while making a loud humming sound like a bee.
5. You can also make a low-pitched sound but it is a good idea to make a high-pitched one for better results.
6. Breathe in again and continue the same pattern 3-4 times

Precautions:-

- Ensure that you are not putting your finger inside the ear but on the cartilage.
- Don't press the cartilage too hard. Gently press and release with the finger.
- While making the humming sound, keep your mouth closed.
- You can also do Bhramari pranayama with your fingers in the Shanmukhi Mudra.
- Do not put pressure on your face.
- Do not exceed the recommended repetitions of 3-4 times.

Nada Anusandhana Asana:

The name Nadanusandhana combines the Sanskrit words Nada, which means "sound," and Anusandhana, which means "aiming towards" or "being focussed upon", which aptly describes the technique. Once the practitioner is able to deeply absorb the mind in the Anhat Nada, it becomes a powerful and effective technique to restrain the fluctuations (vrttis) of the mind, leading to stillness and deep conscious silence. As a result of this deep contemplation and involuntarily drawing the attention within, Nadanusandhana is considered to be an excellent means of meditating upon the supreme state by ceasing the movements of the conscious mind (citta vrtti nirodhah), and thereby the attainment of Samadhi (bliss).



Nada Anusandhana Asana

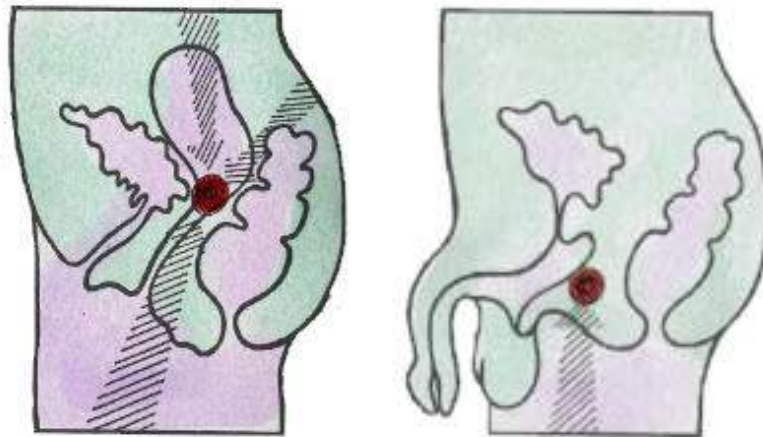
Steps:-

1. Sit in any meditative position and adopt Chinmaya Mudra
2. Take a couple of breaths to centre yourself and draw the attention inwards.
3. Slowly inhale to fill the lungs completely, and begin to chant A-kara in a low voice (just the 'AAA' sound). Notice how the sound reverberates in the abdomen.
4. Repeat 9 times.
5. With Chinmaya mudra, slowly inhale to fill the lungs and completely, and begin to chant U-kara 'UUU' in a low pitch. Notice how the sound reverberates in the chest and middle part of the body.
6. Repeat 9 times.
7. With Aadi Mudra, slowly inhale to fill the lungs and completely and begin to chant 'MMM' in a low pitch. Notice how the sound resonates in the throat and head region.
8. Repeat 9 times.
9. Inhale slowly and completely fill the lungs.
10. Adopt Brahma mudra and exhale to chant AUM in a low voice. Feel the sound resonate throughout the body.
11. Repeat nine times.
12. To close the practice, take another few deep breaths becoming aware of any sensations in the body and observe your emotional state.

Bandhas for Meditation:

Bandha is Sanskrit for "lock," "close," or "stop." The energy flow to a certain portion of the body is restricted when performing a bandha. The energy floods through the body more forcefully and under higher intensity when the bandha is released. The four bandhas are as listed below:

- Moola Bandha (Perineum Lock)



Point of Lifting the Pelvic Floor in Moola Bandha

- Uddiyana Bandha (Abdominal Contraction/Diaphragm Lock)



Contraction of Abdomen and Lifting of Diaphragm in Uddiyana Bandha

- Jalandhara Bandha (Throat Lock)



Locking of Throat Pit in Jalandhara Bandha

- Maha Bandha (Great Lock)



Locking of throat pit, contraction of abdomen with lifted diaphragm and lifted pelvic floor with contraction of perineum

Generally, the breath is held during practice of the Bandhas. Moola Bandha and Jalandhara Bandha can be performed after the inhalation as well as after the exhalation. Uddiyana Bandha and Maha Bandha are only performed after the exhalation. Thus, Moola Bandha and Jalandhara Bandha are most commonly practiced in Naada Yoga

Steps for Moola Bandha

1. Sit comfortably on a chair or cushion. Relax your shoulders and jaw, and bring awareness to your breath.
2. As you inhale, begin to contract and lift the muscles of your pelvic floor.
3. While breathing slowly, draw your pelvic floor muscles up for a count of 5. It may help to imagine an elevator rising up one floor with each number.
4. Hold this for up to 10 seconds. You can start off holding for 3 seconds, and then build up to 10 seconds over time with regular practice.
5. Slowly exhale to a count of 5, lowering the pelvic floor with each count until you are completely relaxed.
6. Practice for around 2 to 5 minutes, twice a day.

Steps for Jalandhara Bandha

1. Place your hands on your knees with the palms facing upwards. Inhale so your lungs are about two-thirds full, and then retain your breath.
2. Drop your chin down and draw it back closer to your chest making a double chin. At the same time, lift your sternum towards your chin. As your chin drops toward your sternum with breath exhaled, swallow. This will help to activate this bandha. Relax your shoulders away from your ears and enjoy the stillness.
3. Hold as long as is comfortable and then lift your chin up and finish your inhalation before releasing the breath.

Mantras for Meditation:

The word ‘Mantra’ means, “tool of the mind”. Repeating a mantra in silence turns the mind’s focus inward so it may transcend the external world to unite with the actual self. This is said to be an endless eternal sphere of pure consciousness – one can be said to be ‘actualised’, through such a process.

This is achieved through the manner in which the mantras help the mind to focus and concentrate, allowing unwanted thoughts to leave the mind so that one’s awareness may expand. It ensures that the body’s centre of energy is attuned to the corresponding centre of universal energy.

Here are some Mantras commonly used in the practice of Naada Yoga:

Ganesa Mantra (Removal of obstacles):

Suklambara dharam visnum
Sasi varnam catur bhujam
Prasanna vadanam dhyaye
Sarva vighnopasantaye

Saha Navavatu (Beginning and conclusion of programs):

Saha Navavatu
Saha Nau Bhunaktu
Saha Viryam Karavavahai
Tejasvi Navadhitamastu
Ma Vidvisavahai
Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Hi

Gayatri Mantra (Prayer for enlightenment)

Om Bhur Bhuva Svah
Tat Savitur Varenyam
Bhargo Devasya Dhimahi
Dhiyo Yo Nah Pracodayat.

Brahmarpanam (Food prayer):

Brahmarpanam brahma havih brahmagnau brahmana hutam
Brahmaviva tena gautavyam brahma – karma – samadhina

Guru Prarthana Mantra (Prayer in honor of guru)

Gururbrahma gururvisnuh
Gurdevo mahesvarah
Gurudeva param brahma
Tasmai sri gurave namah

Mahamrtyunjaya (Prayer for health)

Om tryambakam yajamahe
Sugandhim pusti-varadhanam
Urvarukam iva bandhanat
Mrtyor muksiya mamrtat

Purnamadah (Completion):

Purnamadah purnam idam purnat purnamudacyate
Purnasya purnam adaya purnam evavasisyate
Om Shanti Shanti

Datta Stavah

Sri Ganesaya Namah
Sri Sarasvatyai Namah
Sri Padavallabha-Narasimha-Sarasvati
Sri Guru – Dattatreya Namah

Dattatreyam Mahatmanam
Varadam bhakta-vatsalam
Prapannarti-haram vande
Smartrgami sa no'vatu

Saranagata-dinarta-
Paritrana – parayanam
Narayanam vibhum vande
Smartrgami sa no'vatu

Saravanarta – haram devam
Sarva mangala Mangalam
Sarva klesa haram vande
Smartrgami sa no'vatu

Brahmanyam dharma-tatvajnam
Bhakta – kirti – vivardhanam
Bhaktabhista – pradam vande
Smartrgami sa no'vatu

Sosanam papa-pankasya
Dipanam jnana-tejasah
Tapa – prasamanam vande
Smartrgami sa no'vatu

Sarva – roga – prasamanam
Sarva pida nivaranam
Vipad-uddharanam vande
Smartrgami sa no'vatu

Janma – samsara bandhajnam
Svarupananda – dayakam
Nihissreyasa – padam vande
Smartrgami sa no'vatu

Janma – samsara – bandhajnam
Svarupananda – dayakam
Nihissreyasa – padam vande
Smartrgami sa no'vatu

Jaya-labha-yasah kama
Daturdattasya yasstatvam
Bhoga-moksa-pradasyeyam
Prapatet sa krti bhavet
Sri Ganesaya Namah
Sri Sarasvatyai Namah
Sri Padavallabha – Narasimha – Sarasvati
Sri Guru-Dattatreya Namah

Astalaksmi Stuti

Sri Ganesaya Namah
Sri Sarasvatyai Namah
Sri Padavallabha – Narasimha – Sarasvati
Sri Guru Dattatreya Namah

Rathamadhyam ashvapurvam
Gajanada prabodhinim
Samrajya dayinim devim
Gajalaksmim namamyaham

Dhanam agnir dhanam vayuh
Dhanam bhutani panca ca
Prabhu taisvarya sandhatrim
Dhanalaksmim namamyaham

Prthvi garbha samudbhinna
Nana vrihi svarupinim

Pasu sampat svarupanca
Dhanyalaksmim namamyaham

Na matsaryam na ca krodho
Na bhitir na ca bhedadihih
Yad bhaktanam vinitanam
Dhairyalaksmim namamyaham

Putra pautra svarupena
Pasubhrtyatmana svayam
Sambhavantim ca santana
Laksmim devim namamyaham

Nana vijnana sandhatrim
Buddhi suddhi pradayinim
Amrtatva pradatrim ca
Vidyalaksmim namamyaham

Nitya saubhagya sausilyam
Varalaksmi dadathi ya
Prasannaam straina sulabham
Adilaksmim namamyaham

Saravasakti svarupanca
Sarva siddhi pradayinim
Sarvesvarim sri Vijaya
Laksmim devim namamyaham

Astalakshmi samahara
Svaruparam tam haripriyam
Moksalaksmim mahalaksmim
Sarvalaksmim namamyaham

Daridrya dukkha haranam
Samrddhirap smapadam
Saccidananda purnatvam
Astalaksmi stuter bhavet

Sri Ganesaya Namah
Sri Sarasvatyai Namah
Sri Padavallabha – Narasimha – Sarasvati
Sri Guru – Dattatreya Namah

Datta Sodasi

Sacchidananda–sadguru–dattam bhaja bhaja bhakta
Sodasavatara–rupa–dattam bhaja re bhakta

Mahisapura–avasa–sri–kalagni–samana–dattam
Prodduturu–grama–vasa–yogiraja–vallabham
Bengaluru–nagara–sthita–datta–yogi–rajam
Anantapure sthitam Jnana – sagaram bhaja-dattam

Vijayavada–vilasitam syama–kamala–locanam
Macili–patna–samsthitam atri–varadarajam
Jayalaksmipure samskara–hina–sivapuram
Madrasu–nagara samvasam adiguru–namakam

Rsikesa–tirtha–rajam sri–digambara–dattam
Akividustham–visvambara–avadhuta–dattam
Nujvidu–pattane deva–devavataram
Bhagyanagara–sthitam dattavadhutam bhaja

Gandigunta – janapade datta–digambara–devam
Kocinagare sthitam siddharaja–namakam
Maya–muktavadhuta–maccarapake
Lila–visvambaram surannagare bhaja

Sacchidananda–janma–sthale datta–kasisvaram
Purva–samudra–tire datta–ramesvaram

Sacchidananda–sadguru–dattam bhaja bhaja bhakta
Sodasavatara–rupa–dattam bhaja re bhakta

Bowls, Gongs, Bells and Feeling Well

Bowls, gongs and bells are all instruments that produce frequencies that resonate with our own. Interestingly the gongs, bell and bowls are all a kind of bell, just with different structures. This affects timbre but not sonority.

Energy can be balanced and cleared by striking bells, gongs, or bowls that produce a clean ring. Metal bells, gongs, and bowls can only be used for general purposes unless they have been tuned to a particular frequency. Strike the instrument, move it up and down the limbs, and move it upward along the front of the spine to clear the energetic field of the body.



Tibetan Singing Bowls



Hand Bells



Tingsha Bells

Play the instrument while standing in the middle of the room or house, or circle the room or house clockwise while hitting or ringing the instrument an help with eliminating negative energies present in an enclosed space.

Another popular instrument in this realm of meditation is the Hand pan. Using some of the principles of the steel drum, they produce a relaxing sound that is often used in conjunction with guided mediation. Their round shape ensures that great resonance in a room, making it the ideal instrument for a sound healing group session.



Hand Pan

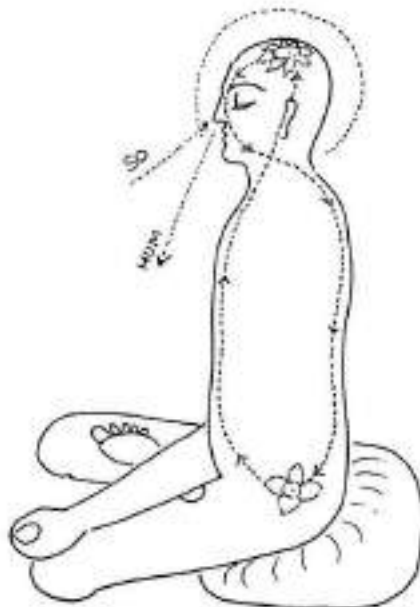
Nadanusandhanam

This refers to meditation on Nada or Sound that is heard at the Anahat Chakra.



As with all Sadhana, the Ethical and moral preparations are the first important pre-requisites. Similarly, proficiency in Hatha Yoga and Pranayam is essential. It is better to have sufficient practice in concentration and meditation. That will make it easy for us to concentrate inwardly and meditate on the Anahat sounds.

Ajapa Japa or Japa of 'Sohum' with breath will help you in your concentration on the subtle sounds. That by itself will take you to the Anahat sound.



Sit in Padmasana or Siddhasana. Use the Shanmukhi or the Vaishnavi Mudra.



Shanmukhi or Vaishnavi Mudra

Do Ajapa Japa. Let your gaze be inwards. That will lead you to the Anahat sound. With Shanmukhi Mudra in Padmasana or Siddhasana, you can also lead the Prana and Apana into the Sushumna and then meditate on the Anahat Chakra which will also allow you to hear the Anahat sounds. The sweet melody of the sounds will bestow on you greater power of concentration.

At first you will hear ten different sounds that will make you deaf to all external sounds. The sounds are: Chini, Chinchini, ringing of the bell, blowing the conch, sound of the lute, sound of the cymbal, that of the flute, like that of a drum, of a mridanga and that of the thunder. These sounds should be heard through the right ear.

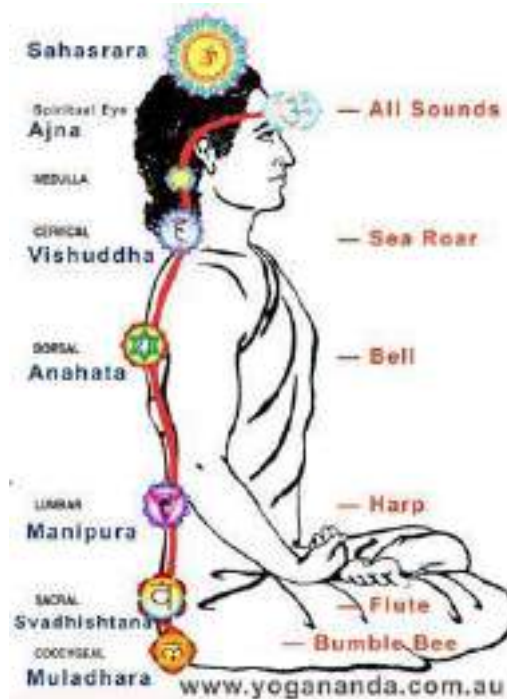
There are two aspects of these sounds, gross and subtle. You should proceed from the gross ones to the subtle ones.

If the mind runs only towards the gross sounds, do not get perturbed. Let it first get accustomed to and established in the gross sound. Then it can be led to the subtle sound. Bear in mind that Mano Laya is not the goal but that Mano Nasa and Self Realization is the goal. Remember not to take any special fancy or liking for any particular sound but try to lead the mind from the first to the second, from the second to the third, and so on to the tenth.

There is another school of Nada Yoga that distinguishes three different stages in the hearing of the sounds. The first stage is when the Prana and Apana are led near the Brahmastrandha.



The second stage comes when they enter the Brahmastrandha and the third when they are well established in it. During the first stage sounds like that of the roaring sea, the beating of drums etc. are heard. During the second, sounds like those of Mridanga, conch, etc. are heard. In the third stage, sounds like Kinkini, humming of the bee, sound of the flute or the lute etc. are heard.



Knowledge pertaining to hidden things arise in a person who can hear well the seventh sound (like that of the flute). If he can hear clearly the eighth sound then he will hear Para Vaak. With the ninth, he develops the Divine Eye. When he hears the tenth, he verily attains Para Brahman.

Meditation Practice and Instructions

- 1) Sit comfortably with your body in symmetry. Let the right side of your body (hands/arms,feet/legs) be in the same position as the left side. If you can sit with your legs crossed with one of your heels pressing up into your perineum, that is ideal. If not, sit on a rolled up blanket or pillow placed longways between your legs so there is pressure on your perineum.
- 2) Block the sound entering your ears with earplugs. You can use your fingers instead, although this will cause a sound of its own, which may be distracting.
- 3) Put your hands on your knees. This will prevent you from slumping. Keep your spine straight. (If your fingers are in your ears, sit with your feet flat on the ground and your knees up. Put your elbows on your knees.)
- 4) Close your eyes.
- 5) Try to find a position of comfort so you don't have to move. You want to be able to sit in perfect stillness for yoga nidra to arise.
- 6) Recall a past experience of unconditional love. Fill your heart with that feeling. Repose in the center of your heart, suffused with that unconditional love.
- 7) With your eyes still closed, look up between your eyebrows. Your gaze is inward, but your focus is as if you were looking outward into the distance. Although you are actively looking/watching, try to make this effortless, without strain.
- 8) With a feeling of unconditional love and sense of joyful anticipation, invite the Divine Light to arise.
- 9) Allowing the light to arise is something we intuitively and naturally know how to do. The light is already shining within us. With unconditional love, surrender your control over it.
- 10) Quiet your mind. Let go of all thinking. If thoughts come up, let them pass like a cloud in the sky. Then bring your focus back to looking/ watching between your eyebrows. At first you may see only darkness. Eventually you will begin to see flickering, clouds or rays of color, or lights. These are not imagined. They are an internal perception. If light arises, hold it in your attention without trying to control it. Thank it with unconditional love for arising. With continuous unbroken concentration, over time, the lights will eventually become a single focused point of light. It may be a very small, intense dot or fleck of light, an iridescent blue or indigo "pearl" surrounded by a corona, a bright burning ball of white light, a shimmering star, or other concentrations of brilliant radiance.

- 11) Realize that you are not separate from the light. Embrace that “You are that.” Co-absorb with the light by moving it into the center of your head.
- 12) At the same time, draw your eyes back in toward the center of your head, pulling the light with them.
- 13) Draw the light into and around you. As you dissolve into it and it into you, blissfully feel it surrounding and covering your head. Let that blissful feeling flow over and spread through your entire body.
- 14) Keep a continuous feeling of moving forward into the light as it is drawn into you and you are drawn into it.
- 15) Your body should feel extremely comfortable. Remain perfectly still to maintain that blissful comfort.
- 16) There is a subtle nerve channel that runs from under the right eye, down the cheek, to the bottom of the jawbone, then along the lower jaw to its hinge, and back up behind the right ear. Turning your attention to this nadi will lead you from the light to the sound.
- 17) With a feeling of unconditional love and sense of joyful anticipation, invite the Inner Sacred Sound to arise.
- 18) Trust that the sound is already vibrating within you.
- 19) Allowing the sound to arise is something we intuitively and naturally know how to do. With unconditional love surrender your control over the sound.
- 20) Listen through the right ear for an internal sound. The sound may take many forms: a low rumble, a buzzing, a resonant sustained tone, a shimmering tinkle, or a high ringing. If you don't hear any of these right away, be patient and wait with a joyful anticipation for the sound to arise. Allow for the possibility that in time you will hear it.
- 21) If sound arises, hold it in your attention without trying to control it. Thank it with unconditional love for arising.
- 22) It is a very subtle sound. Whatever sound you hear, fix your attention on the subtlest part of it: the sound behind, above, within, or beyond the sound. Just by focusing on the subtlest part, it will increase in intensity and volume.
- 23) Follow the sound, co-absorb with it, letting it pour into you, filling you like water from a pitcher.

24) Having co-absorbed with both the sound and the light, realize you are not separate from them. You and the light are one. You and the sound are one. The light is the sound. The sound is the light. You and the light and the sound are all merged. Dissolve into them and them into you. You are all one.

25) Remain perfectly still in your body and mind.

Health Benefits

As an age-old discipline of exercise and meditation, yoga focuses on building flexibility, strength and breathing to improve various facets of health - a and mental wellbeing. With regards to Naada Yoga, its non-straining format is advantageous for those that may not be able to engage in physically strenuous activity. Still, there are a lot of benefits that it presents as enumerated below:

- Promotes mindfulness and awareness of the subconscious: By drawing one's focus towards the natural sounds around themselves or even one's own heartbeat or breath, one can overcome worries that are prevalent in the consciousness, as they delve deeper into their subconscious state of mind.
- Alleviates stress: Following the previous point, if one can move past one's problems, they may be closer to relieving themselves of any stress they experience. By bringing one's attention to one thing (which in this practice is the sound in experience), those that employ this practice may also release muscular tension, aside from mental stress and negative emotions.
- Improve concentration: as with most meditation, the aspect of focusing on just one thing while ignoring all else is central to Naada Yoga. With a stimulus as engaging as sound, it is considerably easier than most other meditative practices and is best suited for all, regardless of level of experience. And as with most meditative practices, it is certainly advantageous to one's concentration and allows one to better analyse larger portions of information at a time.
- Increased cognitive capacity: as improved concentration allows one to better analyse larger amounts of information at a time, such ability undoubtedly aids one's cognitions and capacity for cognition. With more mental resources available having disengaged from unproductive thought structures, they can now be employed to better use.
- Reduced anxiety, fear and aggressiveness: Such behaviours can often be attributed to negative thoughts or emotions, and are widely regarded as manifestations of the same. With an absence of the aforementioned through meditation comes a reduction in such behaviour. Therefore, an improvement is brought about in one's phenomenological experience of life.
- Other health benefits: Due to all these factors, there are physiological factors that are experienced as well – for a healthy mind resides in a healthy body. The practice is highly beneficial for people with high blood pressure, heart disease, aches and pains (including lower back, etc).

Conclusion

Nada yoga is not an intellectual pursuit. It is an experiential practice. With regular daily practice, in a relatively short time, we can experience deep levels of meditation that will bring comfort, calm, and contentment to our daily life. We experience being part of something larger than ourselves. We come to understand that we are one and the same with the Universe. We are not only connected to, but are one with, all things everywhere.

The practice of Naada yoga is one of much excitement to me personally due to its wide scope of applicability. It is also a highly lucrative option for those wanting to get started with meditative practices or having difficulty with other methods of meditation.

Furthermore, it is rather easy to incorporate into one's schedule, given that 15 minutes of such practice with focus on any sound – inner, environmental or instrumental – is a portion of time through the day that can easily be spent doing miscellaneous activities or investing effort for a better experience of life.

My personal fascination with sound and music also helps me connect to this field of yoga, as I have been able to find myself through music. Naada yoga too, aims to explore the depths of the universe through sound, bringing about a unity with the world and a stillness in the mind. It offers an avenue of self-discovery that resonates with my personal associations and reasons for reverence of music.