

The Practice of Nada Yoga: Meditation on the Inner Sacred Sound

By Baird Hersey

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Meditation exercises for listening to the four levels of sound, to still the body, quiet the mind, open the heart, and connect with the Divine

• Details the teachings on nada yoga from the Hatha Yoga Pradipika with clear, step-by-step instructions to find and hear the inner sacred sound of nada

• Explains the 4 levels of sound through a series of practical meditation exercises

• Includes instructions for a daily nada yoga meditation practice as well as ways to strengthen your advanced practice

The ancient practice of nada yoga is not complex. It is the yoga of listening. It is a journey from the noise of the external world inward to a place of peace and bliss, to the source of the transformational power of sound--the nada. By meditating on the inner sacred sound of the nada, we can release ourselves from mind chatter and obsessive thinking. We can still the body, quiet the mind, and open the heart to create a state of mind where joy naturally arises.

Sharing his experiential understanding of the classic Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Baird Hersey offers precise, step-by-step instructions on how to find the inner sound of the nada. He explains the first three levels of sound--first, how to truly hear the ordinary sounds of the world around us (vaikhari); second, how to quiet the sounds of the mind (madhyama), such as sound memories and internal dialogue; and third, how to access visual sounds (pashyanti), tapping in to our ability to see sounds and hear colors. Mastering the first three levels prepares one for the fourth level of sound (para), the heart of the practice that connects one to the inner sound of the nada. The author provides detailed exercises to guide you through each level of sound and instructions for a daily nada yoga meditation practice.

Hersey explains that by focusing our minds on this internal sound we reunite our essential self with the eternal and infinite. In this re-union we find bliss in both body and mind, an uplifted spirit, and heightened states of consciousness.

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Editorial Review

Review
“Musicians and music lovers, as well as the average person who simply wants to understand nada yoga, will enjoy this fascinating book. Musicians will find the music meditations and exercises for experiencing music on a higher sensory level of particular interest. Everyone will benefit from Hersey’s teachings on the healing powers of sound. Inspiring, clearly written, and engaging, this title deserves a place among top yoga books.” (*Ajoke Kokodoko, Library Journal, January 2014*)

“Brilliant, revealing, and extensively researched, *The Practice of Nada Yoga* eloquently explains how all of the yoga practices are based on the fundamental concept that the whole of existence is composed of sound. Through the practice of yoga, one can penetrate into the essential spiritual truth that our bodies are sound bodies, and music is the very nature of our soul.” (*Sharon Gannon, author, musician, and co-creator of the Jivamukti Yoga Method*)

“In his new book, The Practice of Nada Yoga, musician Baird Hersey sheds light on a yoga practice that is rare to the West. Nada yoga, the yoga of sound, is rooted in the Rig Veda, one of the world’s oldest religious scriptures. But Hersey argues that the ancient teachings are just as relevant—and transformative—today. Hersey prefers to define Nada yoga as the yoga of listening. The practice is a form of meditation that involves running into sounds around you and within you. It can be a soothing way to quiet your mind and experience a sense of connection with the universe by becoming absorbed in sound vibrations that permeate it and each of us. His book is based on his interpretation of various Sanskrit texts (such as the Hatha Yoga Padipika) and offers nearly 40 exercises to help readers learn how to listen more intimately with their ears and, eventually, with their hearts and minds. For example, one has you pay attention to a specific sound surrounding you and listen for subtle fluctuations in pitch. Another has you plug your ears and notice sounds within your body as you move a little. Hersey’s book is a mix of traditional teachings and contemporary applications that will appeal to yogis, musicians, and anyone wanting to deepen their meditation practice through the soothing medium of sound.” (*Shannon Sexton,Yoga Journal, March 2014*)

“Baird, through his many years of practice and study in yoga and in music, has traveled to the depths of nada yoga, the yoga of sound. He leads us, in this remarkable book, to the infinite source of this sacred sound, the Self. If you are a disciplined student of yoga or music, this journey with Baird is an indispensable trip.” (*Beryl Bender Birch, author of Power Yoga*)

“Baird’s writing voice is strong and sonorous, confidently leading us toward a tranquil mind, an undefended heart, and a more sustained connection with the divine. His meditation exercises are among the clearest and easiest to follow that I have ever read. In a world where sound is associated with stress and overload, *The Practice of Nada Yoga* reminds us, as Baird says, what we might hear if we could listen through God’s ears.” (*Gail Straub, cofounder of Empowerment Institute and author of Returning to My Mother’s House*)

“Baird Hersey describes in clear, exact steps the process of developing the ancient practice of nada yoga. While these Hindu and Buddhist exercises are often clouded in mystery, he manages to make the process both comprehensible and accessible to Westerners serious about their meditation, contemplation, and concentration practices. This is a book by an experienced practitioner who knows the terrain.” (*Jose Luis Stevens, Ph.D., cofounder of the Power Path, author of Awaken the Inner Shaman, and coauth*)

“Presented with in-depth experience and study, Baird Hersey’s book makes nada yoga accessible to all levels of seeker and is a valuable tool for their practice.” (*Shubhraji, founder of Namah Vedanta Center*)

“ This is an excellent book for anyone interested in attaining enlightenment and listening to your inner voice. It is very detailed, yet very easy to grasp. This is especially helpful to those who are on their path without a Master to guide them. At this point in my life I found this book to give me a welcome perspective on my own higher nature and a guide to a personal experience of the after-death experience through meditation. It is an inspiring read.” (*David H., Bargain Book Reviews, January 2014*)

“Hersey’s book offers simple and clear instruction for focusing attention, quieting the mind, and opening to a deep awareness of sound.” (*Spirituality and Health, January 2014*)

“Baird Hersey, the very successful, award-winning composer, musician, and yogi expresses his love of sound in *The Practice of Nada Yoga*. With the blessings of Krishna Das, Hersey, an accomplished yogi and long-time student of Sri Pattabhi Jois, skillfully integrates his knowledge of yoga with the exploration of sound, or nada yoga.”

“*The Practice of Nada Yoga* is well organized, beginning with the four levels of sound and moving into an explanation of what sound is (vibration, which you already knew!), echolocation (think dolphins), the art of listening, and the sacred sound of OM—just to name a few chapters. Hersey provides meditation exercises, asanas, chants, breathing (pranayama), the Eight Limbs (observances) of Yoga, and even a quick chapters on using a neti pot and the importance of sleep.”

“Hersey’s book is a well-rounded and responsible guide to Sacred Sound, which also includes the physical practice of yoga and self-care through a healthy lifestyle. Any reader looking to explore meditative sound and principles of self-care through yoga will enjoy this very accessible and thorough book.” (*Allyson Gracie, Wellness Specialist, Pilates & Yoga Instructor*)

“*The Practice of Nada Yoga: Meditation on the Inner Sacred Sound* is nearly too dense, like a deep rich gong tone. It’s got a lot packed into it, and a cursory read isn’t the way to go about it. It’s more like a handbook, a manual, for a particular line of spiritual inquiry...go purchase this book right now!” (*Ivan Nahem, Yoga Teacher Magazine, Summer 2014*)

About the Author
Baird Hersey is a musician and National Endowment for the Arts Composition Fellow. He has composed extensively for television and for organizations such as Harvard University and the Hudson Valley Philharmonic. A student of yoga and overtone singing since 1988, he studied ashtanga yoga with Sri K. Pattabhi Jois for 9 years, vedanta for 12 years with Swami Chinmayananda’s student Shubhraji, and chant with the Gyuto Monks of Tibet. In 2000 Hersey formed the 9-voice overtone choir PRANA, which regularly collaborates with renowned kirtankar Krishna Das. Baird Hersey lives in Woodstock, New York.

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Chapter 7
Filtering

Music is the silence between the notes.
--Claude Debussy

There are literally thousands and thousands of bits of information flying into our brain every second. From all the reflections of light and color entering our eyes, to the millions of nerve cells in our body sending

information about temperature, texture, pressure, balance, and vibration, to the myriad smells that enter our nose with every breath to the panorama of audible sounds that surround us. We are inundated with stimuli. If we paid attention to it all, we would be overwhelmed, immobilized, and unable to function.

So, our brains have instantaneous and precise routines for prioritizing information as to what we should focus our attention on and what we should filter out and disregard.

Out of the corner of our eye, we see something slither through the grass near our foot. We hear a loud noise. We smell smoke or feel something crawling up our back under our shirt. Because survival is at the top of the list of unconscious priorities, our attention immediately shifts to whatever may be threatening us. At the same time we are filtering out all other input.

I lived in a city for ten years. After working intensely on an album project, recording, listening, and mixing every day for weeks, I took a vacation in the country. There was no television, radio, or anything on which to play recorded music. This was well before the day of cell phones and laptop computers. The quiet of the county overwhelmed me. I couldn’t sleep with all that quiet.

I was used to the daily bombardment of the sounds of the city--some of it purposeful and some made just by neglect. I was used to filtering it all out. I had learned to sublimate the sonic overload. Now that I wasn’t experiencing this stimulation, my brain didn’t know what to do.

In the rain forest when a predator is near all the birds and animals fall silent. Some primal part of my brain was responding. My survival mode was saying if there is no sound then something must be wrong. My filters, which allowed me to sleep in the city had nothing to filter out. They were waking me up because no noise signaled danger. After a week my filters had adjusted and I began to sleep more normally.

Since that time I have lived in the quiet of the country for 25 years. On a recent visit to the city I stayed in a room facing a busy street. At first, I was not able to sleep because of the noise on the street. Every time a truck rumbled by or a motorcycle engine revved as it raced up the street or a bus caused the building to shudder and rattle, I woke up. Again after a couple of days I began to acclimate. The filters began to come up and I didn’t wake up so much.

This first exercise is to wake up our external listening, to help us let go of some of our filters. This will help us to hear all the sounds of the world around us with more subtlety.

Ambient Sound Meditation
It may be helpful to close your eyes after you read each instruction. Take your time and really allow yourself to hear.

1. At first let your hearing focus on individual sounds in your environment.
2. Listen for the sound closest to you.
3. Listen for the sound most distant from you.
4. Listen to the loudest sound.
5. Listen to the quietest sound.
6. Listen to the lowest pitch sound.
7. Listen to the highest pitch sound.
8. Listen for continuous sounds.
9. Listen for cyclical, repeating sounds.
10. Listen for intermittent sounds.

11. Listen out of your right ear.
12. Listen out of your left ear.
13. Listen out of both ears.
14. Now, instead of hearing these sounds one at a time, hear all them all at once in a panorama. Listen as if you are broadening your focus from one point on a movie screen to the entire screen. Let go of all naming or identifying of individual sounds. Hear them combined as just one all-encompassing sound. Hold that focus as long as you can.

As you travel through your day, try to take notice of the sounds that you ordinarily filter out. Let yourself hear those sounds that surround you all the time that you don’t usually hear. Bring into your awareness the qualities of a sound that make it unique, the minute differences and similarities that give it a place in the panoramic auditory spectrum of all the sounds that surround you.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Wendy Ray:

This book untitled The Practice of Nada Yoga: Meditation on the Inner Sacred Sound to be one of several books that will best seller in this year, this is because when you read this reserve you can get a lot of benefit into it. You will easily to buy this kind of book in the book retail store or you can order it via online. The publisher of this book sells the e-book too. It makes you more easily to read this book, since you can read this book in your Touch screen phone. So there is no reason to you to past this e-book from your list.

Loren Benton:

Do you have something that you like such as book? The guide lovers usually prefer to choose book like comic, brief story and the biggest the first is novel. Now, why not seeking The Practice of Nada Yoga: Meditation on the Inner Sacred Sound that give your pleasure preference will be satisfied by means of reading this book. Reading practice all over the world can be said as the means for people to know world far better then how they react in the direction of the world. It can't be mentioned constantly that reading behavior only for the geeky man or woman but for all of you who wants to be success person. So , for all you who want to start studying as your good habit, you may pick The Practice of Nada Yoga: Meditation on the Inner Sacred Sound become your own personal starter.

Lynnette Jennings:

Your reading 6th sense will not betray you, why because this The Practice of Nada Yoga: Meditation on the Inner Sacred Sound book written by well-known writer who really knows well how to make book that could be understand by anyone who else read the book. Written inside good manner for you, dripping every ideas and publishing skill only for eliminate your hunger then you still doubt The Practice of Nada Yoga: Meditation on the Inner Sacred Sound as good book but not only by the cover but also through the content. This is one book that can break don't determine book by its deal with, so do you still needing a different sixth sense to pick this particular!? Oh come on your reading through sixth sense already said so why you have to listening to another sixth sense.

Raymond Nelson:

The book untitled The Practice of Nada Yoga: Meditation on the Inner Sacred Sound contain a lot of information on this. The writer explains the girl idea with easy way. The language is very straightforward all the people, so do not necessarily worry, you can easy to read the idea. The book was compiled by famous author. The author gives you in the new age of literary works. You can actually read this book because you can read on your smart phone, or model, so you can read the book in anywhere and anytime. If you want to buy the e-book, you can open up their official web-site in addition to order it. Have a nice study.

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