



Nadam and Authentic Self ~ Sharon Gannon & David Life

Date: Oct 8, 2005

Focus: Nadam

Location: Jivamukti Yoga, NY

Sharon:

(Chanting)

OM, OM, OM

Now you'll have to ask your own Higher Self, the inner guiding light, the inner guru, who appears in the form of nadam.

(Chanting)

Make me an instrument for Thy will

Not mine, but Thine be done

Free me from anger, jealousy and fear

Fill my heart with compassion

Shanti, Shanti, Shanti

We will begin with meditation, please choose your seat, sit in such a way that you are comfortable and your position is conducive to meditation practice. Sit in such a way that you can remain for around 20 minutes. Once you have secured your seat do not move, be still. Allow the outer body to be still as the process moves deeply inward. Bring your awareness to breathing, breathing in and breathing out. Letting go of everything you think you know.

(Plays Shri Brahmananda Sarasvati's Cosmic Meditation)

(Meditation)

When thoughts, feelings arise, allow them to arise, and let them go, continuous letting go, the practice of meditation. Letting go of everything you think you know, every label and description. Let go layer by layer until all has gone through and what will remain is that which can never come or go, that which is essential, eternal. That which cannot truly be described but can be felt, can be heard through feeling. Deep, deep, deeper still into the nadam.

(Meditation continues)

Please sit as if you were making yourself available for this stripping away, this letting go, layer by layer, so as to reveal that which is essential within you. That which is alive, truly alive within you and has been from the beginning of time, that which is beyond personality, that which is beyond all cultural conditioning, sit, available to that practice. And as you do, inspire others who may be sitting near to you to allow this revelation within them. Sit as to inspire the person next to you.

(Meditation continues)



Lie down, relax for a few moments.

(David chanting)

*Namah Shivaya Gurave, Nada Bindu Kalatmane
Narajnana Param Yati, Nityam Yatra Parayanah
Namah Shivaya Gurave, Nada Bindu Kalatmane
Narajnana Param Yati, Nityam Yatra Parayanah*

Salutations to the nadam, which is the inner guide and the inner life, the dispenser of happiness to all. It is the inner guru appearing as nada, bindu and kala. One who is devoted to the inner guru, the nada, the inner music, obtains the highest bliss.

Sharon:

Please turn to the side, pause for a few moments and then come onto your hands and knees, press into downward facing dog. Strive to get out of the way so as to allow your body to be an open channel, a conduit. Feel that you are plugging into the Earth through your hands, receiving the energy of Mother Nature through your wrists and arms, torso and then allowing the pulsation of energy to descend back into the Earth through the legs and feet. Facilitate this process through means of breathing. Breathe in, draw the energy up through the hands, and breathe out, reach through the heels, connect to the Earth. Walk your feet forward til they come between your hands, uttanasana. Through means of breathing do your best to facilitate movement of energy, prana, throughout the body. Open your feet apart til they're about as wide as your mat turn them out slightly, bend the knees exhale come to squat. Bring your hands in namaste position in front of your heart, use your arms to open the inner thighs allowing your tailbone to drop. Through means of breathing facilitate movement of energy through the body. Exhale your hands towards the floor and extend your legs. Walk your feet together, inhale stand up and everyone please come closer to the stage area, bring something to sit on, also if you want to sit in virasana bring whatever props you may need because you will be sitting for several minutes.

We're listening to Anoushka Shankar, Ravi Shankar's daughter. You could say that Anoushka practices nada yoga. But what an Indian musician is doing is not different from what all of us are doing. We are also nada yoga practitioners. And this is what I want to get across this morning hopefully. What is meant by nada yoga. You don't have to be an Indian sitarist to be a nada yoga practitioner. You don't even have to be a musician to be a nada yoga practitioner. Patanjali begins the Yoga Sutra with this sutra, and if you know it please chant along.

(Chanting)

*Atha Yoga Nushashanam
Atha Yoga Nushashanam
Atha Yoga Nushashanam*

Now this is yoga as I have observed it in the natural world. So the first sutra is a lesson in nada yoga.



(*Silence. Laughter.*) The first sutra of Patanjali is a lesson in nada yoga. He is saying yoga, or this realization of the eternal Self, the essential nature, the cosmic primal cause, God, the Divine, this realization of the oneness of Being, this realization that you are that which is eternal and divine, can be yours, if, he says, you are willing to look deeply into things. If you are willing to go past the outer surface, the appearance of things, and penetrate into the essential nature of the world, of yourself as an individual, of others, of every person or situation that you find yourself in. if you are willing to penetrate and come to the essential nature of that, then yoga will arise. This is a way of describing nada yoga. Nada yoga is deep listening. The ability to hear beyond any labeling, beyond any description, beyond what you think you know about anything. Like Shri Brahmananda said, forget everything you think you know. And that is what the process of meditation is about. When you think you know something that has arisen in your experience, whether it is a thought or excruciating sensation in your knee, right, you immediately attach a label, if you're practicing meditation you whooh, immediately drop that label and you continue to penetrate deeper until you get to the essential nature which is pulsation, vibration. The quantum physicists are telling us that now. Finally they kind of caught up to the yogis. They were yogis themselves all along. But the essential nature of all of manifestation is sound vibration. Please take your hands and allow them to become like earphones, headphones, and put them over your ears very tightly, and listen.

Release. In the Hatha Yoga Pradipika those sounds that you heard are expressed in various ways, sounding like rushing water, sounding like the humming of bees, sounding like kettle drums, sounding like bells or chimes. If you can even penetrate that sound with your precious faculty of attention you will begin to perceive the inner innermost sound which the closest way that the rishis and sages of old have come to describe that sound is Om. So that is what is penetrating and permeating every aspect of being. So in this practice of nada yoga it's not just done by musicians, it's not just done when you listen to Indian music, it's not just done by plugging your ears. It's done by the practitioner who doesn't want to live a superficial life any longer but wants to penetrate into the causes of things.

When someone asks us, and this is a very common social convention, "How are you?" has anyone ever asked you that? "How are you?" and most of us answer "Oh fine thank you." Now usually neither one of us wants to go any deeper, right? I mean, for whatever reason, we really don't have time but we want to connect to the person in some way, you know, so we just sort of answer that way. But truly if you contemplate it as a nada yogi, when you are asking another person how are you, what you are really doing is inquiring as to how are they feeling. You're trying to pull up from the other person a remembrance of a deep level of feeling, of vibration, of pulsation as Shri Brahmananda would describe it. It's like some great nada yoga masters like Michael Franti when he performs he's continually asking, "How ya feelin'?" because he's trying to remind the people that he's with of the essential nature within each one of us which defies description, which is just pure vibration pulsating. So as we go into the asanas today, I want you to move into the asanas as a nada yogi. Don't be content with superficial sensation or awareness, penetrate it. Try to penetrate it so deeply that perhaps you could even come to a layer of awareness which is pure pulsation, pure vibration without any label of 'this feels good, this feels bad, this is painful, this is pleasurable' try to keep digging, penetrating deeper. That's what nada yoga is. David wants to say a few things.



David:

We don't want you to feel gypped. In the art of music in India there are three aspects to it in order of importance. First is singing, voice, second is playing, and third is dancing. Together they make the art of music. Number one singing, has to do with the voice, sounds that we make, words that we speak, and that's very interesting in itself, that there's so much there to investigate in the voice and the sound of the voice. For example if in the other room there was a young child speaking a phrase, could you tell it was a young child speaking by the sound of their voice? If in the other room there was a middle aged person, speaking the same phrase, could you tell it was a middle aged person? Or a teen for that matter. Or could you tell it was an elderly person, not by the content of what was there but by the sound of it. The quality of voice has an age to it. Also if you pay attention, this is really interesting, people who had a fortunate life, and to me that means people who have some happiness and some freedom in their lives, their voice sounds different from the unfortunate. And don't you perceive that also, just from the sound of the voice, it's really amazing.

This investigation is part of nada yoga but even more importantly and what I want to do is I want to try to make the connection to asana practice, because I don't want you going away from this month thinking that was a month about music and musicians and it really doesn't relate to me. What is the word, we all know about the potency of words, we know that in the Bible it says, in the beginning was the word, and the word was god. It also says the word is light and in every religion you will find this importance placed on the word in one way or another. And it's because of this, it's a simple idea, listen to these sounds I have to get the mic a little closer so it picks it up. (*Exhales into the mic*) It's just my breathing, right? But does it have meaning there? (*Exhales*) there's meaning, right? Could you give it a word? You'd have to give it maybe several words, contentment, ease, something like that if I'm doing it well. Is there a word there? It's just the quality of the breath.

So what are words? Nothing but a refinement of breath. And what is a yoga asana practice? Nothing but a refinement of breath. When we refine the breath we refine the speech. So it's not just about singing a song, it's about understanding the potency of the breath and understanding that potency underlies the potency of our lives. What's the common expression, Alex, "Word up." What's it mean? Translate for us. (*Alex: "How you doing?"*) We have another translation. (*Alex: "Correct."*) Correct. Word up. That's right. You know, and there are many other expressions like I hear you that tell us the potency of breath but in our daily lives do we live the potency of breath? I was walking down the street yesterday and I saw coming toward me half a block away a beautiful young Indian girl talking on a cell phone. And from a distance I was appreciating her hair, the texture of her skin, the color of it, the way she walked, she was a vision to me. As she got closer I heard her talking on the cell phone, 'If I see her I'm gonna take her out, she's a bitch.' (*Laughter*) My vision was like bbthht, like this, right. Then it changed, I got compassionate for her, trying to see her among her peers, trying to see her level, her place, her power, all that, right. So I understood. But anyway I don't want to go any more into that, you get it? When we talk about the word it's not just about the rhythm of poetry, it's not just about the singing voice although if you, if we look at the most powerful singers throughout history, whether it's popular singers or classical singers it doesn't matter, the very best ones, it's all about the breath. Look at Luciano Pavarotti. Listen carefully to Bob Dylan. Listen to how the phrasing, the pacing, everything that he's saying is about his breath. When there's that close link and that honoring, it's exalted and that's nada yoga.



Secondly, playing, and I don't want to go into this very deeply at all, but you all know that instruments, musical instruments are an extension of the body. Look at even the shape of a cello, the shape of a guitar, look at the way a bagpipe works. (*Makes bagpipe sounds*) They're all just extensions, as any instrument is there all just an extension of the eye, the ear, the voice and so forth. I don't want to go too deeply into that but that's why we feel that listening to music is important in a yoga practice. I mean what did we sing in the beginning of class? Make me an... (*Students: "Instrument"*) instrument of your, of thy will. Clear me out, help me to get rid of my stuff so that I could, I could allow your breath to come through me freely without being infected with my won self cherishing which changes it, changes the content.

But I did want to spend slightly more time, especially with reference to asana practice on the third aspect of the art of music in India which is dancing. We don't usually or often, we know the link between dancing and music and sound. But I don't know if we would include it as they do in India as part of the art of music. Maybe we would consider it a separate art, related. But what dancing is really is an expression of rhythm, and rhythm is a very important aspect of nada yoga. I mean we have various ways that we experience rhythm and that rhythm has various effects on us. But on a very simple level rhythm is an expression of our, rhythm in music or in sound is an outer expression of an inner experience of rhythm, for example the beat of the heart. We all know that's. I mean when you go to a doctor it doesn't matter what kind of doctor, if it's an Aryurvedic doctor he's got his hand on your pulse here (*wrist*) if it's an allopathic doctor he's got his stethoscope here. They're listening to the beat of your heart to see how you're doing. The step of the foot in dance or the step of the foot walking down the street has, it is our experience of the potency of our lives. Life without movement is what? It loses all of its potency. So the movement through space is equated with the rhythm. It can be faster, it can be slower, it could be somehow syncopated or changed, but that rhythm has an important message to us and I want to emphasize the way that we step through space and the way that we can that that has an effect on our mental state, agreed? In the same way that various voice sounds can have an effect like it had an effect on me when I saw the girl. Or it tells us certain things, it informs us. It might inform us of how we're doing, what kind of terrain we're crossing. It might inform us of our vitality, our potency in any given moment.

And what is asana practice about? It's about stepping your foot forward in space nicely with ease and selflessness. Even before the one Sharon said, *atha yoga nushashanam*, we have a title of the first chapter, which is? (*Students: "Samadhi Pada."*) *Samadhi Pada*. One translation of the word *Pada* is word. It's the word on *Samadhi*. So I think that we need to enlarge, we all could benefit by enlarging our ability to integrate, re-integrate. Rather than seeing and experiencing our life separately from our yoga practice, the music that we hear separately from the asana practice that we do, the voicing and the singing that we hear separately from our breath practices, please, if *Jivamukti* is about anything, it's about seeing how things relate to each other. Not how they are separate and distinct from each other. Yoga is about bringing it together, bringing our understanding together. I had a bunch of notes but I didn't use them. I don't usually have notes, but I went to a long talk that B.K.S. Iyengar gave two weeks ago and he had notes, so. And he's a master, so I guess I'd better have some notes. I have notes, I have timing, and now we're going to have music and movement.



Sharon:

So the asana practice along with all the other practices of yoga should address the dis-ease that we all suffer from to some extent at this time, and that disease is the dis-ease of disconnect. As David said, he mentioned that, most of us think something, say something completely different, and do a third totally different third thing. We've gotta heal this or there's not going to be a world left.

And David and I feel that this is why yoga has become so popular in our time because yoga gives a method for reintegration, of connecting together, to come from a place of authenticity. Not from a place of cultural conditioning. I saw an interview, an old interview with Bob Dylan, and those old interviews are so great, right, if you ever get a chance to see them from the sixties, he was a master of authenticity. In other words, nada yoga, he knew how to get to the essence of something. And a reporter asked, "*I have read that your songs have a subtle message.*" So he responded by saying, "*Where'd you read that?*" and she kind of got embarrassed and she said, "*Oh, some movie magazine.*" And so he wouldn't answer the question. He didn't answer her question because she didn't ask it. She wasn't asking the question. And why talk to somebody who's really not talking to you or interested in communicating with you? It goes nowhere.

As a people we've got to begin to communicate with each other in an authentic way, to actually speak to each other what's deeply inside of us, deeply inside of us. Not surface feelings, not something that we just read about or has been put upon us with some sort of conditioning. You know and I gave this example the other day, there was a really wonderful all girl band in the early 80s called the Raincoats, and they had this great song, do you remember them, they had this great song and the first line was, "Have you ever made love before you read a magazine?" so we live in these times of heavy cultural conditioning that we don't even know who we are. We don't even know where our thoughts come from. So let's get back to that authenticity, come and find a space on your mat.

