



Hear and Become ~ David Life

Date: Oct 5, 2005

Focus: Nadam

Setting: Class Talk

Place: Jivamukti Yoga New York

Don't miss that class with Laraaji playing he's truly a master of Nada yoga. You'll learn a lot about it just being in his presence and hearing his amazing sound. I first encountered Laraaji on a radio program called new sounds back in the 80s. I used to hear him all the time on that show and I was really quite surprised the first time I went to Ananda Ashram because he always plays there during meditation, especially when Shri Brahmananda was there. He studied with another Nada yoga master called Nada Brahmananda who stayed at Ananda Ashram for many years and taught. He was a yogi quite famous for his feats, yogic feats, and he was tested various times at the Menninger Institute to see just exactly what he could do with his yogic feats.

One of the things that, one of the tests that they did was they put him in a completely closed air container, some kind of plastic container, with a set of tablas to play and a candle burning inside the container. And next to him they put, I'm sorry to say, a monkey, in a duplicate plastic container with a candle burning but no tablas. And they had Shri Nada Brahmananda start playing his tablas, which he did very enthusiastically, and after some time, I don't know, some time, the air was used up in the container where the monkey was and the candle went out, and the monkey passed out. The candle went out in the container with Nada Brahmananda but he continued to play the tablas for another hour or two hours after. They rescued the monkey, they didn't leave him in there after he passed out with no air, but he was able to control his heart rate, slow it down, and his respiration to the extent that he used up the air very slowly, much more slowly than the monkey. Of course the monkey was a little bit in a panic state, which I'm sure any monkey would be if he was put in a plastic container with a candle burning, but in any case Nada Brahmananda was able to continue playing the tablas the entire time, just one of his little feats of Nada yoga.

We're going to start today with meditation, so I suggest you make sure that you have a comfortable seat. You can raise your seat a little bit on a blanket, if you don't have one there's a bunch over there, you might want two or more. If your feet fall asleep I would suggest putting a blanket under your feet also. Open one up under your feet and then also sit on one. Spend a little time making the seat comfortable so that you won't have to experience a lot of difficulty after you get started meditating. So your seat's ok that's the first thing you want to make sure for meditation. Sit up straight.

(Chanting)

OM, OM, OM shanti, shanti, shanti

Feel the seat underneath you giving support, lift to the spine. Feel at the same time rooted, grounded, stable and steady and lifted, made light. Make any last adjustments you need to trying to remain still for the balance of the meditation practice. Within that stillness begin to watch the breath as it moves in and out with no effort on your part, observing the ebb and flow, ebb and flow of the breath and of the thoughts as they flow through the mind. In the same way feel the ebb and flow of sounds as they manifest in the world, are perceived in the ear and subside gradually. Try not to judge any sound as less or more, experiencing all with detachment and reserve. *(Meditation)*



As you allow sounds to flow through with no resistance, no judgment, begin to perceive a common thread through all the various sounds. Begin by listening to the loudest sounds, and then perceiving the most subtle sounds, and then switch back, listening to the louder sounds, and then to the most subtle, eventually perceiving at the most subtle level the common ground of all sounds, the tonic, the nadam.

Use these final minutes, not for superficial listening, but for diving deep inside - begin to tune internally your instrument and listen internally for the most subtle of all sounds.

Slowly stretch out your legs, lay down on your back for a few minutes.

(Cosmic meditation CD)

Begin to move your fingers and toes. Deepen your breath, stretch out on the floor, then roll over onto your right side and pause there. Push up to a seated position.

(Chanting)

OM, OM, OM

If you want to follow in the chant books we're going to do on page 15 from the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, fourth chapter first sutra.

OM

Namah Shivaya Gurave, Nada Bindu Kalatmane

Narajnana Param Yati, Nityam Yatra Parayanah

Namah Shivaya Gurave, Nada Bindu Kalatmane

Narajnana Param Yati, Nityam Yatra Parayanah

Nityam Yatra Parayanah

OM

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.

Everyone's devoted to music, but some use it for transformation and some use it to stay the same. Some use music that reaffirms that aspect of themselves which is narrow and confined, that aspect of themselves that gets jealous, gets angry, jumps up and down and stomps their feet and cries a lot. Some people use music to uplift that part of themselves which is closer to our highest nature rather than our lowest nature. And those people are the yogis. They use music to uplift the soul, to bring clarity to the mind. They use music as a yogic practice, those are nada yogis.

(Reading)

“The anahata nada sounds may appear in any part of the head, left or right, but beginners are advised first to meditate on the right side, since the right side of the brain needs development and blossoming, and then to expand the sound so that it reaches in all directions.”



Actually the right side of the brain has a direct link to the brain stem that controls the beating of the heart, the rate of the heart, whereas the left side of the brain has a less direct connection.

(Reading)

“Modern people are mostly right handed, right sided, so the left brain is developed. By hearing the sound on the right side of the head we directly stimulate the right brain, and there is evolution of universal existence in our perception. Right is God and left is human; when they meet, intelligence flows through us naturally and spontaneously.”

I was just at the Yoga Journal conference in Estes Park, Colorado. How many of you have gone to a Yoga Journal yoga conference? Very few. Why not? No time? Busy New Yorkers? Broke? Why? What are you spending your money on? What's valuable in this time? To go into the mountains with almost 2000 yogis being lead by master Iyengar is quite an experience and I'm sure is something you'd never forget or regret. Maybe spend a little less on electronic gadgets and amusements, a little more in transcendence. Might be money well spent.

Anyway Master Iyengar gave teachings is everyone familiar with B.K.S. Iyengar, somewhat, you know of his work at all? He was a student of Krishnamacharya, who was also the teacher of Shri K. Pattabhi Jois and T.K.B. Deshikachar, and Indra Devi. Together those four people (Iyengar, Pattabhi Jois, Deshikachar, and Indra Devi) are the four people responsible for bringing just about 100% of the yoga that we experience today into the world. And they all came from one master teacher Krishnamacharya. In any case B.K.S. Iyengar is I guess most renowned for his organization and categorization of all the asanas. He sort of sorted them out and made sense of them. Up until that point asana practice was sort of random. Everyone did them differently and there seemed to be no overall guiding principles. So in a practical way Mr. Iyengar got all the possible ways, obtained all the books available in India and learned all the possible ways of approaching any particular asana. Through his own experience of those asanas he decided which ones were the best ways to do them and put them all into a book called *Light on Yoga*, truly an amazing work. A work that would be quite enough for one lifetime but he has gone on to make many other works, *Light on Yoga Sutras*, he's just come out in his 86th year of life he's come out with a book called *Light on Life*.

In any case a lot of the talks that he gave at the conference were based on his life, recalling his life and talking about it. And one of the things he talked about was this process he went through of ordering the asanas, figuring out what was the best way to do it, not only what was the safest way but what was the most effective way, how was an asana most effective. So he would try out one guru's way of doing it, for a long period of time, not just one day but for a long period of time, and then he would feel the results of that, then he would try out the same asana as instructed by another teacher for a long period of time, and then he would see the results of doing it that way, and so on. Gradually he found what he felt were the most effective and direct and safest ways of encountering all these physical positions. A question was asked of him, how did he exactly decide which one was best? And he named a few reasons why, how it felt, the results he obtained from it, but you know his teachings were very amazing and very dense and he would give almost under his breath very esoteric answers to questions. And one answer he gave to this question how did you decide which way of doing the asana was the best way I found very captivating.



He said it was how it sounded. And I think probably 90% of the people in the room missed that, partly because he kind of muttered it under his breath, how it sounded, but partly because probably they didn't hear it, if you know what I mean. It didn't penetrate past what they had the capacity to hear at the time, or understand, because hearing does really mean understanding.

On one level we can just listen, we can listen and judge and separate and segregate, and keep those thoughts in the left hemisphere of the brain, keep the responses there too according to some sort of analytical process. But on the other hand we can listen and hear and through that hearing, through allowing that hearing to become part of us, we can know. We can know what's being spoken of. We can know it as the same as us. And this is what nada yoga is, it's learning how to first of all listen, and secondly hear, and thirdly to become, to become the same as the sound, and thereby gain all the wisdom incorporated in the sound, anything we are exposed to.

The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* proclaims that as yogis it should be our goal to experience this and Shri Brahmananda Sarasvati who you were just listening to emphasized this practice more than any other practice, the practice of feeling pulsation. We've all felt pulsation, it's nothing strange, if you've ever stood near a big speaker at a concert, you've felt on a very gross level, pulsation. You've felt it pushing your body, literally, pushing against your heart, against your chest, and certainly vibrating against your eardrum until you stuffed something in there to keep from going deaf at the concert. So we know that music moves us -- it doesn't just move us physically, which we've all felt, if you've ever gone to the doctor's office and received ultrasound treatment for some injury you know that the sound can be felt as pulsation but it also can be felt as heat in the form of that ultrasound treatment. But beyond the physical experience of pulsation we have an emotional experience of pulsation.

Music has an associated mood or it can place you in a certain frame of mind, it could be contemplative, it could be serene, or it could be very hyped up, it could get you going, it could excite you. When we become conscious of the effect that pulsation has on us and we feel it we can begin to use it as a tool for transformation on a conscious level, choosing what we listen to in ways that could facilitate whatever it was we were trying to achieve. A little like getting up to get going in the morning and putting on Bruce Springsteen or something, I don't know. On that mundane level it could be very useful. Or calming down at night and putting on some Bach, something like that. But also realizing that it affects our subtle body, we could listen to so much music that's available in the form of kirtan, and Sanskrit chanting as ways of subtly refining ourselves through listening which is the main form that nada yoga takes. At some point we have to penetrate more deeply into the sound and not just let it do us but begin to be transformed by it, and in fact to become it. So in the beginning we have a listener, a sound that's being listened to and the act of listening. In the end of the transformation all three of those merge and there's just being ness. So we start by perceiving more closely, more carefully, refining our listening, might mean that you switch from Bruce Springsteen to Bach, or I don't want to say any music is bad, cos I really don't think it is, but maybe you realize it's going to have an effect on you so you use it that way. But as we become more and more sensitive to the effect that the music has, allowing it to penetrate more deeply into our being, we start to feel not different from that music, we start to lose the identity of the listener, and we incorporate all the wisdom that we find in that music, in those sounds. And that's what we're going to be studying this month at Jivamukti Yoga.



Mr. Iyengar actually mentioned sound twice in his lectures, I was counting. And I was really happy to hear him say it, if only under his breath. I guess he felt that the ones that should hear it, would hear it and would know what he was talking about and everyone else maybe would perceive what was appropriate for them to hear. Are there any questions about nada yoga, yoga of sound, pulsation? No questions, ok good. Ok yes.

She asked when we are doing our asanas how can we include sound or to what degree to we include sound in our practice of asana. Well it happens on many levels. Number one obviously the sound shouldn't be getting in the way of your ease, so if it's too loud, blaring, obviously it's not going to create more ease, it's going to create disruption. The music should hopefully support your upliftment. So it's probably in a yoga practice, in an asana practice, wouldn't be very helpful to listen to music that well, what could I say, gangster rap for example. To listen to music that celebrates the least of our accomplishments perhaps. That celebrates our arrogance or our pride or our anger. I mean there might be an appropriate time for that music but I don't know if it will facilitate asana practice.

Also on a deeper level, on a more subtle level, each of the asanas that we do has a distinctive vibrational signature to it. So that the shape that you're taking with your body as you do asana resonates on the level of vibration celestially, universally, like an antennae, even like both a receiver and a transmitter of different kinds of vibration, so that you see different kinds of antennas on the roof shaped different ways and they have different functions. A satellite dish doesn't pick up radio; I don't know maybe they do from the satellites. A color TV antenna is different from just rabbit ears, the black and white TV antenna. FM radio antenna is different from AM radio antenna. So the shape of your receiver and transmitter will select certain aspects of the total vibration to receive, to conduct through it and then to transmit.

So what we need to do in our practice is as Mr. Iyengar said, listen to the sound, and to begin to develop the inner ear to know when the asana is right. There's only so much correction you can do from the outside. It's quite possible to do asana externally only and look good, look great. But someone who has the skill to perceive could look at someone doing an asana on the outside but perceive that they weren't really in the asana as deeply as they could be. They weren't resonating with it, they weren't vibrating with it, they were just putting it on, like you might get dressed up rather than being in your asana clothes, fancy clothes. You could do an asana practice just like that. So that, and most of us do begin that way, especially when we're in the learning stage, you just, you look, you watch, and you copy it as best you can, and you get better at that. But to take it deeper, which is what this month is about, how to take it to the next level, you got to learn to perceive very well where it is in your being you are resisting allowing that asana to penetrate to the deepest level and transform you. Because it can't transform you if it's just like a layer of clothes.

It can only transform you if you allow it to penetrate very deeply inside. So the awareness is the same as feeling, you know, you feel a certain tightness, let's say, in an asana, and you could know that tightness or that confusion as past karmic residue that disallows the vibration to move through you easily. You feel it as resistance, you feel it as what you might call misunderstanding and confusion, but what we need to do to allow that to diminish over time is to begin to not push away that tightness, not try to make it do something, this is again doing it from the outside, but to embrace that tightness as the result of some past action, to allow it to resolve itself, come all the way back to its starting place which was you, thereby diminishing it and allowing the subtle sound to move through that part of the body more easily.



Of course you can use the breath and most especially you can use the inner attunement to begin to feel pulsation in the parts of your body that are hard, that are dull, that are resistant. Feel pulsation there. That's the beginning of the change. If it's an old injured part of the body that you've made a little shell around it to protect it maybe you don't even remember the injury doesn't matter but you do know that nothing seems to penetrate the shell.

Slowly you start to feel a pulse there. The pulse of your own vitality, the pulse of your own healing energy, rather than feeling this tightness as something separate from you, something you must force to change, you must instead be all right with it. I mean honestly to be able to say, this is fine, in fact I appreciate it because it's telling me about me, it's informing me about how I've been. And at that point it begins to really melt away and then the pulsation can move through it easily, there's no longer resistance there.

So that's a little bit about asana and nadam, about how it works, and as he said, it should sound right. But in order to know if it sounds right you have to be listening right, listening internally. Start that process through your outer listening to the music, notice what the lyrics are, notice the effect it has on you, notice if it gets you excited or calms you down, begin to refine that, consciously selecting music that is appropriate to whatever you're doing in the moment and see if that doesn't help. OK shall we do some asana?

