

# The Yoga of Sound

“Om” – that syllable is everything!  
Here’s why:  
The past, present, and future –  
everything is just om.  
And whatever is beyond the three  
times, that too is just om. ”



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Class One:

The Generative Power of Language and the Song of Silence

I. The Two Truths About Reality

From the *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*:

saṃvṛtiḥ paramārthaśca satyadvayamidaṃ matam |  
buddheragocarastattvaṃ buddhiḥ saṃvṛtirucyate ||

**Truth about reality is considered to be of two kinds – deceptive and ultimate. How things really are is inaccessible to the intellect, for the intellect is said to be deceptive.**

(9.2)

II. The Power of the Word

A. From Atisha's *Lamp for the Path of Awakening*:

bhavo vikalpobhūto'yaṃ tadvikalpātmakastataḥ |  
sarvakalpaparityāgaḥ nivārṇaḥ paramo'sti hi ||

**This world has come into being through concepts and thus exists purely conceptually.  
The abandonment of all such conceptual thinking is the highest nirvana. (56)**

B. From Nagarjuna's *Root Verses on the Middle Way*:

vyavahāramanāśritya paramārtho na deśyate |  
paramārthamanāgamya nirvāṇaṃ nādhigamyate ||

**Without relying on conventional reality,  
The ultimate meaning cannot be taught.  
Without arriving at the ultimate meaning of things,  
Nirvana cannot be attained. (24.10)**

yah pratīyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatām tām pracakṣmahe |  
sā prajñaptirupādāya pratipatsaiva madhyamā ||

**Whatever arises dependently  
Is what is called emptiness.  
That which is conventionally designated  
Is the middle way. (24.18)**

apratīya samutpanno dharmah kaścina vidyate |  
yasmāttasmādaśūnyo hi dharmah kaścina vidyate ||

**There is nothing whatsoever  
That does not arise dependently.  
And thus there is nothing whatsoever  
That is not empty. (24.19)**

yadyaśūnyam bhavetkim citsyāccūnyamiti kim cana |  
na kim cidastyaśūnyam ca kutaḥ śūnyam bhaviṣyati ||

**If there was anything at all that was not empty,  
Then there would be something that we could call “empty.”  
There is nothing at all that is not empty,  
So how could there be something that is empty? (13.7)**

### III. Silence and Ultimate Reality

#### A. From the *Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life*.

yathā dr̥ṣṭam śrutam jñātam naiveha pratiśidhyate |  
satyataḥ kalpanā tvatra duḥkhaḥeturnivāryate ||

**It is not things that are seen, heard, and known that is being refuted here. It is the conceptualization of those things as truly existing – which is the cause of our suffering – that is here repudiated. (9.26)**

B. From Nagarjuna's *Root Verses on the Middle Way*:

karmakleśakṣayānmokṣaḥ karmakleśā vikalpataḥ |  
te prapañcātprapañcastu śūnyatāyām nirudhyate ||

**Freedom comes from the destruction of karma and mental afflictions.**

**Karma and mental afflictions come from conceptual thought,  
From the conceptual elaboration of them.**

**And conceptual elaboration comes to an end in emptiness. (18.5)**

nivṛttamabhīdhātavyaṁ nivṛtte cittagocare |  
anutpannāniruddhā hi nirvāṇamiva dharmatā ||

**When the realm of thought has ceased,  
The process of labelling ceases.**

**Reality is like nirvana:  
It is doesn't arise nor does it end. (18.7)**

अपरप्रत्ययं शान्तं प्रपञ्चैरप्रपञ्चितं ।

निर्विकल्पमनानार्थमेतत्तत्त्वस्य लक्षणं ॥

aparapratyayaṁ śāntaṁ prapañcairaprapañcitaṁ |  
nirvikalpamanānārthametattattvasya lakṣaṇaṁ ||

**Independent, peaceful, not projected by conceptual elaboration,**

**Beyond conceptual thought, undifferentiated –**

**These are the characteristics of reality. (18.9)**

From Candrakīrti's commentary on verses 25.16,24 of Nagarjuna's *Root Verses on the Middle Way*:

sarvaprapañcātitarūpatvād jñānasyeti |

**What is called "wisdom" lies beyond all conceptual elaborations regarding the world of form.**

vācāmapravṛttervā prapañcopaśamaścittasayāpravṛtteḥ śivaḥ |

**When there is nothing left to say and conceptual elaborations are pacified and the discursive mind shuts down, there is peace.**

C. From the *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra*:

yasya kasyāpi varṇasya pūrvāntāvanubhāvayet |  
śūnyayā śūnyabhūto'sau śūnyākāraḥ pumānbhavet || 40 ||

**Even one who contemplates on what is before and after the sound, that person becomes joined with emptiness through emptiness; he assumes the form of emptiness. (40)**

madhyajihve sphāritāsye madhye niṣipya cetanām |  
hoccāraṁ manasā kurvaṁstataḥ śānte praliyate || 81 ||

**Keeping the tongue inside (and inverted), put your consciousness in the middle of the wide open mouth. Mentally make the sound “ha.” Then one will be absorbed in peace. (81)**

abindumavisargaṁ ca akāraṁ japato mahān |  
udeti devi sahasā jñānaughaḥ parameśvaraḥ || 90 ||

**Repeat the letter “a” without nasalization or aspiration at the end, o Goddess, and then suddenly a great flood of wisdom, the Supreme Lord, will arise. (90)**

varṇasya savisargasya visargāntaṁ citiṁ kuru |  
nirādhāreṇa cittena spṛśedbrahma sanātanam || 91 ||

**Put your mind on the aspiration at the end of a letter with aspiration. Because the mind has no support, one touches the eternal brahman.**

Class Two:  
Chanting Sacred Syllables

I. Om: The Ultimate Mantra

A. From the *Chandogya Upanishad*

prajāpatirlokānabhyatapattebhyo'bhitaptebhyastrayī vidyā  
samprāsraṅvattāmabhyatapatasyā abhitaptāyā etānyakṣarāṇi  
samprāsraṅvanta bhūrbhuvahḥ svariti ॥

**The Lord of Creatures heated up the worlds. When they had been heated up, the threefold Veda issued forth from them. He then heated that up, and when it was heated up these three syllables issued forth: *bhuh, bhuvah, svah*. (2.23.2)**

tānyabhyatapattebhyo'bhitaptebhya aumkāraḥ samprāsraṅvattadyathā śaṅkunā sarvāṇi  
parṇāni sanṭṛṇṇānyevamaumkāreṅa sarvā vāksanṭṛṇṇoṅkāra evedaṅ sarvamaumkāra  
evedaṅ sarvam ॥

**He heated those up and when they were heated up the syllable *om* issued forth. Just as all the leaves are held together by the framework of their veins, so too is all speech held together by *om*. This whole world is *om*, this whole world! (2.23.3)**

B. From the *Maitri Upanishad* (6.22-23):

athānyatrāpyuktam dve vā va brahmaṅi abhidhyeye śabdaścaśabdaśca atha  
śabdenaivāśabdamāviṣkriyate atha tatra omi śabdo'nenordhvamutkrānto'śabde  
nidhanameti athāhaiṣā gatiretadamṛtam atatsāyujyatvam nirvṛtatvam tathā ceti

**Elsewhere it has been said, "There are two forms of ultimate reality to be meditated upon: sound and the soundless. It is through sound that the soundless is revealed, and that sound is *om*. By it one ascends upward until one loses oneself in the soundless.**

**This is immortality; this is the union; this is freedom."**

atha yathorṇanābhistantunordhvamutkrānto'vakāśam labhatītyevam vā va  
khalvāsāvabhidyātā omityanenordhvamutkrāntaḥ svātantryam labhate

**Just as a spider ascends upward and gains a footing by means of its threads, so does  
one meditate on *om* and by that ascends upward and gains independence. . . .**

yo'sau parāparo devā omkāro nāma nāmataḥ | niḥśabdaḥ śūnyabhūtaḥ mūrdhni  
sthāne tato'bhyaset ||

**The divine, which is both transcendent and imminent, is called by the name of *om*. One  
should concentrate at its place in the head on that which is soundless and also empty of  
becoming.**

C. From the *Bhagavad Gita*, 10.25:

maharṣiṇām bhṛgur aham girām asmyekam akṣaram  
yajñānām japayajño 'smi sthāvarāṇām himālayaḥ

**Among the great sages, I am Bhrigu. In language, I am the one syllable (i.e., “*om*”).  
Among ritual practices, I am the repetition of mantras. Among mountains, I am the  
Himalayas.**

D. From the *Yoga Sutra*:

tasya vācakaḥ praṇavaḥ |

***Om* is his (the Lord's) designation. (1.27)**

tajjapastadarthabhāvanam |

**Repeat it constantly and meditate on its meaning. (1.28)**

tataḥ pratyakcetanādhigamo'pyantarāyabhāvaśca

**Because of this obstacles will vanish and there will be the discovery of one's inner  
consciousness. (1.29)**

## II. Meditating on *Om*

### A. From the *Mandukya Upanishad*:

om ityetaḥśaramidaṁ sarvaṁ tasyopavyākhyānaṁ  
bhūtaṁ bhavad bhaviṣyaditi sarvamoṅkāra eva  
yaccānyat trikālātitaṁ tadapyoṅkāra eva (1)

**“Om” – that syllable is everything! Here’s why:  
The past, present, and future – everything is just *om*.  
And whatever is beyond the three times, that too is just *om*.**

sarvaṁ hyetaḥ brahmāyamātmā brahma so'yamātmā catuspāt (2)

**For everything is indeed ultimate reality, and ultimate reality is this true Self. That  
ultimate reality is this true Self made up of four parts. . . .**

so'yamātmādhyakṣaramoṅkaro'dhimātraṁ pādā mātrā mātrāśca pādā akāra ukāro  
makāra iti (8)

***Om* is the true Self in relation to its syllables: the number of its phonetic parts is the  
same as the quarters and the quarters are the same as its phonetic parts: “a,” “u,” and  
“m.” . .**

amātraścaturtho'vyavahāryaḥ prapañcopaśamaḥ śivo'dvaita  
evamoṅkāra ātmaiva saṁviśatyātmanā'tmānaṁ ya evaṁ veda (12)

**The fourth is not a phonetic part: it cannot be pronounced, it is the pacification of  
elaboration, it is peace, it is non-dual. So it is that *om* is indeed the true Self. The one  
who knows this amalgamates himself or herself with the true Self. (12)**



B. From the *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra*:

praṇavādisamuccārāt plutānte śūnyabhāvanāt |  
śūnyayā parayā śaktyā śūnyatāmeti bhairavi ||

O Bhairavi, one who recites *om* and other such seed mantras and then meditates on emptiness at the end of the drawn out version of such a recitation arrives at emptiness through emptiness, through the highest *shakti*. (39)

III. The “Perfection of Wisdom” Mantra

From the *Heart Sutra*:

tasmājjñātavyaḥ prajñāpāramitāmahāmanthro mahāvidyāmanthro 'nuttaramantro  
'samamamantraḥ sarvaduḥkhaḥpraśamanamantraḥ satyamamithyatvāt  
prajñāpāramitāyāmukto mantraḥ | tadyathā |

And so there is a great perfection of wisdom mantra you should know, a mantra of great knowledge, an unsurpassed mantra, a mantra that is equal to what has no equal, a mantra that puts an end to all suffering, a mantra of the perfection of wisdom that, because it is true, has been truly spoken. It goes like this:

*gate gate pāragate pārasaṅgate bodhi svāhā //*

#### IV. The Mantra of Impermanance

From the *Diamond Cutter Sutra*:

yaśca khalu punaḥ subhūte bodhisattvo  
mahāsattvo'prameyānasamkhyeyāmllokadhātūn saptaratnaparipūrṇaṁ kṛtvā  
tathāgatebhyo'rhadbhayaḥ samyaksambuddhebhyo dānaṁ dadyāt, yaśca kulaputro vā  
kuladuhitā vā itaḥ praṣṅpāramitāyā dharmaparyāyādantaśaścatuspādikāmapi  
gāthāmudgrhya dhārayeddeśayedvācayet paryavāpnuyāt, parebhyaśca vistareṇa  
samprakāśayet, ayameva tatonidānaṁ bahutaraṁ puṇyaskandhaṁ  
prasunuyādaprameyamasamkhyeyam | kathaṁ ca samprakāśayet tadyathākāśe-

tārakā timiraṁ dīpo māyāvaśyāya budbudam |  
svapnaṁ ca vidyudabhraṁśca evaṁ draṣṭavya samskṛtam ||

tathā prakāśayet, tenocyate samprakāśayediti ||

Finally, Subhuti, if a bodhisattva, a great being, were to make a gift of immeasurable, countless world systems completely filled with the seven gems and donate it to the Straightforward Ones, the Superior Ones, the Fully Awakened Ones, and if a son or daughter of a noble family were to extract one stanza of four lines from this teaching on the Dharma, from this Perfection of Wisdom, and teach and explain it fully to others, this latter would generate a still greater, immeasurable, countless heaps of merit as a result of that. And how would one explain it? In this way:

Like a star in the sky or a speck in the eye,  
A lamp, an illusion, a dewdrop or a bubble,  
Like a dream, a flash of lightning, or a passing cloud –  
So should you look upon any caused thing.

One should explain it like that, and therefore one “fully explains.”

V. The Mantra “Difficult Only for the Very Stupid”

From the *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra*:

sakāreṇa bahiryāti hakāreṇaviśet punaḥ |  
hamsahaṅsetyamuṁ mantraṁ jīvo japati nityaśaḥ ||

The breath goes out with the sound “sa,” and comes back in with the sound “ha.” A person is always repeating this mantra: “hamsa, hamsa.” (155)

ṣaṭ śatāni divā rātrau sahasrāṅyekaviṁśatiḥ |  
japo devyāḥ samuddiṣṭaḥ sulabho durlabho jaḍaiḥ ||

This mantra, taught by the Goddess, is repeated 21,600 times a day. It is easily available, difficult only for the very stupid. (156)

Class Three:  
The Melodies of the Inner Body

I. Mapping the Inner Body

A. From the *Yogatattva Upanishad*, 1.84-103.

bhūmirāpo'nalo vāyurākāśaśceti pañcakaḥ |  
yeṣu pañcasu devānām dhāraṇā pancadhocyate ||84||

**Earth, water, fire, wind, and space – these are the five (elements). It is said that there is a five-fold meditation on the deities of these five (elements).**

pādādijānurpayantaṁ pṛthivīsthānamucyate |  
pṛthivī caturaśraṁ ca pītavaṇṇaṁ lavaṇakam ||85||

**Extending from the feet to the knees is said to be the place belonging to the earth. It has four sides and is yellow in color and is associated with the syllable “la.”**

pārthive vāyumāropya lakāreṇa samanvitam |  
dhyāyaṁścaturmukhākāraṁ caturvaktraṁ hiraṇamayam ||86||

**Placing the breath on the place belonging to the earth with the corresponding syllable “la,” one should meditate on this golden (deity) with four heads and four mouths (i.e. Brahma). (86)**

dhārayetpañca ghaṭikāḥ pṛthivījayamāpnuyāt |  
pṛthivīyogato mṛtyurna bhavedasya yoginaḥ ||87||

**Holding one’s mind (on that place) for five *ghatika-s* (= two hours), one obtains victory over the earth element. For such a yogi there will be no death connected to the earth element. (87)**

ājānoḥ pāyurpayantamapām sthānam prakīrtitam |  
apo'rdhacandram śuklam ca vambijaṃ parikīrtitam || 88

**Extending from the knees to the anus is called the place of the water element. It is said to be shaped like a half-moon, white, and is connected to the seed syllable “vam.” (88)**

vāruṇe vāyumāropya vakārena samanvitam |  
smarannārāyaṇam devaṃ caturbāhuṃ karīṭinam || 89

**Placing the breath on the place of the water element with the corresponding syllable “va,” and one should contemplate the deity Narayana with four arms and wearing a crown. (89)**

śuddhasphaṭikasankāśaṃ pītavāsasamacyutam |  
dhārayetpañca ghaṭikāḥ sarvapāpaiḥ pramucyate || 90

**One should meditate on the Imperishable who appears like pure crystal, dressed in yellow, for two hours. One is then free from all negative actions. (90)**

tato jalādbhayaṃ nāsti jale mṛtyurna vidyate |  
āpāyorhṛdayānam ca vahnisthānam prakīrtitam || 91

**Then there is no fear of water and one does not meet with death by water. From the anus to the heart is called the place of the fire element. (91)**

vahnistrikoṇam raktaṃ ca rephākṣarasamudbhavam  
vahnau cānilamāropya rephākṣarasamujjvalam || 92

**Fire is triangular in shape, red, and is produced from the syllable “ra.” Place the breath on the place of the fire element which is made radiant with the syllable “ra.” (92)**

triyakṣaṃ varadaṃ rudraṃ taruṇādityasannibham  
bhasmoddhūlitasarvāṅgaṃ suprasannamanusmaran||93

**One should contemplate on the three-eyed Rudra, the one who grants wishes, resembles the rising sun, whose whole body is smeared with ash, and who is very gracious. (93)**

dhārayetpañca ghaṭikā vahninā'sau na dahyate|  
na dhayete śrīraṃ ca praviṣṭasyāgnikuṇḍake||94

**One should meditate on this for two hours. One is not burnt by fire; one's body is not burnt even when entering a fire pit. (94)**

āhṛdayādbhruvormadhaṃ vāyusthānam prakīrtitam|  
vāyuh ṣaṭkoṇakaṃ kṛṣṇaṃ yakārākṣarabhāsuram||95

**From the heart to the middle of the eyebrows is called the place of the wind element, six-sided, black, shining with the syllable "ya." (95)**

mārutaṃ marutaṃ sthāne yakārākṣarabhāsuram|  
dhārayettatra sarvajñamīśvaram viśvatomukham||96

**With the breath on the place of the wind, shining with the syllable "ya," one should meditate there on the omniscient Ishvara who has faces on all sides. (96)**

dhārayetpañca ghaṭikā vāyuvadvyomago bhavet|  
maraṇaṃ na tu vāyostu bhayaṃ bhavati yoginaḥ||97

**One should meditate for two hours. One becomes like the wind, roaming through space. The yogi becomes one who has no fear of nor death by wind. (97)**

ābhrūmadhyāttu mūrdhāntamākāśasthānamucyate |  
vyoma vṛttaṁ ca dhūmraṁ ca hakārākṣarabhāsuram ||98

**From the middle of the eyebrows to the top of the head is said to the place of the space element, circular, the color of smoke, and shining with the syllable “ha.” (98)**

ākāśe vāyumāropya hakāropari śaṅkaram |  
bindurūpaṁ mahādevaṁ vyomākāraṁ sadāśivam |99

**Placing the breath on the place of the space element, on the syllable “ha,” (one should contemplate on) the great god Shiva, the beneficent and perpetually auspicious, with the shape of a dot, taking the appearance of space. . . (99)**

śuddhasphaṭikasāṅkāśaṁ dhṛtabālendumaulinam |  
pañcavaktrayutaṁ saumyaṁ daśabāhuṁ trilocanam ||100

**Appearing like pure crystal, wearing the crown of the crescent moon, having gentle five faces, ten arms, and three eyes. . . (100)**

sarvāyudhairdhṛtākāraṁ sarvabhūṣaṇabhūṣitam |  
umārdhadeham varadaṁ sarvakāraṇakāraṇam ||101

**Appearing holding all his implements and adorned with all adornments, Half of his body being the goddess Uma, the one who grants wishes and is the cause of all causes. (101)**

ākāśadhāraṇāttasya khecaratvaṁ bhaveddhruvam |  
yatra kutra sthito vā'pi sukhamatyantamaśnate ||102

**Because of meditating on the space element, one surely becomes able to fly. Wherever such a one resides, he or she enjoys overwhelming happiness. (102)**





prthaglakṣaṇamatitya pare'śabde'vyakte brahmaṇyastam gatāḥ tatra  
te'prthagdharmaṇo'prthagvivekyā yathā sampannā madhutvaṁ nānārasā ityevaṁ  
hyāha : dve brahmaṇi veditavye śabdabrahma parāṁ ca yat | śabdabrahmaṇi  
niṣṇātaḥ param brahmādhigacchati || || 22||

**Transcending the different characteristics, they end up in the supreme ultimate reality: soundless and unmanifest. There the sounds are without separate properties and one can't tell the difference between them, like different flavors turning into the same sweetness. There are two forms of ultimate reality to be realized, that which is sound and that which is beyond sound. Having become deeply familiar with the ultimate reality which is sound, one realizes the supreme ultimate reality.**

B. From the *Nada Bindu Upanishad*:

siddhāsane sthito yogī mudrāṁ sandhāya vaiṣṇavīm |  
śṛṇuyāddakṣiṇe karṇe nādamantargataṁ sadā || 31||

**Sitting in *siddhasana* and placing his hands in the Vaishnava *mudra*, the practitioner should steadily listen for the inner sound in the right ear. (31)**

abhyasyamāno nādo'yaṁ bāhyamāvṛṇute dhvanim |  
pakṣādvipakṣamakhilam jivā turyapadam vrajet || 32||

**While practicing hearing this sound one should close off all outside noise. Completely toppling the enemy from its perch, one goes to the fourth state (32)**

śrūyate prathamābhyāse nādo nānāvidho mahān |  
vardhamānastathābhyāse śrūyate sūkṣmasūkṣmataḥ || 33||

**At the beginning of the practice, one hears various kinds of loud sounds. As one gets better at the practice, one hears subtler and subtler sounds. (33)**

ādau jaladhijīmūtabherīnirjharasambhavaḥ |  
madhye mardalaśabdābho ghaṇṭākāhalajastathā || 34||

**At first, the sounds are like those of the ocean, a thundercloud, a kettle drum, or a waterfall. Midway in the practice, the sounds become like a *mardala* drum, a bell, or a trumpet.**

ante tu kiṅkiṅivamśaviṇābhramaraniḥsvanaḥ |  
iti nānāvidhā nādāḥ śrūyante sūkṣmasūkṣmataḥ || 35||

**By the end of the practice, the sounds are like those of a small bell, a flute, a *vina*, bees, and then silence. The various sounds heard thus become subtler and subtler. (35)**

mahati śrūyamāṇe tu mahābheryādikadhvanau |  
tatra sūkṣmaṁ sūkṣmataraṁ nādameva parāmṛśet || 36||

**Even while hearing loud sounds like thunderclouds, great kettle drums, and so on, one should concentrate only on the more and more subtle sounds. (36)**

ghanamutsrjya vā sūkṣme sūkṣmamutsrjya vā ghane |  
ramamāṇamapi kṣiptaṁ mano nānyatra cālayet || 37||

**One may go from the gross to the subtle or from the subtle to the gross, as one likes, but one should not allow the mind to move to anything else. (37)**

yatra kutrāpi vā nāde lagati prathamam manaḥ |  
tatra tatra sthirībhūtvā tena sārddham viliyate || 38||

**Stick to whatever sound the mind originally fixes on. Staying steadily on it, one is absorbed into it. (38)**

vismṛtya sakalam bāhyam nāde dugdhāmbuvanmanaḥ |  
ekībhūyātha sahasā cidākāṣe viliyate || 39||

**The mind, completely oblivious to outside sounds, becomes one with the sound, like milk mixed with water, and quickly is absorbed in the Cidakasha. (39)**

udāsīnastato bhūtvā sadābhyāsenā saṁyamī |  
unmanīkārakam sadyo nādamevāvadhārayet || 40||

**Then, becoming indifferent (to outside sounds), through constant practice the practitioner of restraint should just concentrate on the sound that brings about the state called “beyond mind.” (40)**

sarvacintām samutsṛjya sarvaceṣṭāvivarjitaḥ |  
nādamevānusandadhyānnāde cittam viliyate || 41||

**Completely releasing all thoughts and not moving at all, because of the full concentration on just the sound the mind becomes absorbed in the sound. (41)**

C. From the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, 4.65-110:

aśakya tattva bodhanām mūḍhānāmapi sammattam |  
proktaṁ gorakṣa nāthena nādopāsanamucyāte || 65

**The practice of being attentive to sound, as it was taught by the Protector Goraksha, will now be explained – a practice agreeable even to the dull ones unable to understand reality. (65)**

śrī ādināthena sa pāda koṭi laya prakārāḥ kathitā jayanti |  
nādānusandhānakamekameva manyāmahe mukhyatamaṁ layānām || 66

**The glorious Primordial Protector has relayed innumerable viable methods for attaining dissolution, but we think that the best one is the exploration of sound. (66)**

muktāsane sthito yogī mudrām sandhāya śāmbhavīm |  
śṛṇuyāddakṣiṇe karṇe nādamantāsthamekadhiḥ || 67

**The practitioner, sitting steadily in *mukta asana* and staying concentrated in Shiva's seal, should listen one-pointedly for the sound inside the right ear. (67)**

śravaṇa puṭa nayana yugala ghrāṇa mukhānām nirodhanaṁ kāryam |  
śuddha suṣumṇā saraṇau sphuṭamamalaḥ śrūtaye nādaḥ || 68

**Through the practice of focusing inward by closing the ears, nose and mouth, a clear, distinct sound will be heard if the central channel has been purified. (68)**

ārambhaśca ghaṭaścaiva tathā paricayo'pi ca |  
niṣpattiḥ sarva yogeṣu syādavasthā caturṣṭayam || 69

**In all of yoga there are four stages: Beginning, Jar, Increase, and Consummation. (69)**

atha ārambhāvasthā |  
brahma granterbhavedbhedo hyānandaḥ śūnya sambhavaḥ |  
vicitraḥ kvaṇako dehe'nāhataḥ śrūyate dhvaniḥ || 70

**And now for the "Beginning" Stage: When the Brahma knot is pierced, bliss arises from the realization of emptiness and a wondrous little sound, the sound of the heart cakra, is heard. (70)**

divya dehaśca tejasvī divya gandhastvarogavān |  
sampūrṇa hṛdayaḥ śūnya ārambhe yogavānbhavet || 71

**When the stage known as "Beginning" and "Empty" occurs, the heart become completely full and the yogi assumes a divine body and becomes lustrous. He has a divine smell and is free from disease. (71)**

atha ghaṭāvastha |  
dvitīyāyām ghatikṛtya vāyurbhavati madhyagaḥ |  
dṛḍhāsano bhavedyogī jñānī deva samastadā ||72

**And now for the “Jar” Stage: When the second or Jar Stage has been achieved, the wind enters the central channel. The wise yogi, unmoving in his posture, then become equal to a divine being. (72)**

viṣṇu granthestato bhedātparamānanda sūcakaḥ |  
atīśūnye vimardaśca bherī śabdastadā bhavet ||73

**And then, because of the piercing of the knot of Vishnu, highest bliss is made manifest. And when there is the “Excessively Empty” stage, there is the pounding sound of the kettledrum. (73)**

atha paricayāvasthā |  
tṛtīyāyām tu vijñeyo vihāyo mardala dhvaniḥ |  
mahāśūnyam tadā yāti sarva siddhi samāśrayam ||74

**And now for the “Increase” Stage: In the third stage, a vigorous sound of the *mardala* drum is heard. Then one goes into “Great Emptiness,” the repository of all attainments. (74).**

cittānandaṁ tadā jītvā sahaajānanda sambhavaḥ |  
doṣa duḥkha jarā vyādhi kṣudhā nidrā vivarjitaḥ ||75

**Then, having attained a mind of bliss, spontaneous bliss arises and one becomes free of faults, of suffering, of old age, of sickness, of hunger, and of sleep. (75)**

atha niṣpattyavasthā |  
rudra granthim yadā bhittvā śarva pīṭha gato'nilaḥ |  
niṣpattau vaiṇavaḥ śabdaḥ kvaṇad vīṇā kvaṇo bhavet ||76

**And now for the “Consummation” Stage: When the knot of Rudra is pierced, the inner wind goes to the seat of Shiva. In the stage of Consummation, there is the sound of a bamboo flute, tinkling like the sound of a *vīna*. (76)**

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karnau pidhāya hastābhyām yaḥ śṛṇoti dhvaniṃ munīḥ |  
tatra cittam sthīrikuryādyāvasthira padam vrajet || 82

The sage who, having covered his ears with his hands, hears the sound. He should keep his mind steady on that and he will attain a state of stillness. (82)

abhyasyamāno nādo'yaṃ bāhyamāvṛṇute dhvaniṃ |  
pakṣādvikṣepamakhilaṃ jītvā yogī sukhī bhavet || 83

Listening to this sound muffles outer sounds. The yogi in a fortnight completely overcomes mental agitation and becomes a very happy person! (83)

śrūyate prathamābhyāse nādo nānā vidho mahān |  
tato'bhyase vardhamāne śrūyate sūkṣma sūkṣmakaḥ || 84

In the beginning, the sounds heard are of many sorts and very loud. But as the practice increases more and more subtle sounds are heard. (84)

ādau jaladhijīmūtabherījharjharasambhavāḥ |  
madhye mardalaśaṅkhotthā ghaṇṭakāhalajāstathā || 85

At first, the sounds are like those of the ocean, a thundercloud, a kettle drum, or a *jharjhara* drum. Midway in the practice, the sounds of a *mardala* drum or conch arise, and then those of bell or a trumpet.

ante tu kiṅkiṇīvaṃśaviṇābhramaraniḥsvanāḥ |  
iti nānāvidhā nādāḥ śrūyante dehamadhyagāḥ || 86

By the end of the practice, the sounds are like those of a small bell, a flute, a *vina*, bees, and then silence. These various sounds are heard coming from the middle of the body.

(86)

mahati śrūyamāṇe'pi megha bheryādkike dhvanau |  
tatra sūkṣmātsūkṣmataram nādameva parāmṛset || 87

**Even while hearing loud sounds like thunderclouds, kettle drums, and so on, one should concentrate only on the more and more subtle sounds. (87)**

ghanamutsrjya vā sūkṣme sūkṣmamutsrjya vā ghane |  
ramamāṇamapi kṣiptam mano nānyatra cālayet || 88||

**One may go from the gross to the subtle or from the subtle to the gross, as one likes, but one should not allow the mind to move to anything else. (88)**

yatra kutrāpi vā nāde lagati prathamam manaḥ |  
tatraiva susthirbhūya tena sārdham vilīyate || 89||

**Stick to whatever sound the mind originally fixes on. Staying perfectly steadily on it alone, one is absorbed into it. (89)**

Class Four:  
Losing Yourself in Music and Chanting the Name of God

I. Liberation Through Sound

From the *Vedanta-sutra* 4.4.22:

anāvṛttiḥ śabdād anāvṛttiḥ śabdād

**One becomes liberated through sound. One becomes liberated through sound.**

II. Losing Oneself in Music

From the *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra*:

tantryādivādyāśabdeṣu dīrgheṣu kramasaṁsthiteḥ |  
ananyacetāḥ pratyante paravyomavapurbhavet ||

**One who with single-mindedness stays fixated for a long time on the sound of music made by a lute or other stringed instruments will, at the end of the process, become embodied in the space of the Supreme One. (41)**

gītādiviṣayāsvādāsamasaukhyaiikatātmanaḥ |  
yoginastanmayatvena manorūḍhestadātmatā ||

**Through the unequalled joy of becoming absorbed completely in the sound of beautiful music and such the yogi's mind is elevated and becomes one with that. (73)**



### III. The Nine Modes of Devotion

From the *Bhagavata Purana*, 7.5.22-4:

hiraṇyakaśipuruvāca  
prahlādānūcyatām tāta svadhītam kiñciduttamam  
kālenaitāvātāyūṣman yadaśikṣadgurorbhavān  
śrīprahlāda uvāca  
śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ smaraṇam pādasevanam  
arcanam vandanam dāsyam sakhyamātmanivedanam  
iti puṁsārpitā viṣṇau bhaktiścennavalakṣaṇā  
kriyeta bhagavatyaddhā tanmanye'dhītamuttamam

Hiranyakashipu said, "Tell me, dear Prahlada, since you are so well instructed over so much time, what is the highest thing you have learned from your teachers?"

Prahlada replied, "There are nine ways of expressing devotion to God that are incumbent on a person: listening about, chanting and singing to, and remembering God; performing service; worshiping and offering prayers; becoming the servant or friend; and wholly dedicating oneself. This is the way to act in relation to the Lord. This I regard as the highest thing I've learned."

### IV. Glorifying God Through Chanting and Singing

A. From the *Bhagavad Gita*, 9.13-14; 10.9:

mahātmānstu mām pārtha daivīm prakṛtimāśritāḥ |  
bhajantyananyamanaso jñātvā bhūtādimaṅgalaḥ ||

But the great souls, Arjuna, taking refuge in My divine nature, are devoted to Me. With minds on nothing else, they understand Me as the imperishable source of all beings.

satataṁ kīrtayanto mām yatantaśca dṛḍhavrataḥ  
namasyantaśca mām bhaktyā nityayuktā upāsate ||

**Always chanting and singing to Me and striving to firmly keep their vows, prostrating with faith, those with unwavering discipline worship Me.**

maccittā madgataprāṇā bodhayantaḥ parasparam |  
kathayantaśca mām nityaṁ tuṣyanti ca ramanti ca ||

**Those whose minds are fixed on Me, whose very lives are wholly given up to Me, enlightening one another and constantly talking about Me – they are contented and joyful.**

B. From the *Narada Bhakti Sutra*:

athāto bhaktiṁ vyākhyāsyāmaḥ |  
**We will now explain devotion. (1.1)**

sā tvasmin paramapremarūpā |  
**Its nature is the highest love for That One. (1.2)**

amṛtasvarūpā ca |  
**And its essence is the nectar of immortality. (1.3)**

yallabdhvā pumān siddho bhavati amṛto bhavati tṛpto bhavati |  
**When one obtains this, a person becomes perfect, immortal, and content. (1.4)**

yatprāpya na kiñcid vāñcati na śocati na dveṣṭi na ramate notsāhī bhavati |  
**Upon attaining this, one desires nothing more at all. One does not grieve nor hate nor lust, nor does one strive for anything else. (1.5)**

yajñātvā matto bhavati stabdho bhavati ātmārāmo bhavati |  
When one truly realizes this, one becomes intoxicated, stunned; their joy is self-  
contained. (1.6)

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tasyāḥ sādhanāni gāyantyācāryāḥ |  
The religious teachers sing about the methods for cultivating it. (3.1)

tattu viṣayatyāgāt saṅgatyāgāt ca |  
But it comes from renouncing objects of the senses and attachment. (3.2)

avyāvṛttabhajanāt |  
And from unrelenting worship. (3.3)

loke'pi bhagavadguṇaśravaṇakīrtanāt |  
And from singing about and listening to the praises of the Lord's qualities all  
day long. (3.4)

## V. Chanting the Divine Name

A. From the *Bhagavata Purana*, 3.33.7; 6.2.14; 6.3.22:

aho bata śvapaco'to garīyānyajjihvāgre vartate nāma tubhyam |  
tepus tapaste juhuvuḥ sastrurāryā brahmānūcurnāma grṇanti ye te ||

Oh how awesome even those who eat dogs become when Your name is on their  
tongues! Those who chant the name are like those well-versed in the Vedas, like Aryas,  
like those who perform sacrifices and austerities.

sānketyaṃ pārihāsyāṃ vā stobhaṃ helanam eva vā  
vaikuṅṭhanāmagrahaṇam aśeṣāghaharam viduḥ

A wise person knows that chanting the name of God – even if it’s done just formulaically, jokingly, disrespectfully, or even contemptuously – delivers one from all sins.

etāvāneva loke'sminpumsām dharmāḥ paraḥ smṛtaḥ  
bhaktiyogo bhagavati tannāmagrahaṇādibhiḥ  
nāmoccāraṇamāhātmyaṃ hareḥ paśyata putrakāḥ  
ajāmilo'pi yenaiva mṛtyupāśādamucyata

The yoga of devotion – practices such as chanting the name of the Lord – is known to be the highest spiritual practice for people in this world. Uttering the name of God turns even children into great beings. Just by this practice even bastards are freed from the snares of death.

B. From the *Bible* (*Psalms* 113.1-3; *Romans* 10.8-13)

Praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord, you his servants; praise the name of the Lord.

Let the name of the Lord be praised, both now and forevermore.

From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised.

“The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” [quoting *Deuteronomy* 30.14] that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” [quoting *Isaiah* 28.16] For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” [quoting *Joel* 2.32]

C. From the *Qur'an* (87.1-3; 14-15)

Glorify the name of thy Lord, the Most High!  
Who creates, then makes complete,  
And Who measures, then guides . . .  
He indeed is successful who purifies himself,  
And remembers the name of his Lord, then prays.