

Nada Yoga

The Vibratory Essence
of the Yoga of Sound



Dr Sangeeta Laura Biagi
Dr Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani

Foreword by
Rajiv Mehrotra

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Nada Yoga

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NADA YOGA

The Vibratory Essence of
the Yoga of Sound

Dr. Sangeeta Laura Biagi
Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani

Foreword by Rajiv Mehrotra

Illustrations by Yogacharini Padma and Sri M Sridharan



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FOREWORD

I am blessed to introduce *Nada Yoga: The Vibratory Essence of the Yoga of Sound*. Co-authored by Yogacharya Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani and Yogacharini Dr. Sangeeta Laura Biagi, the book is more than just a collection of how-to drills. It offers a wealth of theoretical and contextual information, a scholarly contribution to the rich repertoire of writings that enrich the contemporary discourse and understanding of Yoga.

The authors epitomize in their lives and work the aspiration to revive the rich tradition of Yoga in all of its intricacies, subtleties, and richness. They have reached far beyond the narrow contemporary perspective of Yoga as mere asana to nurture its diverse aspects. They achieve this by expanding their boundaries and evolving numerous practice protocols without jeopardizing their authenticity, impacting thousands to live healthy and fulfilling lives.

Ananda was born in an ashram to Yogamaharishi Swami Gitananda Giri, the inheritor of the ancient lineage of the Gurus of the Kambaliswamy Madam tradition, and his wife, Yogacharini Meenakshi Devi. He brings to bear the rich Parampara of his parents' Gurukul and a lineage that goes back for hundreds of years. His parents were among my first Gurus.

Dr. Sangeeta Laura Biagi adopted the same lineage and is an accomplished researcher, artist, and International Director of Gitananda Nada Yoga. Her work explores the human voice in interpersonal, intrapersonal, and transpersonal relationships.

Dr. Bhavanani and Dr. Biagi draw on teachings from the Yogamaharishi Swami Gitananda Giri tradition. His teachings have profoundly impacted many lives, and I am pleased to see his wisdom shared through this book. The authors have done an excellent job of explaining complex concepts in a

way that is accessible to all readers. Drawing upon their extensive knowledge of Indian philosophy, Yoga, and music, they offer a wealth of insights and practical exercises designed to help readers deepen their understanding of Nada Yoga's transformative potential.

The ancient Indian practice of Nada Yoga, also known as the Yoga of Sound, has gained popularity as a powerful method of self-realization and spiritual development in recent years. At its core, it entails tuning in to the music playing inside one's head. These vibrations, produced by the movement of energy in our bodies, constitute the very essence of life. By working with external sounds that resonate with these vibrations within us, we can tune into them to promote physical and mental well-being.

The book points to its potential in the spiritual quest by exploring the concept of the Pranava Aum, considered the primordial sound that gave birth to the universe. Tracing its roots back to ancient Indian texts such as the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, the authors delve into the significance of sonic vibrations in religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sufism. The authors examine how chanting Aum can help individuals connect with their inner selves and the universe, how sound vibration cultivates awareness of both the divine and the self, and how Nada Yoga can help us connect with a more profound sense of spirituality.

One of its intriguing components is the idea of “*anahata nada*,” or the unstruck sound. The internal music constantly plays, which the external din often obscures. As the authors describe, Nada Yoga helps us tune in to that quiet, steady voice within, bringing us closer to our authentic selves and fostering a sense of inner serenity.

Providing a range of exercises that readers can practice daily, the book offers guidance on using our voice, breath, and musical instruments to create and manipulate sound to nurture spiritual well-being. It has specific advice on incorporating vibrations into one's meditative practices, asana practice, as it discusses the body's chakras, or energy centers, and how sound vibrations can stimulate these.

The authors also explain the role of yoga music therapies in promoting salutogenesis, which is the process of maintaining and enhancing health. Through summaries of research studies, they demonstrate sound therapy's efficacy in treating various health conditions, including stress, anxiety, and depression.

Drawing upon their own experiences as Nada Yoga practitioners and

FOREWORD

instructors, Bhavanani and Biagi share stories and anecdotes illustrating the transformative power and the deep sense of peace and joy the practice offers. To invite readers to experience the healing power of sound, there is also a selection of Mantras and Bhajans from Ananda Ashram, founded by Swami Gitananda.

Nada Yoga: The Vibratory Essence of the Yoga of Sound is a comprehensive and insightful guide to the practice of Nada Yoga. The authors' deep knowledge and passion for the subject shine through in every chapter, and readers are sure to come away with a greater understanding of the power of sound vibrations and their potential for transformation and healing. Whether you are a seasoned practitioner of Nada Yoga or just starting on your journey, this book will surely be an invaluable resource.

Rajiv Mehrotra

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Acknowledgments

We are indeed blessed to be Sishyas (śiṣya) of the Great Rishiculture Guru Parampara (paramparā) and express our gratitude to our illustrious Gurus Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj and Param Pujya Ammaji Yogacharini Smt Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani who have blessed us with this life of Yoga. They are the light onto Yoga for us and are the causative energies enlightening anything we have of worth in this lifetime.

We offer this book as our loving gratitude and dedication to Parampujya Ammaji who is truly the Living Siddha of Pondicherry. Her life of Yoga is one of Divinity and blesses us all with wisdom, grace, beauty, and love.

We acknowledge the Gurus of this lineage and, in particular, Swami Purnananda Brighu, Swami Vivideshananda Brighu, Swami Kakananda Brighu, and Srila Sri Shankara Giri Swamigal. May their blessings continue to shower us with grace, strength, and compassion.

We acknowledge with gratitude the loving teachings of the illustrious Natya and Sangeeta Gurus of the Rishiculture Parampara, namely the unparalleled Natya Guru Padmashri Adyar K Lakshmanan, Pudukalaimamani Srengam R Ranganathan, Pudukalaimamani V Manikannan, Tiruvavoor Sri R Krishnamurthy, Thamizhmani Pulavar I Pattabiramane, and Sangeeta Kalanidhi Padmabhushan TV Sankaranarayanan, who have been a major source of inspiration in our lives. They have been living legends of Nada Yoga; indeed, human incarnations of its complete wholesomeness.

We thank all our elders, families, friends, well-wishers, and colleagues who have been a major support in this initiative. Each and every one of these true human beings is an inspiration for us and they motivate us to do our best at all times through their constant feedback and encouragement. They are perfect examples of the qualities extolled by Maharishi Patanjali: being

friendly towards those at ease with themselves and being cheerful towards the virtuous (maitrī-sukha mudita-punya).

We thank all the Gitananda Yoga Mentors around the world for sharing the teachings of this tradition far and wide and for supporting each other and our students.

We thank all of our students and, in particular, the students who enrolled in our online and residential Nada Yoga courses and provided feedback, inspiration, and new insights.

In particular, for transcribing a selection of online lessons by Dr. Ananda and Dr. Sangeeta, we thank Yogacharya Bharata Bill Francis Barry, Hwamin Fettes, Valananda Joyce, Antonio Manzionna, Michael McCann, Amanda Paulson, and Ovidiu Ciprian Ponoran.

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A Note on Sanskrit

Sanskrit (saṃskṛta) is a system of communication that was heard, Shruti (śruti), by the sages of ancient India before its phonemes were written down. It is considered to be the “language of the Gods,” Devanagari (devanāgarī), and it is the language of Yoga (yoga). The lineage of Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri is committed to employing Sanskrit terms in teachings, research papers, and talks. For this book, the authors made the decision to include the Sanskrit terms employed in this tradition and to write them with a capitalized English transliteration followed, when first appearing in the text, by a transliteration with diacritical marks in parenthesis for correct pronunciation. Direct quotes of teachings from the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* (upaniṣad), the *Bhagavad Gīta* (bhagavadgītā), the *Yoga Sutra* (yoga sūtra), and the *Hatha Yoga Pradīpika* (haṭha yoga pradīpikā), to name a few, appear in Devanagari script, followed by a transliteration with diacritical marks.

Sanskrit Pronunciation

Classical Sanskrit has at least 49 letters: 14 vowels, 33 consonants, and two special letters. Four additional letters are occasionally used. Supplements are required because the 26 letters of the Roman alphabet are insufficient to express all of Sanskrit’s sounds. One Roman letter is used to represent one Sanskrit sound whenever possible. Otherwise, two Roman letters are combined to represent one Sanskrit sound (such as the vowels ai and au and the ten aspirated consonants), or a Roman letter with a diacritical mark. Six diacritics are used in Sanskrit romanization:

- a line above the letter (ā)

- a line below the letter (l)
- a dot above the letter (ñ)
- a dot below the letter (ḍ)
- a tilde or curl above the letter (ñ)
- an acute accent above the letter (ś).

The following points will enable you to learn the pronunciation of most transliterated Sanskrit terms and Mantras:

Vowels

The vowels are: *a, ā, i, ī, u, ū, ṛ, ṝ, ḷ, ḹ, e, ai, o, au*. Vowels are pronounced *a* [a], *i* [ee], *u* [oo], *ṛ* and *ḷ* [these two vowels are cerebral retroflex sounds made by curling the tongue towards the area between the alveolar ridge and the “soft” palate], *e* [è] like the sound of *e* in “helicopter,” *ai* [aee], *o* [ow] as in the beginning of “ow-n,” and *au* [a+oo].

The journey of the vowels in the oral cavity goes from the guttural resonance at the bottom of the throat, to the palatal resonance at the back of the throat/palate, to the cerebral resonance in the roof of the oral cavity.

A line over one of a pair of vowels distinguishes long from short. Vowels with a dash above them (*ā, ī, ū, ṝ, ḹ*) take about twice as long to pronounce as their short counterparts (*a, i, u, ṛ, ḷ*). Pronounce the vowels as follows:

- *ā* (long) is like the *a* in father, as in *māyā* (illusion)
- *i* (short) is like the *i* in pin, as in *idam* (this)
- *ī* (long) is like the *i* in pique, as in *jīva* (life)
- *u* (short) is like the *u* in put, as in *guṇa* (quality)
- *ū* (long) is like the *u* in rune, as in *rūpa* (form)
- *ṛ* (short) is often pronounced *ri*, as in the name *Kṛṣṇa* or Krishna
- *ṝ* (long) is like the *re* in fiber, as in *pitṛṇām* (of the fathers)
- *ḷ* (short) is like the *le* in able, as in the root *kḷp*.

The following four vowels are always long in Sanskrit:

- *e* is like the *ei* in rein, as in deva (god) (note: Sanskrit *e* is never short like the *e* in yet)
- *ai* is like the *ai* in aisle, as in vaiśya (merchant) (note: Sanskrit *ai* is never like the *ai* in pain)
- *o* is like the *o* in opal, as in loka (world) (note: Sanskrit *o* is never short like the *o* in pot)
- *au* is like the *ou* in out, as in Gautama Buddha (note: Sanskrit *au* is never like the *au* in autumn).

Consonants

(The sound of A is added to the sound of the consonants, as in *k* [ka].)

Sanskrit has 33 consonants, divided into eight groups, and two special letters, as shown below with the grammatical name for each group in Sanskrit order.

- Guttural consonants: *k, kh, g, gh, ṅ*; *k* [ka as in “car”], *g* [ga as in “garage”], *ṅ* [this sound does not have an exact equivalent in English but you can imagine you are making the sound of N from your throat].
- Palatal consonants: *c, ch, j, jh, ṅ*; *c* is pronounced similarly to the “ch” in choice; *j* [ja as in “Jack”]; *ṅ* [this sound does not have an exact equivalent in English; make the sound of N by flattening the body of the tongue in the front area of your palate].
- Retroflex consonants: *ṭ, ṭh, ḍ, ḍh, ṇ*; these sounds have no exact equivalent in English; they are pronounced like the dentals *t, th, d, dh*, and *n*, except that for retroflex letters the tip of the tongue is bent back to touch the roof of the mouth—the area between the alveolar ridge and the “soft” palate—while for dentals the tongue touches the teeth.
- Dental consonants: *t, th, d, dh, n*.
- Labial consonants: *p, ph, b, bh, m*.
- The semivowels are *y* (palatal), *r* (retroflex), *l* (dental), *v* (labial).
- Sibilants are *ś* (palatal), *ṣ* (retroflex), *s* (dental); *ś* and *ṣ* produce sounds

similar to the English “sh” in shine and are often written as “sh” in English. The first, ś, is a palatal sound in which the back of the tongue touches the soft palate. The second, ṣ, is a cerebral sound produced by a “rounding” of the tongue closer to the floor of the oral cavity. Examples include śūdra (servant), puruṣa (person), śiṣṭa (residue).

- Aspirate: All consonants followed by an “h” are aspirated: *kh, gh, ch, jh, ṭh, ḍh, th, dh, ph, bh*. *Th* and *ṭh* are pronounced like the “t” in “target” and the “tr” in “trap,” respectively, not like the “th” in “the.” The *ph* is pronounced like the “p” in “partial,” not like the “ph” in “pharaoh.”

Pronounce the following consonants as in English:

- *b* as in buddha (awakened)
- *d* as in deva (god)
- *j* as in jīva (life)
- *k* as in karman (action)
- *l* as in loka (world)
- *m* as in manas (mind)
- *n* as in nivṛtti (involution)
- *p* as in pitṛ (father)
- *r* as in rūpa (form)
- *s* as in sat (reality)
- *t* as in tat (that).

Visarga

h, the visarga, is an aspiration at the end of certain words ending in a vowel, either at the end of a word or before a consonant. This sound is subtle; for example: duḥkha (suffering) or namaḥ (homage).

Anuswara

Anuswara (anusvāra) is written *ṃ* or *ṁ*, a nasal-cerebral “m.” A simple rule is to pronounce it as *m* at the end of a word or before *p*, *ph*, *b*, *bh*, or an other *m*, and otherwise as *n*. Anuswara stands for a nasal sound pronounced in one of three ways:

- at the end of a word, as *m*
- before semivowels *y*, *r*, *l*, *v*, sibilants *ś*, *ṣ*, *s*, and the aspirate *h*, as a nasalized vowel (as in French *bon*)
- before other consonants, as the nasal consonant of the same group; thus *ahaṃkāra* (egoism) may be written *ahaṃkāra*, and *sannyāsin* (renouncer) may be written *saṃnyāsin*.

Note: Anuswara has other linguistic rules and variations in sound but this detailed information is not necessary for the purpose of this book.

INTRODUCTION

*The Parampara of Yogamaharishi
Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj*

The Source

The Yoga Parampara of ICYER at Ananda Ashram Pondicherry, South India, is the Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga (ṛṣi-culture aṣṭāṅga yoga) as synthesized by Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri (1907–1993). The rich Vedic Rishi concepts and practices, which contain the ones included in this book, were received by Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri from his Ashtanga Yoga Master Sri Swami (svāmī) Kakananda Brighu, a Bengali saint, who initiated Swami Gitananda (then Ananda Bhavanani) at the age of ten years into this ancient Yoga teaching in Swamiji's¹ ancestral childhood home in Maharajganj, Bihar. Swami Gitananda maintained his relationship with his Guru, who lived in Swamiji's ancestral home, until Swami Kakananda's Samadhi (samādhi) on October 26, 1967.

Swami Kakananda was Professor in the Central Hindu College that later became the Banaras Hindu University in the early 1900s. Tragedy struck in his life when a disastrous fire destroyed the Varanasi housing colony in which he lived with his wife and infant son. Both his wife and son died in the fire. Driven nearly insane by the tragedy, Ram Gopal Majumdar (as he was then known) ran away into the Himalayas to wander as a Sadhu (sādhu), seeking peace of the soul. In the course of his Parivrajaka (pārivrajaka), “the life of a religious mendicant,” he met Swami Vivideshananda Bhriḡu, who

1 Swami/Swamiji is how Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj is addressed by his family members and his students.

initiated him into a particularly rich Yoga tradition, which contained Asanas (āsana, postures), Pranayamas (prāṇāyāma, breath and energy control), and Dharana (dhāraṇa, concentration) practices. Swami Vivideshananda had learned this esoteric knowledge from his Guru, Swami Purnananda Bhrigu, who was part of a long line of Yoga Gurus. Thus, the transformation from mathematics professor to saint occurred.

At the age of 16, Swami Gitananda moved to England to study medicine and then traveled to North and South America and settled in Canada. He was a pioneer of the movement in which the teachings of the East percolated to the West. In 1967 Swami Kakananda left his body, and his last request to Swami Gitananda was that he return to India to take over his work, which he did in December of that year. He established Ananda Ashram in central Pondicherry and visited all the holy places in and around Pondicherry at that time to offer his Pranams (praṇam, devoted salutations) to the Great Souls who had hallowed this land.

At that time, he had visited a small Madam, a sacred site set in a jungle-like environment in Thattanchavady on the northwestern side of Pondicherry, far past the luscious rice lands and village tanks that then flourished there. He met the old Sadhu in charge, Srila Sri Shankara Giri Swamigal, who told him of the great power of the shrine of Sri Swamy, whose Samadhi was at the center of the Madam. Sri Kambaliswamigal was a Digambari Sannyasin who took Jala (jāla) Samadhi in the Amavasi of Marghazhi in 1863. Sri Kambaliswamigal was a great Siddha, and many miracles are attributed to him. He was praised in many old beautiful Tamil hymns as The King of Ashtanga Yoga over the whole Earth. He was also hailed as a Kalpa Vriksha (vṛkṣa) who would grant all boons of his devotees. Other hymns declared he was worthy of worship by the whole world. At that time, the Madam consisted of one small, tiled house, and the Samadhi of Sri Kambaliswamigal. Few dared to venture there, as it was infested with cobras and scorpions and the land behind it was used as a cemetery, but Swami Gitananda was attracted to the Samadhi and to the Sadhu, whom he visited often. Swamiji established Ananda Ashram in October 1969 in Lawspet, which was only a half-kilometer walk from Sri Kambaliswamy Madam. He then began to frequently visit and participate in all spiritual activities there.

During the Annual Guru Puja (pūjā, ritual practices) in December 1973, Srila Shri Shankara Giri, then 73 years of age, fell ill and requested Swami Gitananda to perform the Pujas. On January 21, 1975, Srila Shri Shankara

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Giri nominated Swami Gitananda as his legal heir and successor to the position of Hereditary Trustee and Madathipathi of Sri Kambaliswamy Madam as per the Madam tradition. Then began the great restoration and rebuilding of Sri Kambaliswamy Madam by Swami Gitananda. The Madam became famous throughout India and the world as an ideal Guru Kula (“womb” and home of the Guru) and a Shanti (śānti) Niketan, “abode of peace,” in South India. Classes in Ashtanga Yoga, Bharatanatyam (bharatanāṭyam), and Carnatic vocal music started in 1975 and attracted thousands of local and international students.

Srila Sri Shankara Giri Swamigal was a Siddha, who lived the life of a traditional Sannyasi (saṁnyāsin). Born in a village near Trichy, into a family of goldsmiths, he renounced the world at the age of 51 and spent nearly a decade wandering in the Himalayas. He came to Kambaliswamy Madam in the early 1960s and became the chief disciple of Subramaniya Giri Swamigal, then head of the Madam. He became well known as an adept in Siddha medicine and many Siddha medicinal herbs were grown in the Madam. He was named as successor to Subramaniya Giri Swamigal.

Sri Shankara Giri wore his hair coiled on top of his head and, when he opened the coil, his hair was more than five meters in length. He was born on December 25, 1900, and lived a very austere, simple life, walking wherever he went, sometimes as much as 50 kilometers a day. He was a staunch upholder of Dharma (dharma), and his favorite saying was: “Dharma protects those who protect Dharma.” He had a great influence on Ananda Balayogi, son of Sri Swami Gitananda, and confirmed young Ananda as the successor and head of Sri Kambaliswamy Madam in January 1994. Srila Sri Shankara Giri Swamigal was the Chief Guest for many Ananda Ashram programs even though he was then in his nineties; he relished each and every program and gave his perceptive remarks and appreciation for all of them. Shankara Giri Swamigal attained Mukti on June 11, 1995, at the age of 95. His Samadhi is in the western side of Sri Kambaliswamy Madam, and daily Pujas are performed there.

Thus, the Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga teachings of Sri Kanakananda Swamigal and the South Indian Saiva Siddhanta (śaiva siddhānta) tradition of Akanda Paripurna Srila Sri Jnanananda Desigar Kambaliswamigal came together in Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri Guru Maharaj, and the spirits of these great Gurus are the guiding force behind all of the activities of the present Ananda Ashram.

Yogacharya Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani (Giri) is the current lineage holder of the Rishiculture Gitananda Yoga tradition and current Madathipathi of the Sri Kambaliswamy Madam. He continues the illustrious tradition under the watchful guidance of his mother, Pudevai Kalaimamani Pudevai Shakti, Yogacharini Meenakshi Devi Bhavanani, Pujya Ammaji, one of the great Yoginis of Modern Times. Dr. Ananda lives and shares his Dharma with his wife (dharmapatnī), Yogacharini Devasena Bhavanani, an accomplished Natyacharini and Sangeeta Vidhushi, supported ably by their daughter, Dhivya Priya Bhavanani, and son, Anandraj Bhavanani.

Core Concepts of Rishiculture Ashtanga (Gitananda) Yoga

Before we delve deeper into the teachings of Nada Yoga (nāda yoga), we would like to share some core concepts of Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga to start our journey:

Yoga is a Way of Life

Yoga is a Sanskrit term whose etymology comes from the Sanskrit Yuj (yuj), “to unite, to blend, to make whole.” The root of the word has three meanings, according to the grammar of Maharshi Pāṇini: 1. Rudhādiganīya, which means unification or union; 2. Churādiganīya, which means to control the mind; and 3. Diwādiganīya, which means samādhi (ultimate liberation from the bondage of ignorance).

On the basis of its origin from the root Yuj, the word Yoga means “union, restraint of mind, and samādhi,” and therefore, Yoga is not something we “do,” but rather, Yoga is a way of life. Understanding this difference is of great importance because Yoga is both the goal of the practices (union with all that is, i.e., becoming one with pure consciousness) and the process that attains the goal. Yoga as a process involves a conscious transformation from a state of “doing” to a state of “being.” This requires immense introspection, consciousness, awareness, dedication, and determination. Many will exclaim that this is easy to say and tough to do but Swami Gitananda “walked his talk” and showed us how to do it by his magnificent example.

In the principles and practices of Nada Yoga, a conscious state of Yoga is attained through deep listening to inner and outer sounds, from the

metaphysical cosmic vibration, to the physical and physiological attunement to one's heartbeat. Yoga is an uninterrupted state of awareness that we are One with the Source of all that is, that Ultimate undivided intelligence that sustains the laws of the Universe. Considering that everything in our cosmos is moving and vibrating, from the atoms that sustain our body to the furthest galaxies, Nada Yoga is a process of merging with the resonance of that Divine Source.

Breath is Life

There is no life without breath! Swamiji was truly a grand master of this intricate and detailed science of subtle energy. In this tradition, great emphasis is placed on learning how to breathe properly, and the students start with the sectional breathing of Vibhaga Pranayama (vibhāga prāṇāyāma) and then build up step by step to the knowledge and practice of more than 120 intricate Pranayamas. All of this is done so that Prana (prāṇa), the vital cosmic catalyst, may naturally fill each and every one of our trillions of cells with life and light.

This teaching is even more important for those who are naturally drawn to the practices of Nada Yoga because the sound of our breath is a powerful Mantra that we repeat, consciously or unconsciously, over 21,600 times per day. The sound of the movement of energy of our inhalation and exhalation is the Ajapa Japa Mantra (ajapā japa mantra) “Soham” (sohaṃ). The definition of the word Mantra (mantra) in Sanskrit is “mananāt trāyatē iti mantrah”: “sustained repetition (mananāt) of that which protects (trāyatē) from all miseries arising from bondage or cycles from birth and death is called mantra” (Parthasarathi, 2020, p.84). In Nada Yoga practices, we connect with our breath as a vehicle for our voice to teach, chant, recite, invoke, sing, and, most importantly, listen.

No Option Yoga

Swamiji termed Maharishi Patanjali's (mahaṛṣi patañjali) Ashtanga Yoga (aṣṭāṅga yoga) the “No Option Yoga” and placed great importance on the study and understanding of the Yamas (yama, moral constraints) and Niyamas (niyama, ethical precepts), which are the firm foundation upon which the real Yoga life can be built. “You wouldn't build a colossal building without a foundation but you want to do it with Yoga?” he would ask numerous easy-going aspirants who wanted some “quick fix” Yoga.

Step-by-Step Approach

Every aspect of Swamiji’s teachings follows a step-by-step, structured approach that is easy to follow, detailed, and methodical. Emphasis is placed on learning and relearning the preceding steps until the teachings are well digested, before proceeding any further on the path. “No shortcuts please” was his constant refrain, for it is always better to be slow and steady than fast and sorry. Great emphasis is placed on growing into the practice rather than forcing oneself into it, thus enabling growth to occur at all levels.

Love for Indian Culture

One of the major issues facing Yoga in the West is the fact that Yoga has been cleaved away from Indian culture (sanātana dharma, the eternal law). Without an understanding of Indian culture, it may be difficult to find answers for many questions confronting the sincere seeker. Swamiji tried to inculcate in his students a deep love and understanding of the ancient living culture from which Yoga has sprung.

Bountiful Practices

Scores and scores of practices and techniques are part of this tradition that has numerous Hatha (haṭha), Laya (laya), and Jnana (jñāna) Yoga practices for the sincere aspirant. Polarity practices and the Mantra Laya (mantra laya) deserve special mention, as do the Laya Yoga Kriyas (laya yoga kriyā). The intricate and in-depth understanding of Nadis (nāḍī) and Bindus (bindu) of the twelve Chakras (cakra) and Mantra Yoga shared in this book is gleaned from the Dakshina Marga Tantra (dakṣiṇa mārga tantra) tradition of Yogamaharishi Swami Kakananda Brighu and are not found elsewhere. Each of these practices and concepts has multiple levels for the sincere seeker, and those who have gone deep into them understand that they are not mere playthings but are indeed very powerful and life transforming.

Tantra, Mantra, and Yantra: “In Tune” with Nature

In this Parampara there are three important sciences, namely Tantra (tantra), Mantra, and Yantra (yantra). Tantra is a Yoga philosophy and practical understanding of reality in which our inner and outer worlds coincide and influence each other. Tantra provides a practical map of the matrix of existence and focuses on the movement of subtle energies in our various bodies

(physical, physiological, energetic, emotional, mental, and spiritual), in our environment, and in the multiverse in which we live.

Mantra is the study and practice of the vibration of such energies, from the mental vibrations of thought to the material utterances of our apparatus. Mantras are poetic invocations in Vedic and ancient Sanskrit that have been perceived by the saintly Rishis (ṛṣi) of India thanks to the refinement of their clairaudience. The Rishis organized and passed down the Mantras in the complex oral system of the four *Vedas* (veda), which only later were written down. Mantras help us relax and focus the mind, quiet down destructive thinking, and invoke and evoke the power of love as it manifests through the elements and their essential forces, their “seed sounds,” the Bija Mantras (bija mantra).

Yantra is the mystical science of number, name, and form and is a method by which one can learn to live “in tune” with the cycles of the Universe rather than be “off tune” with those very cycles. According to the Yantra concepts taught by Swamiji, each number has a special quality to it and is not merely a measure of quantity as is usually presumed. Every aspect of life goes through a “phase of Nine.” This phase may be nine years, nine months, nine weeks, or even nine days. This concept can be further extended to nine milliseconds on the one hand and nine lifetimes on the other.

Mudras, Divine Communication

One of the main features of the Gitananda tradition is the detailed exposition and understanding of Mudra, the ancient Yogic art and science of gesturing and sealing vital Prana. These advanced techniques are designed to improve neuromuscular coordination, refine human emotions, and still the restless mind. They enable us to communicate intrapersonally with our Inner Self, interpersonally with others, and transpersonally with the Divine. The teachings of Hasta Mudras (hasta mudrā) in the Vibhaga and Pranava Pranayamas (praṇava prāṇāyāma) highlighted in this book are unique to this tradition.

Create Gurus, not Followers

Pujya Swamiji never desired huge numbers of students, a multitude of ashrams, fame, or a vast organizational empire. All that mattered to him was the growth of the student, and he aimed to help manifest students’ inherent potential even though this often meant being an exacting taskmaster. Each

and every one of Swamiji's students became "the best" they could have been in this lifetime.

How This Book Came to Life

The teachings of Nada Yoga are an integral part of Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga in the Parampara of Swami Gitananda Giri. Nada (nāda) is a Sanskrit term whose translation can be summarized as "vibration and sound," and which refers to those teachings in Gitananda Yoga that focus on the awareness, perception, and production of vibration, sound, and music. Gitananda Nada Yoga² principles and practices are integral to Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga, not separate from it. These teachings have their roots in the two lineages of the Parampara—the Bengali Tantric Tradition and the Tamilian Shaiva Siddhanta—and, with Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri, they were also infused with Western medical language and reference systems. Yogacharya Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani has been continuing the tireless work of maintaining the authenticity of the teachings while keeping them relevant in medical, artistic, and spiritual contemporary circles for the benefit of all. "Sharing is caring" is one of Dr. Ananda's mottos, and this book is the result of such generosity of spirit and action.

In 2009, Yogacharini Dr. Sangeeta Laura Biagi began her studies of Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga. Living in New York, where she was a college professor, Dr. Sangeeta enrolled in the *Yoga: Step-by-Step* course and, the following year, moved to Ananda Ashram in India to complete a six-month Yoga teacher training. While in residence at the Ashram, Sangeeta began her in-depth studies and practice of Nada Yoga under the direct guidance of Dr. Ananda and also began her studies of the traditional arts of Sanatana Dharma, in particular the classical form of Carnatic singing and Bharatanatyam dance with Yogacharini Devasena Bhavanani. Sangeeta lived in the Ashram for two years and then decided to come back to the United States and Europe to share these teachings.

During the pandemic of COVID-19, Dr. Ananda began sharing the teachings of Gitananda Yoga online, creating videos on various principles of Tantra, Yantra, and Mantra, as well as sharing live feeds of ritual celebrations

2 It is important to know that Swami Gitananda did not call his teachings on Nada "Gitananda Nada Yoga" and that it was Yogacharya Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani, his son and successor, and Yogacharini Dr. Sangeeta Laura Biagi, their student, who coined this title to create online and in-person training programs beginning in 2021.

INTRODUCTION

taking place at the Ashram and at the Gurus' Samadhi site, Sri Kambaliswami Madam. Dr. Ananda also converted various forms of training, which were previously held in person or by postal correspondence, to online training programs in which Dr. Sangeeta participated as a student and, sometimes, as a Mentor to other students. In the summer of 2021, Dr. Ananda invited Dr. Sangeeta to co-create an online course focusing on the teachings of the Parampara on Nada Yoga, which resulted in an online seven-month Nada Yoga immersion that was held once a week from December 2021 until June 2022, and which saw the participation of over 70 students from around the world. This course was followed by another online immersion, *Sacred Sounds of the Chakras*, in November and December 2022, and a residential intensive course at Ananda Ashram on March 2–16, 2023.

While teaching these courses, Dr. Sangeeta and Dr. Ananda made the decision to share the teachings in a book format and the choice of collaborating with Singing Dragon solidified. The process of choosing which principles and practices to share and how to make them accessible in writing—considering that all teachings rely on oral transmission—was often challenging and required awareness of the format's limitations and strengths. Given the width and depth of the teachings of Rishiculture Ashtanga Yoga, this book is designed to be an introduction to the wealth of the principles and practices of the Gitananda Parampara, with the hope of inspiring readers to take in-depth studies (online and in person) to become, themselves, capable of sharing them with authenticity and respect.

Chapter 1 is an introduction to Nada Yoga and the meaning and applications of its philosophy in our day-to-day life. In particular, the authors focus on the importance of learning how listening and sound vibrations affect our various bodies (pañca kośa) and how a conscious invocation of sound in the form of Mantra may contribute to our overall health.

Chapter 2 focuses on the Mantra of Mantras, the Pranava Om (praṇava om). This Mantra has been praised for millennia as the vibration of the Divine incarnate. In this chapter, the authors will share Swami Gitananda's system of sectional breathing practices, the Vibhaga Pranayama, which employs the use of the hands in various gestures called Hasta Mudras to stimulate various parts of the lungs and create reflexogenic flows from the fingertips to our breathing center in the medulla oblongata of the brainstem. The relationship between breathing, listening, and vocal invocation of the Mantra is at the heart of the Pranava Pranayama, a real gem of this Parampara.

Chapter 3 offers an overview of the complex system of psychic energies called Chakras. The authors introduce the six lower and six higher energy centers, focusing on the lower six, the Pinda Chakras (piṇḍa cakra), and their correspondences in the cerebrospinal human system and their “seed sounds,” the Bija Mantras as well as the Devata Gayatri Mantras (devatā gāyatrī mantra) for each of the Shat Chakras (ṣaṭ cakra).

Chapter 4 introduces some fundamental concepts of Yoga Chikitsa (yoga cikitsā), Yoga Therapy, and how the principles and practices of Gitananda Nada Yoga offer excellent tools to generate and maintain physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health.

Appendix I offers a selection of Mantras we invoke in our daily practices (sādhana) at Ananda Ashram. Appendix II highlights some of the research studies conducted at the Institute of Salutogenesis and Complementary Medicine of the Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth (Deemed-to-Be University) by Dr. Ananda and colleagues at the Institute’s School for Yoga Therapy and School for Music Therapy previously known as the CYTER and CMTER. Appendix III contains a selection of entries written by members of the Gitananda Nada Yoga community worldwide. Their writings were collected in the form of weekly assignments during the seven-month online Nada Yoga course that Dr. Ananda and Dr. Sangeeta taught between December 2021 and June 2022.

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"This is a comprehensive and insightful guide... the authors' deep knowledge and passion for the subject shine through in every chapter, and readers are sure to come away with a greater understanding of the power of sound vibrations and their potential for transformation and healing. Whether you are a seasoned practitioner or just starting on your journey, this book will surely be an invaluable resource."

– Rajiv Mehrotra, Hon. Trustee and Secretary, The Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Nada Yoga, oftentimes referred to as the Yoga of Sound, is an incredibly spiritual and advanced practice that allows Yogis to listen to the music of their inner spirit through deep, internal listening. This contemporary manual offers clarity and guidance on Nada Yoga and fuses traditional teachings with modern science in a multimedia approach.

Experienced author duo Dr. Sangeeta Laura Biagi and Dr. Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani, who are well-versed in Yoga Therapy, modern medicine, and music, bring a variety of novel approaches and methodologies to help students understand the principles and advanced meditative techniques required for Nada Yoga. This book includes a comprehensive overview of Nada Yoga, the Pranava AUM, the Chakras, Carnatic music essentials, relaxation and healing, and Yoga Therapy applications,



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