

**To Come to Know Who Rides Upon Your Tongue:
Sound sSāadhanā—Cultivating sSelf Through sSwara:
A Practice-based Spiritual Inquiry**

by

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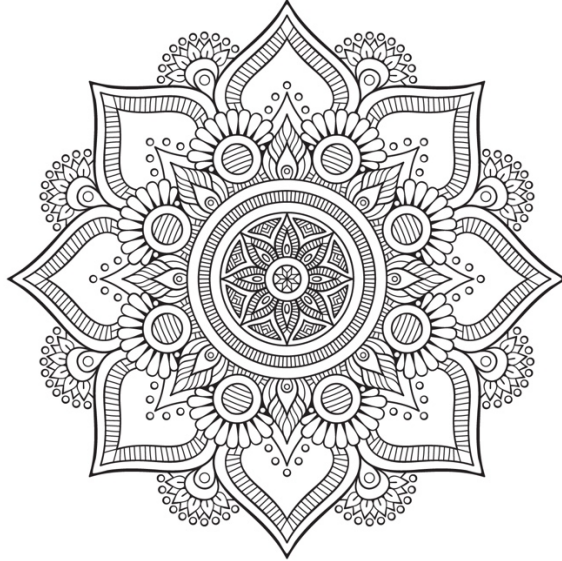
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Abstract

This dissertation is the account of a group exploration of Sound sādhanā—an integrated voice and self-study practice designed specifically for research purpose—undertaken as an artist’s spiritual journey over a three-month duration. The purpose of the study was to explore Sound sādhanā as practice-based spiritual inquiry from a sound yogi practitioner perspective. This research design emerged from two intertwining oral teaching traditions: Indian music foundational voice cultivation practices; and Nāda Yoga, the path of exploring consciousness through sound, vibration and resonance. Ontological themes of dual and nondual, identified self and transcendent Self, informed the journey, the language, the voice techniques, sound forms and mantric compositions of this inquiry. The voice was the medium of exploration, and voice cultivation was engaged as a yogic path of personal and artistic transformation. Through voice cultivation and re-sounding reflective writing practices, each participant was invited to be a sound Yogi, to study their voice and their practice as a yoga sādhanā, to refine their voice and their personal sādhanās, and to develop witness consciousness to their own person, art, and spiritual inquiry. The research involved a group of six participants as Yogis through a course of individual voice sessions, group gatherings (Satsang), and daily personal Sound sādhanā practice. The transcripts from the Satsangs along with the written reflections and field notations from each participant’s daily practice, were gathered as a testament to a journey taken and as documentation in support of this research study. Thus, multiple voices re-sound in this dissertation document, which contains the Sound sādhanā journeys of the six research participants, including the author as researcher, teacher, facilitator, mentor, and Sādhaka (spiritual seeker / Yogi). This research revealed multiple benefits, including: enhanced creativity, a sense of expanded consciousness, increased self-awareness of body, breath, word and thought; vocal awareness and refinement; enhanced listening; and, increased clarity and organization of thought. This dissertation holds the unique experiences of an oral teaching tradition and reflects the Sound sādhanā research journey as an invitation to the reader to witness a new form of scholarship within the Yogic paradigm unfolding in the area of art, education, and spirituality. This research contributes to research and education in the field of practice-based spiritual inquiry, sound and consciousness studies, inquiry-based voice yoga practice, and the contemplative arts.

Keywords: Voice Yoga; Sadhana Arts; Practice-Based Spiritual Inquiry; Contemplative Art Practice



*The written words within this text are to be enlivened
with breath, sound
and practice*

To Sarasvatī

Sādhana
Saadhanaa
sSādhana
sSādhana
Sound sSādhana

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A note on transliteration markings

The Sanskrit transliteration markings throughout this dissertation are purposeful, and are intended as points of attention ... to consider new forms, language and meaning as ways to awaken. To attend to the shaping of sound and space through breath and voice, tongue and palate. To attend to utterance and resonance, reverberation and vibration. The diacritical markings within this text are points of attention to remind you that this is an oral tradition, and the shapes, lines, and dots you read are to be heard and sounded, passed from teacher to student through voice and breath.

Language to Begin—A Way In

Sādhana

Practice-based Spiritual Inquiry

sSādhana

practice and Praxis

sSādhana

journey of Sādhana

self

small conditioned self

Self

Divine Self, Soul Self, Inner Self

swara

musical note

Swara

soul-filled utterance

Sādhaka

spiritual seeker and practitioner

Satsang

gathering for teaching, learning, and discourse
on the journey of sSādhana and the nature of Self

Pilgrimage to Arrival

I was born of a land far from the origins of Yoga to a people of the old Celtic culture of Scotland¹—an Animistic Earth culture that views the natural world as filled with Spirit, and the visible and the invisible dimensions as one world reality. My first language was Gaelic, not Sanskrit, and the Yogic way of life was not part of my original cultural shaping. Nevertheless, the longing I had for immersive experience in music, to know and sing spirit through song, to realize the Divine within all sound, particularly vocal sound, brought me to the spiritual path.

My exploration of sacred sound and spirit song brought diverse theatre voice performance and sound design experience. My experiments with non-verbal utterance and atmospheric sonic shaping formed part of my approach when working as a vocal artist in residence with the international performance company Cirque du Soleil. My work with Cirque du Soleil eventually led me from the *outer expression of voice* to the *inner exploration of resonance*, which led eventually to Yoga² and the Sanskrit syllable and practice of OM as a path of personal transformation and liberation.

Through the sounding of OM, I experienced all my personal chaos being subsumed into the vibration and resonance of existence. I was activated.

¹ An ancient yet still active Animistic Earth culture which views the natural world as inspired. In the Celtic heart the visible and the invisible worlds exist together as one holistic reality.

² Yoga as path of transformation and liberation "... provides a phenomenological investigation of suffering and its transcendence" (Chapple, 2008, p. 4). I sought personal transformation and liberation from my own suffering through knowledge found within direct experience.

Instantly initiated³ into sound yoga. Thus, I became a sound sādḥaka, a nāda yogi, a yogic practitioner attuning to the vibrational dimension of reality through yogic sound practices⁴ (Hari, 2005). Over time, I integrated Yogic philosophy and Vedic lifestyle, Nāda Yoga, Dhrupad and Khyāl voice cultivation practices into my life and into my teaching praxis. My ongoing Sādhanā in the realm of yogic sound has been initiated, encouraged and guided by Indian singing masters, nāda yogis and gurus from India, USA, Europe, and Canada.

Thus, I come to Arts Education as a professional singing artist, teacher of voice art and sacred sound practice, Nāda Yogi, and sound designer. Here, I designed Sound sSādhanā as a Yogic path of inquiry, a practice-based spiritual inquiry which brings together voice and the *practice of voice cultivation* as a yoga and way of self-inquiry. Self-inquiry within a Yogic paradigm is a spiritual endeavour and journey of self-unfoldment. Having first explored Sādhanā in my Master thesis, *Artistic Sādhanā: A Praxis of Embodied Awakening* (2015) as a personal investigation, I was curious to explore Sādhanā as a practice-based spiritual inquiry through sound with a collective of other seekers, other Sādḥakas. What might I learn as teacher and participant?

Sound sSādhanā, as presented here as a research project, is intended as a practice-based spiritual inquiry through sounding, through the human voice and

³ Sparked, ignited, activated. Seeded potentials awakened by direct experience of sounding.

⁴ Sound Yoga is Nāda Yoga, the path of exploring consciousness through sound. Expressed through various Indian music forms including non-syllabic utterance and deep listening. Nāda Yogis explore the full spectrum of sound frequency in their practice, both the audible and the inaudible, meaning that all forms of earthly music, the sounds of space, and even the entire electromagnetic spectrum of frequencies are included within this range of perception (Devi, 2021).

human body complex, and through listening into one's own sounded, re-sounded, and unsounded reverberation. Sound *sSādhanā* emerges from oral tradition, and is an embodied, living, dynamic practice in response to context and student. Sound *sSādhanā* is a path of quietening and focusing the mind body heart complex to the degree of profound strength, clarity, and discernment. It is a path of steadfastness in practice, and steadiness of mind, breath and tone. A paradox of sound and silence, action in stillness, and stillness in action.

As voice artists and Sound *Sādhakas*—seekers of spiritual experience and knowledge through practice of Sound *sSādhanā*—we seek through *sSwara*⁵—we seek to know *sSelf*, both the small self (our time-based, conditioned, contingent self) and the eternal Self—through *sSwara*, through cultivation and refinement of our voice practices, our selves, and our art.

This pedagogical project was nurtured in an environment that celebrates the continual reimagining of what constitutes scholarly inquiry, research, voice, and scholarship in the field of Arts and Education. I have been inspired by the many forms of arts-based research and inquiry that explore diverse approaches to academic scholarship, that invite new ways of scholarly presence beyond conventional argument. These include, performative inquiry, poetic inquiry, embodied inquiry, a/r/tography, aesthetic inquiry, ritual inquiry, self-study and teacher inquiry, that advance research and inquiry as performative, embodied,

⁵ *sSwara*—specific to this dissertation *swara* is the musical note, and *Swara* is the soul filled tone of the realized singer/artist. The *Sādhaka* pursues *Swara* through *swara*—perfection of the musical note in practice. Some achieve *Swara*. Some remain and perfect *swara*. The finest of musicians have both. The journey from *swara* to realizing *Swara* is *sSādhanā*.

narrative, poetic, personal, and transformative⁶. I have listened to and participated in multiple approaches and perspectives of engagement that educational research through the Arts offers. Seeking to enlarge the space of the possible⁷, my research arrives into Arts and Education with a new offering—an approach to the spiritual dimension and the art of voice—a practice-based spiritual inquiry within a Yogic paradigm exploring new forms of voice cultivation and new ways of languaging experience. This offering is an invitation to quest ... to come know who rides upon your tongue.

Yet, here, at the beginning of this dissertation on Sound *sādhanā* as a Yogic path and inquiry, I feel it is important to note that I am aware of the current critical discourse and points of contention regarding the misuse, misrepresentation and misappropriation of Yoga outside of India. I am aware of the capitalist nature and the inequity of the modern Yoga industry, how Yoga is commodified and marketed, to whom the Yoga trend is targeted, whom the market exploits, and whom the market alienates. I am aware of the hypocrisy and elitism propagated in target marketing that has nothing to do with Yoga and everything to do with industry and profit. I am aware of the legacy of false gurus, the harm they cause through abuse of their power. I am aware of the anger, righteousness, and frustration of those who seek redress for all these wrongs. Their voices have penetrated the depth of my *sādhanā*, making me question my place and my path in this tradition.

⁶ Inspirational contributors to this field among many are: Fels (2010); Kelly (2015); Snowber (2004, 2016); Meyer (2006, 2010); Bickle (2005, 2015); Irwin & Cosson (2004); Walsh (2015); Franklin (2017); Grimm, (2012); and, Prendergast, M., Leggo, C., & Sameshima, P. (2009).

⁷ See Sumara & Davis, 1997

I have asked myself, “Have I stolen, mindlessly colonized, or believed myself entitled to this Yogic sound practice and understanding of reality, or was it offered to me as I sought to know spirit and soul through self-knowledge, artistry, transformation and transcendence?” I decided to ask⁸ my Nāda Guru, my music teacher and guide of the last ten or so years, if I should join the Sādhanās of those who are calling for reclamation and redress, and view myself as part of the problem, or if I should remain steady in my own sSādhanā praxis as a spiritual singing artist and teacher of Sound sSādhanā. She replied:

The knowledge that we seek through practice and association transcends culture, context, place, race, politics and religion. True knowledge can only be found through practice and direct experience. *Sat* is what we are and *Sat* is what we seek. All are welcome. The rest is just noise (in conversation, Prasad, 2019).

In our sādhanā practices, we seek to expand beyond limitation of identity, which is not to say that the issues activating the identified self are not of importance to the individual within culture, but rather, this work, my work here, is not about that. The word “Sat” means “That which is ultimately real” (Feuerstein, 2001, p. 458); “Pure Being” (Iyengar, 1993, p, 342); and, “Truth” (Desikachar, 1995, p. 241); and as my singing teacher expresses here, the reality that is “Sat” exists for all of us. Sat is inclusive of All, regardless of differences.

⁸ I ask this question regularly of my teachers, and they always redirect my attention to swara, to the music. The best way to respect the origin of the music, the philosophy within it and the culture of its origin, is to attend to cultivating bhāva (devotion, love and affection) and to take seriously the cultivation of musical skills. Sanskrit is to be spoken correctly. Swara and sur refined to perfection, and the teacher/s and Gurus revered. One of the most important ways to demonstrate regard for the teachings and the teacher, is through practice. Diligence in practice combined with sincere devotion to Īshwara (God, Divinity, Cosmic Soul) is key.

To qualify injustice, difference or indifference, inequality, oppression, right or wrong action, the expressions of outrage and the cultural issues of the times as “noise”, requires explanation. For what qualifies sound as noise is indeed subjective and contextual. In the context of this Sound *sSādhanā* research, “noise” means that which distracts the *Sādhaka* from their Sound *sSādhanā*—from their voice cultivation practices and from their development as a singing sound artist and Sound Yogi.

In the context of this Sound *sSādhanā* research, the *Swara Nāda* we seek lies beyond all matters of chaos and dispute, and beyond identification with the matters of small self (conditioned contingent self) in the world. We seek “the discovery of that which is unbroken and continuous at the back of all that rise, break and pass; what flows placid and peaceful underneath all surface clashes and discords ...” (Pratyagatmananda, 1961, p. 61). The *Swara Nāda* we seek that is so discreet and subtle can only be experienced when we internalize our five senses in a practice of *Pratyāhāra*—the yogic practice of abstraction and selective attention (Bhatnagar, 2019). One way to *Pratyāhāra*⁹ is through sound meditation as *sSādhanā*.

Not to minimize the importance of intentional presence and action in the world of chaos, conflict, and dispute, particularly if transformation is one of the goals. An engaged presence in chaos and transformation is a powerful *Sādhanā* in and of itself. Such a *Sādhanā* could be added to or taken up by the *Sādhaka*

⁹ *Pratyāhāra* bridges the outer practices of Yoga with the inner processes. It is the practice of discriminatory withdrawal of attention from distraction, controlling all forms of consumption, dissipation of vital forces, drawing attention inwards as a foundation for the higher yogic practices of concentration and meditation. See Language Glossary.

whose *dharma*¹⁰ (process of discernment determining self and community evolution) it is to do battle in the world; and, much like Arjuna the Pāṇḍavan prince in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, some people have been prepared (conditioned by their life context) for such a role. However, other Sādhakas require time and space away¹¹ from conflict so as to cultivate poise and strengthen their capacity for effecting change within themselves first before re-entering and engaging the cultural, political, familial, social, and or d/evolutionary fray.

Through the endeavour to realize Self through self,¹² or indeed, to cultivate self from the location and perspective of Self (nondual), the Sound Sādhaka will become skilled in their daily Praxis¹³. Individual refinement will reverberate in a subtle yet profound way through the transpersonal¹⁴ world of relationship and community. For now however, pursuing the Sādhanā of chaos

¹⁰ An experiential inquiry determining the positive significance of one's actions in performance within a given context.

¹¹ Space and time at a distance to gain perspective, rejuvenate, rebalance, reflect, cultivate skills, strengthen resilience. Not spiritual bypassing but consciously choosing to attend to a spiritual practice to strengthen a foundation of deep stillness and equanimity within. Connecting to a deeper Source beyond the source of agitation.

¹² The concept and journey of knowing Self through self is drawn from the *Bhagavad Gītā* (6:20) and is explained in detail in the Language Section of this dissertation. To understand the journey/ process, it is necessary to also understand the concept of self, Self, and sSelf, also explained in detail in the glossary. In summary, the Yoga Sādhanā journey/ process requires the Sādhaka to locate and focus upon the divine spirit/soul (Self) within the individuated self, and to come to know (realize through direct experience) the individuated divine aspect (quality, soul, Self) as the same spirit in all things (Self). From there the Sādhaka views with discernment the contingent self (identified small egoic self—I, me, mine) and engages sādhanās (specific formal spiritual practices) to refine egoic nature and dissolve contingency (seeing through and beyond identification). Thus, removing conceptual boundaries between the self and Self, and ultimately expanding experientially into the realization of being already "That" (Nisargadatta: "I Am That" (1973)—we journey back to the beginning, to Wholeness.

¹³ Living and applying one's philosophy and inquiry in daily life and as one's work in the world.

¹⁴ Transcending the personal individual to affect the field of other, group, community, culture.

and conflict is not in the scope, direction or intention of this particular dissertation, but may be considered in future Sādhanā research iterations.

Franklin (2017) invites us to “consider that beyond our many identities we are embodied infinity—turning awareness inward toward its origins is the creative pilgrimage” (p. 202). For the spiritual musician Yogi Sādhaka, the Sound sSādhanā proposed here in this research dissertation is a creative endeavor and a spiritual journey of awakening. In the words of Zen master John Daido Looi (2004), “The creative journey, like the spiritual journey, is intuitive, non-linear, and experiential. It points us toward our essential nature, which is a reflection of the boundless creativity of the universe” (p. 1). Whomsoever joins the creative pilgrimage will be transformed.

I arrive here now, embodying a unique composition of experience and skill, with an invitation to Sound sSādhanā—a way of inquiry that opens into the spiritual dimension through voice cultivation. Sound sSādhanā does not arise in response to the loudest voice seeking attention and confirmation, or to the victor of argumentation on the subject of Sādhanā and its place in Education or Arts. Rather, Sound sSādhanā as inquiry has arrived through my ongoing practice-based sSādhanā, immersed as I am in Oral teaching traditions: Advaita¹⁵ Vedānta, Dhruvad, Khyāl, Mantra Sādhanā, Yoga Vedānta, and Nāda Yoga. Thus, this offering comes from the perspective and experience of a sound yogi artist, teacher, practitioner and researcher of sSelf, Arts and Education. The

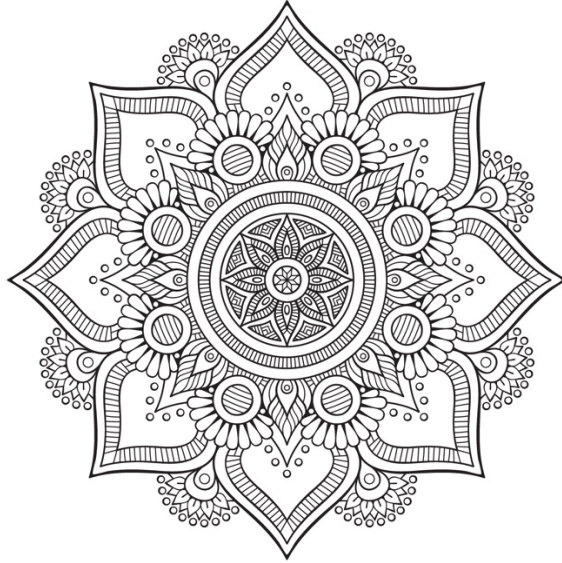
¹⁵ Nondual, unity, spirit and matter as one reality.

Sound sSāadhanā design I offer here, is an invitation to come to know who rides upon your tongue as a path of artistry, inquiry, and subtle activism.¹⁶

All are welcome.

Oṃ Śānti ~ Peace

¹⁶ Affecting energy and consciousness in a subtle way. Specific sounded qualities can reverberate at a particular energetic and thus vibrational level that can be beneficial to spiritual awakening, transformation of self, relationships and community. I elaborate further on the power of vibration, potentized sound and subtle activism in the Language for the Journey section and in the Satsang on Satsang.



At the back of our many perceptions of self-identity is the omnipresent, untainted, formless forever that we too are. Like any sacred pilgrimage, this core essence is the shrine of spiritual investigation (Franklin, 2017, p. 201)

The Map

(Viewing the journey ahead)

Welcome. I offer you here a Map. An invitation into personal and experiential encounter with spiritual practice and inquiry, so that you, dear Sādhaka¹⁷, might come to experience as Witness, a living and direct connection¹⁸ with my research and the way of Sound sSāadhanā¹⁹.

To light the path forward, I have divided this dissertation into sections:

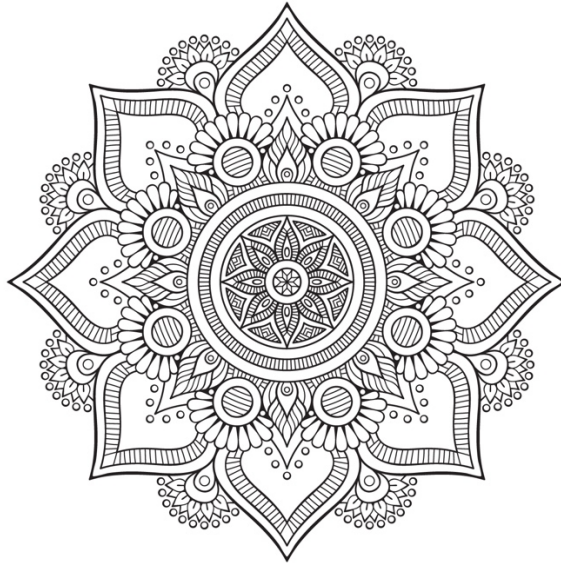
- The Initiation Activation Mandala represents the entrance portal to the body of this research dissertation. You are entering the path of the Sound Sādhaka.
- Invitation invites you to contemplate what rides upon your tongue. To facilitate introspection you are presented with questions to provoke the opening of your inner ear.
- Infinity Paradox of a Holistic Cosmos contains the Wholeness Mantra and Paradox puzzle out of which this dissertation emerges and of which this dissertation is part.
- The Story of My Research: A Gathering of Sādhakas reveals the story of my research, my inspiration and intention, and the methods by which I gathered data. This section includes the Sound sSāadhanā Research Palette that I developed as a foundation for the Sound sSāadhanā journey.

¹⁷ Spiritual seeker—one who is on the path of Sāadhanā through practices of awakening and personal refinement.

¹⁸ Dr. Frawley, from *Vedantic Meditation: Lighting the Flame of Awareness* (2006). My approach to explication of spiritual inquiry is purposeful. I write in such a way as to draw the reader into the experience, into the story, and thus into the teaching. Rather than writing *about* spirituality, spiritual inquiry and spiritual experience, we (the Yogi Sādhakas) attempt to speak (in first-person written voice) from direct experience and through reflection upon that experience.

¹⁹ Spiritual Sāadhanā through sound practices. In this research we seek direct experience of Self through our own singing, sounding, resounding voice.

- Language for the sSāadhanā Journey: A Word Palette is a glossary, an introduction and explanation of the words and terms that I use in my praxis and throughout this dissertation. Within this section, the philosophical ground and theoretical underpinnings for this practice-based spiritual inquiry research are revealed and established. You will need this word palette to accompany your journey.
- The Satsang Section offers seven facilitated Satsangs (group Sāadhanā gatherings). Each Satsang unfolds as a script, emphasizing oral transmission as a way of teaching and learning, giving precedence to direct experience through the invitation to practice-based spiritual exploration (inquiry). Specifically designed to facilitate this research, each Satsang contains: a teaching or presentation from the facilitator; a discussion on a theme within Sound sSāadhanā; an invitation to the Yogi Sādhakas to share their insights and their direct experience of their practice; responses to reflections within discussion; and, a practice from the Sound sSāadhanā Foundational Palette. Thus demonstrating how this particular practice-based spiritual inquiry unfolded through various teachings, practices, questions and contemplations.
- The Journey's End: Culminating Yogi Responses offers the Yogis' reflections of their journey through the Sound sSāadhanā research in their own words.
- Final Arrival: Reflections from the Researcher offers reflections and insights on the Sound sSāadhanā research process from the researcher, facilitator, and teacher.
- Final Pranām is a final acknowledgement and appreciation of the reader Sādhakas for their presence as witness to the unfolding of this research.
- Appendix 1 Formal Research Design, describes in detail the structure of my research, the participant call, the way of data collection, the goal, purpose and intention.
- Appendix 2 Formal Invitation and Consent, contains the invitation to the research and a consent form that each participating Yogi read and signed before embarking on the research study. The form describes the research in detail and explains the offer, the terms of engagement, and the agreement between researcher (myself) and participant.



*Each section of this work is Sādhanā. Each word and every piece of research is Sādhanā.
This sharing with you dear Sādhaka, is the way of Satsang. Om Tat Sat.²⁰*

²⁰Om Tat Sat—All is One, All is God, One Being, Absolute Reality, meaning integral to both material goodness and spiritual pursuit—Bhagavad Gītā 17:23



Vibration

Initiation



Activation

Transformation



Invitation

Imagine if all of who you are is carried within and upon your breath.
Envision if all of who and what you are—earth, sky, air, water, trees,
mountains, fire, rain, memory, spirit, animal, human, god, past and
present, hope and longing, the vital force that animates all, and pure
consciousness yet to be realized—could be perceived inside of each
utterance, each sigh, each sounding, each song.

Have you ever wondered upon the resonance of your own voice, or
explored the colour, depth and breadth of each sounded reverberation
as it carries your heartbeat
through the air to the ear and heart of another?

If you were to decipher the layered textures of your own sounded breath,
what might you discover?

Imagine following your own voice back to before the moment of its
creation, and listening into the silent potential of all sounds yet to come.
All sounds as parts of One.

The invitation here is to bring inquiry into practice
and awareness to the process of personal transformation.
The medium, the mirror, and the portal for this *y*Yogic quest will be
your own voice.

Within this research, *s*Sādhanā is practice-based spiritual inquiry.
Sound *s*Sādhanā is practice-based spiritual inquiry through *s*Swara
through the singing sounding voice..... Om̐

Infinity Paradox of a Holistic Cosmos

ओं पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥
ओं शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Om Poornamadah Poornamidam Poornaat Poornamudachyate

Poornasya poornamaadaaya poornamevaavashishyate

Om shaantih shaantih shaantih*

Om

'That' is whole; 'this' is whole; From 'that' whole 'this' whole came;

From 'that' whole 'this' whole removed;

What remains is whole.

Peace, Peace, Peace.

Swami Dayananda Saraswati**

* Shanti Mantra and Invocatory Verse from Ishavasyopanishad, Yajurveda. This Sanskrit verse means that the individuated being is a projection and manifestation of the Universal Cosmic being, thus both beings are identical, complete in themselves, and infinite. The knowledge hidden within this verse rests in the pronouns 'this' and 'that', and is revealed through the understanding and acknowledgement of a universal cosmology in which the individual is part. The verse is no ordinary verse. It contains the vision of the Upanishads—the truth of oneself (Saraswati, 2014, p.40), and contains within it the grounding philosophy for my research and dissertation—Wholeness. Additionally, Shānti, which means Peace, comes from understanding Wholeness—Nonduality. This Sound Sādhanā research moves within Wholeness. Om Tat Sat—All is One, All is God, One Being, Absolute Reality, meaning integral to both material goodness and spiritual pursuit—Bhagavad Gītā 17:23 (Swami B. V. Tripurari, 2001, p. 516). I sing this mantra with my own teacher regularly. Sometimes it is inserted into other compositions as part of a story of auspicious beginnings i.e., Krishna's birth. The verse often provokes discourse on dualist and nondual perspectives, and is a worthy mantra to sing and contemplate.

** This particular translation is chosen in alignment with my research on Sādhanā. Additional translations of this mantra offer Poorna, or Pūrna, as Completeness, Fullness, Absolute Fullness and Total Limitlessness. Meaning for example, that absolute completeness, for it to be undivided (inclusive of both incomplete and complete), includes all, every-thing and no-thing, form and formlessness in its completeness. From a Vedic perspective, "Purnam is another way for *shruti* [that which is heard and spoken aloud] to say Brahman" (Saraswati, 2014, p. 13). This one verse is an example of its meaning. Everything is there. "Nothing is left out. Subject, object, cause, effect, experience, and fullness—nothing is omitted" (p. 40)

The Story of my Research

(A Gathering of Sādhakas)

Oṃ Sādhakas. The inspiration to conduct a group study of Sādhanā (practice-based spiritual inquiry) through voice cultivation practices by way of oral tradition, arose from my own Sangeet (singing) and Nāda (sound yoga) Sādhanā practice, research, and teaching Praxis. I have been involved in spiritual Sādhanā in music for many years, and have noticed that musicians with disciplined sound sādhanā practices who also live the way of Sādhanā, have a unique quality in their vocal sound and presence that the combined expressions of Sādhanā seem to grant.

This combination of sādhanā (practice) and Sādhanā (way of being, praxis) I present here as sSādhanā, to pedagogical purpose. The small ‘s’ represents sādhanā practice(s), and the large ‘S’ represents Sādhanā as praxis and way of being in the world. The double ‘sS’ reflects the two expressions of sādhanā as a unique totality, while the italic ‘s’ leaning into the large ‘S’ represents a relationship and movement between the two forms. Thus, the ‘sS’ reflects the movement of individual practice into praxis—intentional practice towards a way of being. Explained in greater detail in the following Language Glossary section, the combined positions of ‘sS’ will be found throughout this dissertation, sometimes leaning, sometimes not, and other times prefixing different words.

In my Master’s research *Artistic Sādhanā: Embodied Praxis of Awakening* (Anderson, 2015), I explored Sādhanā through multiple artistic mediums

including sound, and found the project personally enriching and revelatory. I wondered how I might teach, co-create and facilitate sSādhanā exploration as a group study, and whether the participants in the group might also benefit from the experience. Thus, in the final chapter of my Master's manuscript I proposed a research design for "a gathering of Sādhakas" for the purpose of sSādhanā inquiry. I envisioned Satsang as the environment where individual Sādhakas could share and receive inspiration on their journey, where sSādhanā inquiry could unfold as a group endeavour, and where, as researcher, I could gather responses to my inquiry.

In considering a group Sound sSādhanā exploration, I wondered who my participants would need to be. I sought initiates of Yoga as a foundational prerequisite. However, I soon realized that voice development and sound awareness practices are rarely part of a daily yogic practice. Particularly outside of an ashram where daily yogic practice is represented almost solely as physical training with some meditation. Additionally, though Mantra might on occasion be voiced, yogic singing usually occurs in a call and response Kīrtan (devotional group chant) in which devotional intention takes precedence over vocal awareness, breath support, tone, and quality of sound. In contrast, I was seeking yogi musicians ... those for whom music practice *is* their yYoga (their practice and way of life)

Over time, I encountered yogis and singers who expressed interest in deepening their understanding of the connection between their voice—their singing, sounding, sacred instrument—and their spiritual aspirations—their

desire to know more about the nature of reality, divinity, sSelf²¹ and consciousness. I invited these yogi musicians, singers, artists and seekers with similar ontological orientations, to join me in my Sound sSādhanā research, that we might become Psychosononauts²² and Sādhakas in a shared Sound sSādhanā journey.

For this research, I invited all the Sādhakas into practice-based spiritual inquiry through their own voiced sound current. I taught the tools of meditation, deep listening, vocal sounding, toning, chant, and drone alignment for induction into non-ordinary (holotropic) states of consciousness within which the Sādhakas could navigate and explore their own psyche, mind, and soul. The degree to which one explored was dependent upon each Sādhaka's intention, focus, commitment, and curiosity.

Inevitably, each Yogi arrived with a unique history of spiritual practice and spiritual experience within the Yogic culture, including Kīrtan, Satsang, Nāda and Mantra Yoga, Āsana, Meditation, scriptural study and guru interaction. Almost all were yoga practitioners, and two were singing teachers,

²¹ sSelf = small self (ego identified, contingent self) together with Self (expanded, unbounded by identity, greater Self). Explained in greater detail in the Language for the Journey glossary section. Exploration and participation in the movement between wholeness and wholeness, between individual and universal, might be understood as different locations of 'Here'. Thus we move from here to here, though both are here (Mehrotra, 2019). The 'sS' reflects the underlying ontological themes of dual and nondual perspective, location, and experience, and the leaning 'sS' represents the journey to unity, which is the aspiration of Yogi, meditator and singer alike through a disciplined practice that embodies the spiritual goals of Yoga.

²² Explorers of consciousness using the sound current as vehicle, as invocation and as portal to altered (expanded) states. The term Psychonaut combines two ancient Greek words: Psychē meaning "soul", "spirit", or "mind"; and Naútēs, meaning "sailor" or "navigator". Thus, a Psychonaut is one who navigates the soul; is a sailor of the soul, one who seeks to investigate their mind using intentionally induced altered states of consciousness for spiritual, scientific, or research purposes" (Blom, 2009, p. 434). Further reference to Psychonautics, Psychosomanautics, Psychosononautics, and Psychosomasononautics can be found in the Language for the Journey glossary section.

performing singing artists and musicians. Thus each Yogi reflected varying levels of knowledge and competence on the Sound sSādhanā path, particularly in the area of sSelf-inspired, sSelf-initiated guided practice and sSelf-study. Through the practice-based spiritual inquiry of Sound sSadhana, each participating Yogi was to become a Sound Sādhaka—a seeker and explorer of sSelf and consciousness through the medium of sound, specifically, vocal sound.

Group Sound sSādhanā Practices

To create community within diversity I grounded the Sound sSādhanā research in a set of rich foundational voice cultivation practices including: OM and AUM Mantra, Shadaj Sādhanā, Dhrupad Kharaj Sādhanā, Swara Sādhanā, Mokṣa Mantra, Nāda Sādhanā, Prāṇāyāma Sādhanā and Deep Listening into Reverberation and Silence. This set of practices along with re-sounding writing practices such as sonic mapping became the Foundational Sound sSādhanā Research Palette²³ offered and taught to all the Yogi Sādhakas in our sound classes together. These practices can be located in the Satsang pages.

To remain integral to oral traditions of voice cultivation and listening practices, I followed the way I was taught—Oral transmission. All interaction, all teaching and sharing was through sound via singing, sounding, talking, and discussion. All voice practices and vocal techniques (voice culture) were taught in-person—from teacher to student.

²³ The Foundational Sound sSādhanā Research Palette is described in greater detail below.

Over the three-month duration I gradually introduced the palette of practices, modifying the practices to suit the disposition of each Yogi Sādhaka while continuing to provoke an ongoing attention to *Tapas* (disciplined practice), *sSwara* (cultivation of self and the uncovering of Self through voice simultaneously), *Ātma-Vichāra* (sSelf-Inquiry—who is singing? Who is asking the question?), *Svādhyāya* (sSelf-study alongside of sounding, singing, and mantra, practice), and *Īśvarapranīdhānā* (devotion to God²⁴ / Swara Nāda). Breath practices were an integral part of the Sound sSāadhanā palette, to bring the mind home to the body, to bring the breath to awareness and under the control of a focused mind, and to harness the breath in support of the voice for sounding and singing.

I introduced foundational practices as a way to focus the group, and to develop a strong vocal foundation for each Yogi Sādhaka. Thus, the Yogis were tasked with a daily sound sādhanā (personal practice) in the mornings, moving from Om to Shadaj and to Kharaj in the lower octave. The sound sādhanās of the palette were intended to stabilize and ground body and breath, to still and steady the mind before the start of the day. These foundational sādhanā practices were established as a formal palette out of which each Yogi could create their personal daily sound sādhanā, adding or subtracting elements—modifying and refining according to self-assessed need.

Most of these practices are based in tone, the long tone, the single tone that carries no direct meaning, but rather guides the sounder inwards to

²⁴ For the Nāda Yogi the Nāda is Divine. For the Yogi musician, swara (the musical note) is the way (vehicle and portal) to the Divine, to Īśhwara. There are many levels of realization before ultimate realization, many depths of listening for the Nāda Yogi to perceive and in which to refine perception.

introspection. Each of these foundational practices/sādhanās, can stand on their own as single practices; however, as part of a palette, each practice was to support and complement the other, together creating a strong foundation for the sound Yogi. Of the many benefits to the voice, toning sādhanās offered a spaciousness and a timelessness in which the observer²⁵ consciousness was awakened. The Yogi could observe their nervous system, their thoughts, and their shifting awareness through the transparency and quality of their tone. To this end, vocal toning was presented as advantageous to the exploration of consciousness and to the refinement of perception.

One-on-one Sound sSādhanā teachings

The one-on-one class was for developing deep listening into sound and voice. As the teacher, I would sing the sound exercise and the Yogi would listen then repeat the sound exercise back to me. The voice practices were to be heard and directly sounded, repeated and then practiced.

The one-on-one Sound sSādhanā²⁶ teachings consisted of part singing class and part Satsang. Yogis were taught ways of listening and attuning voice, body, energy, mind and thought to harness all of their self towards the refinement of tone and alignment with Sur (musical pitch). The work within the individual singing class uncovered the original voice, the essential unmasked

²⁵ “Vedanta speaks of mind and matter as the subtle and gross forms of one and the same reality. The duality of the seer and seen, the observer and the observed “is overcome in the field of pure Consciousness” (Ranganathananda,1991, p. 86) of which the seer and the seen, the observer and the observed, are but two poles.

²⁶ Sādhanā with a capital ‘S’ refers to Sādhanā as Praxis and as a philosophical stance and ‘way of Being’ in which all events and every moment is an opportunity for sSādhanā—for participating in one’s awakening.

sound of the Yogi. From there, modifications of the voice practices were made in response to each Yogi's skill level and progress in their sSādhanā. The work of each Yogi between their one-on-one class was a daily practice of everything learned.

The sādhanās²⁷ (vocal practices) in this research are connected to Nāda Yoga philosophy and to Indian voice cultivation practice in yogic music studies. Each practice (sādhanā) was intended to awaken awareness in each Yogi Sādhaka and to initiate a journey of artistic refinement. Each practice (sādhanā) was accompanied with a story of its musical and spiritual lineage, a philosophical teaching, and an offering of insight on practice for each student. In this way, sound sādhanās were approached as voice cultivation practices and as ways of spiritual inquiry. In each foundational practice lay the seeds for cultivating vocal artistry simultaneous to sSelf awareness and sSelf-knowing.

The daily sound sādhanā

Outside and between the classes and Satsangs, the daily personal sound sādhanā was necessary for artistic development, personal evolution²⁸ and spiritual transformation,²⁹ and was the responsibility of each Sādhaka Yogi.

²⁷ sādhanā with the lower case "s" refers to the practices as part of the way. Even in the simplest or smallest of sādhanās one can, with the right approach and attitude, find 'the way'; however, sādhanās can be undertaken as repetition and might not always have the same depth of commitment, attention, or awareness attached.

²⁸ The notion of participatory evolution whereby one instigates and continually feeds the process in which one awakens. The practitioner consciously and intentionally refines and enlightens their nature. The path of the sSelf-realizing Sādhaka.

²⁹ Developing spiritual quotient SQ through direct first-person experience. One can only truly know the spiritual dimension through their own experience. Intentional spiritual practice is, and is a way to spiritual experience, as the practice itself is spiritual in nature, meaning devotional,

Emphasis was placed on the mutual relationship between Tapas and Svādhyāya—disciplined practice interwoven with sSelf-study. While there are various types of Tapas (disciplines) from traditional yoga streams, with various levels of asceticism, for the purpose of this research, the Tapas for each participating Yogi was to attend to a daily practice of singing and reflecting. Through Tapas the Yogi Sādhakas could engage Svādhyāya (sSelf-study) in their sādhanā.

The daily sound sādhanā was intended ultimately as a self-managed and self-guided practice-based process of sSelf-cultivation through self-investigation and Self-discovery. The daily discipline, was for the conscious strengthening of one’s person, their voice and powers of concentration together, developing the vocal instrument while cutting through distraction, to bring full attention to the present moment in creation.

Each Yogi committed to daily sound sādhanā engagement, which included voice and meditation, and re-sounding reflective writing practices drawn from the Sound sSādhanā palette. The daily personal practice was for the benefit of the Yogi. Personal insights were shared and discussed during group sessions.

Re-sounding writing practices

Re-sounding writing practices of sSādhanā journaling, field note documentation, sonic mapping, poetic and creative writing, and long-form

receptive, seeking to know the unknowable. The more practice, the more experience, the greater spiritual quotient in the Sādhaka, the fuller the spiritual presence of the Sādhaka.

composition further enriched individual practice and reflection. Written reflections were shared and collected as documentation of experience—thus becoming research data.

To facilitate the exploration of the sSelf through the writing process, I introduced the reflective journal into daily sSādhana. The personal reflective journal was to companion the Yogi Sādhaka throughout their spiritual journey for the duration of the research process. The journal was to hold the Yogi's daily reflections on their sSādhana experience, their thoughts, feelings, ideas, stream of consciousness writing; and could also include field notes, personal experiments, poetry, lyrics, Sanskrit translation, ideas for future development, lists of things to do, new language, sketching, diagrams, charts, doodles, sonic scores and musical maps, mantras to learn and explanations of Mantras researched, or mantra meanings and revelations discovered through their daily sound sādhanās.

The Yogi could share from their journal in Satsang if they wanted to, and could return to their journal to resource and craft their personal writings into compositions or refined field notes to add to the collective research. The underlying intention from the researcher and teacher perspective, apart from encouraging the production of data, was to invite each participant into the practice of a disciplined self-study and participatory sSelf-unfoldment.

The journal was an invitation to collect notes to self, thoughts about the process, inspired creative visions and or ideas generated by the voice cultivation practices, including specific notes from the teacher for individual sādhanās, and insights on matters of importance to the journal keeper. The journal would

become a personal resource for reflection, future long-form writing, poetry, and music composition. Thus, each Yogi carried their journal to Sādhanā sessions and Satsangs, adding notes on sSādhanā to be further reflected upon during their personal daily sSādhanā.

A second form of reflective writing was introduced as the field note,³⁰ as in writing from within the field of practice, that being Sound sSādhanā. Field note taking was to be part of the daily singing practice, short-hand notes on thoughts, jotted down whilst working, experimenting, and experiencing; succinct observations of personal process, words set to paper to remind the Yogi of an idea to return to later and develop, abbreviated writing, explanatory writing, semi crafted or poetically refined. The field note was offered as a way into writing, a jotting down of observances about the daily experience. For some, the field note would lead to poetic writing, and for others the field note led to extended composition.

Sonic mapping is a form of field note that involves visual gesture to articulate in a drawing what may not be articulated with words; the expression of a state or a feeling, a tonal quality, or a sense of presence that may not be fully grasped. The visual gesture can be used to follow the shape of a vocal ornament,

³⁰ The Field Note form was inspired by Dr. Karen Meyer (2010) and her qualitative study of the practice of Living Inquiry. In her study, the field note was “like a ‘sketch’... an expression of an individual inquiry” (p. 87) and could take a variety of media forms including written text. For Meyer, the fieldnotes became the content of her study and the way the group engaged, unfolded, and moved forward. The participants created field notes throughout the study and amassed a portfolio of individual inquiry (2006, p. 157) that became the seeds and the substance for culminating creative projects.

a microtonal journey, the way the note bends, or perhaps the places the mind travels as it explores consciousness.

The sonic map is a resource for the visually oriented Yogi and musician, and can be used to retrace steps to remember states of awareness or a particular movement of sound. Sonic mapping is also using the visual gesture in ways to organize thought, make sense and meaning out of a reflection or particular lesson, for example: how the notes on a scale sit in relation to each other and or move through space while in relation.

Using the visual gesture to capture sound as it is happening is also a way of promoting stream-of-consciousness writing opening a bridge between the subconscious and conscious self. Though not the focus of this research project, Sonic Mapping will be pursued as a separate study on mapping consciousness through sound practices.

Within the Sound sādhanā research, poetic reflection organically emerged from some of the Yogis, and became a distilled writing form that took time to craft. Through the crafting and refining of the poetic expression, further reflection occurred, crystallizing thoughts most often sourced from the archived experiences within the subconscious and the cryptic jottings within the personal journal as field notes. The poem was a private thing, a personal art, a work of closely considered thoughts and words describing a constellation in one's personal process, moved into being through insight and the desire to not only express a particular profound moment in time, but to capture, hold and relive the moment in continual time through the written form. The poem, because of the

time and effort it took to create, was a deeper inquiry into the Sādhaka's experience and process written poetically; a field note written poetically, a journal entry as a line of poetry.

And finally, long-form written composition was encouraged as an extended flow on a particular theme important to the Yogi, crafted and refined over the duration of the research. In the extended long-form composition the Yogi could cultivate writing as a reflective inquiry and as an art form. In this way, writing was a reverberation of the voiced experience—a form of re-sonance and a facet of the full expression of vibrational being.

Collection of data

Sound *sSādhanā* is the design, the content, the subject and the way of inquiry. During the months of daily practice, various themes arose for each Yogi, which were discussed in their class time. By the end of the three month Sound *sSādhanā* research project, the singing class had become Satsang *sSādhanā*. We would sing and sound, modify practices, then discuss emergent themes. All discussions were recorded and transcribed. Some of the conversations were kept whole, as the flow and articulation of a particular theme seemed so profound in that moment. These Satsang conversations will be found throughout the Satsang section of this dissertation. The field notes, reflective writing, creative long-form composition, sonic maps and poetry, were collected as documentation of research. All sessions and interviews were recorded and transcribed, shared, edited, and further refined by the Yogi and the researcher. In this way, each Yogi was a co-investigator within the Sound *sSādhanā* research.

Embodying multiple roles

In my direct experience of the living oral tradition of voice cultivation *sādhanā*, one's teacher is also a mentor and a student who is continually learning and crafting the teachings (See Oral Tradition Satsang). In workshops that become Satsangs, the teacher facilitates, holds, gathers and shapes the teachings in response to the context and the student. As this research is based in an oral tradition and this dissertation reflects the oral tradition of which I am part, I too embody multiple roles within its unfolding.

To unite the individuals within the group I taught a palette of foundational practices (see below). To host the group skillfully in Satsang, I acted as facilitator. To gather documentation, explore themes, and enter an iterative cycle of writing with each Yogi, I embodied the role of researcher. To encourage and inspire each Yogi in their unique exploration and expression of *sādhanā*, I embraced the role of mentor. My commitment of care for each Yogi on their journey engendered an environment of trust for personal and spiritual growth.

Finally, the entirety of this research was and is my *sādhanā*. Thus, I am a *Sādhaka* among *Sādhakas*, and Yogi among Yogis on a journey of discovery to explore the potentials of Sound *sādhanā* as a practice-based spiritual inquiry through Sound. Sound *sādhanā* is the design, the content, the subject, and the way of inquiry for this research project.

Sound sSādhanā Palette

Sound sSādhanā, an oral tradition, exists here in written explanatory form as a palette of practices through which inquiry was performed and experiences documented, reflected upon and discussed. To participate in the Sound sSādhanā inquiry, the Yogis required direct first-person experience of their practice. The Sound sSādhanā Research Palette below, introduces the practices through which we engaged our practice-based spiritual inquiry.

OM—Bīja Mantra—The Wholeness Seed

OM³¹ is considered the most important of all the mantras and is known among sound yogis as the sound of cosmic entirety. In the sounding of Om one creates the sound and the experience of God.³² The one who utters, consciously adds their individual vibration to the universal. Meaning that when chanting Om, the chanter is tuning into wholeness. To this purpose, each individual session and group Satsang began with chanting Om in long steady tones sustained for the length of the Yogi's breath. Om grounded each Satsang in sound and breath. Om was the prayerful opening to practice, a ritualizing of the space, a recognition of the sacredness of our sound practice together, and an activation of all that was to come within the Sound sSādhanā session. In some classes and in Satsang, OM was opened up linguistically to AUM, as three

³¹ Praṇava —AUM, Om: The primal syllable or Bīja (seed) said to contain the entire Sanskrit alphabet in seed form (Beck, G. (1995, p. 246).

³² Based in the understanding of a vibrational universe. Om is explained further as we move deeper into the dissertation.

sounded tones and one silent, where we listened into the fullness of silence after the final utterance.

In this Sound sSādhana research, the OM and AUM invocation activated deep breathing, inner listening, attentive sitting, and witness awareness. Recitation of Om and AUM aligned and attuned each Yogi Sādhaka's voice, breath, body and intention. In Satsang, sounding the Om together as a group aligned and attuned the Yogi Sādhakas to one another, thus creating a sacred community of Yogi Sādhakas and charging the spirit of the research.

Shadaj Sādhana

Shadaj Sādhana is the opening of the voice into Ā (Ākāra, Aakaara) while holding the tonic swara SĀ for a good length of time. Shadaj Sādhana settles the Yogi in their voice, breath, body and place. Shadaj Sādhana returns the sounder again and again to the beginning of sound creation. At the same time, the open vowel Ā offers an opening for Ātma Vichāra (sSelf-inquiry)—to ask of the self: Who is sounding? Who is asking the question? And, what is the composition of me today?

In Shadaj Sādhana, the sounder (Yogi Sādhaka) continually returns to the beginning of creation, and yet never returns to exactly the same starting place. Their voice is always new. Each repetition a new birth, a new creation of breath, body, sound, and consciousness. Each tone an opportunity to listen closely and closer still into the origin of the sound and sounder.

Over time, this arduous practice results in development of the tonic swara Shadaj (Sā) in which all the other notes of the scale can be heard as overtones. In Shadaj, the Yogi works to fill out the dimensions of the swara (the musical note), and to beautify and polish this one primary musical note. The work of the Yogi Sādhaka is personal and artistic refinement alongside of swara refinement. During Shadaj Sāadhanā, the Yogi Sādhakas were encouraged to write down any thoughts or themes that emerged and then return to sounding. The thoughts were examined after practice but not during. The focus during practice was to be solely on sound—breath, tone, colour, pitch, beauty, strength, endurance, vitality. All noted thoughts and insights were reflected upon after practice in conversation, in Satsang, written as field notes, journal entry, or crafted in composition.

Kharaj Sāadhanā

Kharaj Sāadhanā emerges from Shadaj Sāadhanā and moves slowly down the scale of swaras (notes) into the lower octaves of the voice. Kharaj Sāadhanā develops strength, courage, patience, humility, and perseverance, while cultivating experiential Swara (Self) in the voice. Kharaj Sāadhanā is best performed early morning before sunrise for maximum meditative experience.

Kharaj Sāadhanā had a powerful effect on the Yogi Sādhakas that extended beyond their formal daily sound sādhanā into their regular daily lives. This foundational sound sādhanā (practice) was one of the most profound for the Yogis who chose to explore voice sādhanās beyond the OM and Shadaj sādhanās.

Swara Sādhanā

The next step for our Sound Sādhanā exploration was Swara Sādhanā. The Yogis were introduced to Sargam³³—Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni Sa—the proper placement of each swara (note), correct pitch and relationship to Tānpūra and to each other note, and encouraged to practice their Sargam to the degree that they understood the notes (swaras) and the spaces between each note as a first step towards Raga (melodic arrangement). Specifically, Swara Sādhanā required attention to the note (swara), cultivation of pitch and roundness of tone, emphasizing the support of the entire person, body and soul as necessary to the cultivation of presence in Swara (Self in sound).

Swara Sādhanā was taught through call and response method, combining close listening, deep receptivity, courage in response, and a willingness to play. How the Yogi Sādhaka responded to Swara Sādhanā offered a direct reflection of their personal daily practice. As the teacher, I would negotiate with the Sādhaka to add or subtract practices (sādhanās) from their personal daily Sound sSādhanā. Together we, the Sādhaka and me, would craft our daily Sādhanā and area of focus, to find the balance point between challenging and manageable. Thus, keeping inspiration and creativity alive in practice.

³³ The individual syllables Sa Re Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni are swara, the musical note. Collectively they are known as Sargam. At a fundamental level Sargam is similar to Western Solfege, the syllables Do Re Me ... a way of naming the notes of the scale for the purpose of reading music and composing. Knowledge of Sargam is valuable as a method of retaining melodies of a composition in a field journal. Practice with Sargam familiarizes the singer with placement and relationship of swara. Proficiency with Sargam will allow the singer to advance in music studies. The individual syllables of Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni, are used in Sound Yoga for meditation and healing practices as they correspond to the cakras (energy centres) in the body. Daily practice with Sargam affects the singer holistically. Breath and tone together in the way of Sargam strengthens, harmonizes, clears, stabilizes, focuses the whole self and refines the swaras for singing.

Mokṣa (Moksha) Mantras

Mokṣa³⁴ Mantras are mantras specific to liberation of the Sādhaka. The Mokṣa Mantras chosen for Sound Sādhanā research were set in a sound yoga flow by one of my teachers, Sri Yogi Hari. Chanting of the mantra flow harnessed and focused the energies of the Sādhaka towards Mokṣa (Liberation). This Sound Yoga flow was offered to the Sādhakas who desired a form³⁵ of divinity to support their personal sSelf-study and sSelf-realization endeavor. Exploration of sSelf through Mokṣa Mantras yielded a wealth of insight, clarity and energy for the Yogis who chose this element from the Sound Palette.

Teaching the Mokṣa Mantras as sSādhanā entailed working with pronunciation of Sanskrit. Producing mantric formulas required care and attention. All the syllables needed to be pronounced clearly with the understanding that the Mokṣa Mantras are a condensed and therefore potent³⁶ form of sounded sSelf-provocation.

A dedicated focused practice with these Mokṣa Mantras in combination with a personal reflective writing practice, was intended to accelerate personal transformation. Insights, revelations, and reflections on practice were entered

³⁴ Mokṣa and Liberation: release from misunderstanding through knowledge of the sSelf. See Language for the Journey section for explanation.

³⁵ The form of a deity, an image, a name, is offered as a focal point to direct the Sādhaka's energy and intention. Engaging Mantra with focus on a specific deity or aspect of consciousness is a potent form of participatory transformation. Through the form of the deity the Sādhaka could experience the unitive state where Deity and Sādhaka are immersed in One. The deity becomes a portal to spiritual experience, and a doorway to the formless. From Sagun (form of divinity) to Nirgun (formless divine).

³⁶ Potency of Mantra is discussed in the Glossary of Language section and in the Satsang on Satsang.

into Sādhanā journals, written as field notes, poetry, long-form composition, and were shared in discussion and Satsang.

Śānti Mantra in Four Voices

A Śānti (Shaanti) Mantra was chanted in group Satsang as an exploration of group intention through four subtle levels of sound: the sounded voice, the whispered voice, the inner voice, and the unsounded resonance filled silence. At the same time, this mantra was chanted as a prayer for peace for all beings including ourselves. Thus we explored inwardly and outwardly the paradox of simultaneous individuality and interbeing. The combination of sound exploration and devotional intention within group Satsang brought an element of profundity and significance to the work of Sound sSādhanā. The chanting of the Peace Mantra can be found in Satsang on Satsang.

Breath sādhanās

Breath practices were introduced in support of Sound sSādhanā as practice-based spiritual inquiry through voice cultivation, meditation, awareness and inquiry practices.

Awareness Breath is simply the bringing of awareness to the unconditioned breath moving through the body underlying all sound, recognizing the body breathing, and recognizing the exchange between breathing and inspiration, breathing and listening, breathing and being. The Exhalation Awareness Breath practice places awareness on two kinds of exhalation—exhalation as an expressive release of breath and energy, and

exhalation as a sustained controlled breath that would be required for vocal support in singing. The Space Awareness Breath brings attention to the momentary suspension of breath between the inhalation and exhalation, and between the exhalation and inhalation, allowing the mind to linger without thought in the lightness of each between space.

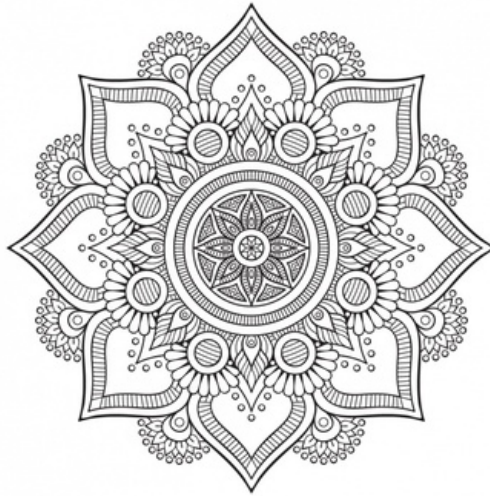
Bhrāmarī Prāṇāyāma the Bumblebee breath or Humming Breath is a yogic breath practice wherein the Yogi produces a low frequency humming sound with ears, eyes and mouth closed by the fingers of both hands. The sound created resembles the buzzing, humming drone of a bumble bee. The Bhrāmarī breath is practiced to “to obtain a clear singing voice and to internalize the mind” (Hari, 2005, p. 151). To “open the inner ear to the inner sounds of the body” (Paul, 2004, 265) ... polishing and beautifying the singing voice while simultaneously awakening sensitivity and awareness of subtle vibrations within; a favourite preparatory practice for Nāda meditation and singing.



All these words and this entire dissertation can fit into one single utterance

Om

Language for the Sādhanā Journey



Word Palette
(Palate)

That which sits upon my tongue?

Sādhakas ... within your own life, you might already have come to know that your voice, the quality of your sound, and the words you utter, have the potential to shape the world within and the worlds around you. Repetition of words and stories shape your perception and create your realities. Cultivating awareness of how you reverberate, affect, activate, create and evolve your realities through your sounding and your vibration³⁷ is the focus of this Sound sSādhanā Research project.

Since the vision for this Sound sSādhanā design and research project emerged from my own training in the oral traditions of Yoga, Indian music voice cultures and sound sādhanās, the language I use here carries special significance and inner meaning particular to Sound sSādhanā as I have experienced and envisioned it. Thus, this Sound sSādhanā design and research dissertation is inseparable from an understanding of the language and terms of its creation. If you dear reader are to journey through the multiple layers of this dissertation unhindered, familiarity with its language and presentational form will facilitate your comprehension and flow.

I introduce my Praxis below through a glossary of language and terms with added contextual translation to the purpose of revealing the theoretical, philosophical and cosmological ground embedded within each symbolic formation of text. Throughout the composition and presentation of this dissertation, you will notice recurring themes and repetition of yogic concepts in a textual and metaphorical return to the beginning, which is intentional on my

³⁷ The frequency of one's personal vibration that can be refined over time and through appropriate sādhanā.

part, as repetition of themes continually emerge in the oral traditions of sound sādhanā practices. When practice and repetition become sādhanā, we intentionally create new *samskāra*—new impressions and thus new capacities and dispositions within ourselves for ourselves and by ourselves. Thus, repetition of themes reflects the practice itself.

As a reflection of the oral tradition from which this Sound sādhanā emerged, you will find a mix of language forms: Sanskrit, Roman transliteration of Sanskrit, English translation of Sanskrit, Indian music sargam (solfege), with English text used as the primary language of explanation and reflection. Additionally, to visually and symbolically present my interpretations of philosophical concepts, and to show how I engage with Yogic and musical concepts, I use the printed textual form performatively. Underlying the multilayered approach to language and translation is my intention to communicate concept, process, and experience, simultaneously.

The performative textual gesture³⁸ is used here to textually and visually embody concepts, relationships, movement, and differing translations of the same word. When the word forms and fonts are joined together and yet remain

³⁸ A term that I created specifically to describe a text that performs the action of that which the text denotes. The term ‘performative textual gesture’ suggests movement and action, as in text that acts upon or within either itself or the page, the thesis, or the reader. Using lowercase and uppercase font purposely and outside of normative rules of grammar, punctuation, and word formation, is what I term performative. The performative textual gesture denotes, differentiates and describes its meaning through interdimensional play, and pushes understanding of a concept across the boundaries of the flat page into the visual realm, adding depth (and thus dimension) to an explanation. As a teacher I work with many visual learners. I often draw theoretical/philosophical constructs as diagrams and as maps with movement. Sometimes linear and other times nonlinear. Here I have created a form that performs across concepts—sSelf, sSādhanā, sSwara, yYoga, sSource, and gGuru. Each performative textual form holds and projects a world of understanding within its form: a teaching, a potential, a choice, location, perception, a journey, a beginning, a goal, duality and Wholeness.

separate, the textual gesture performs a relationship between one form and the other, and points to the potential journey from one form to the other. For example: self, Self, sSelf and sSelf; sādhanā, Sādhanā, sSādhanā and sSādhanā; yoga, Yoga, yYoga and yYoga; and, swara, Swara, sSwara and sSwara, source, Source, sSource and sSource. The best place to begin this journey through language, gesture, and terms, is with an understanding of sSelf and sSelf

sSelf and sSelf

The performative textual gesture is a visual code impregnated with meaning, a symbol denoting an understanding of the sSelf-realization journey as sSādhanā. To explain the gesture of sSelf, is to reveal the philosophy and the journey of yYoga sSādhanā embedded within its form. Yoga philosophy and yogic practices (sādhanās) show the way to the unitive experience according to the *Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali* and the *Bhagavad Gītā*—two principal sources of Yoga philosophy and psychology referenced in Yoga today. There are many streams and forms of yoga (paths) leading to Yoga (union, immersion with Source), as many as there are Sādhakas (seekers). The composition of the textual gesture ‘sSelf’ is intended to visually express the spiritual journey of the Yogī Sādhaka as they move through self to Self.

The lowercase ‘s’ represents the small self, the identified, ego³⁹ sense of “I” that is constructed from out of, embedded within, and contingent upon a

³⁹ “The ego or *Ahaṅkāra*, (*Ahamkaara*) claims experience to be its own and fixes the world as seen from its own limited experience ... ego-identification and suffering result. ... The higher Self (*Puruṣa*) becomes buried and one identifies with the seen ...” (paraphrase, Chapple, 2008, p. 4). The concept of *Puruṣa* (*Purusha*) arises from *Sāṃkhya* (*Sankhya*) philosophy.

complexity of matrices (environments with their own organizing principles), potentially believing itself a solid separate static subject self apart from other selves, other beings, other kinds of selves. The small self represents who one believes their self to be in this manifest individual physical form in time and context, and in relation to everyone and everything else, and is often spoken of as “I,” “me,” “my,” and “mine.” Though ego is necessary to move one in the direction of spiritual seeking, and especially to maintain vigilance and self-agency while on the spiritual journey, over identification with ego and the lack of awareness of the composition of one’s ego, can influence personal evolution and transformation.

The capitalized ‘S’ here represents the “inner self” (Ātman⁴⁰) also spoken of as the “transcendent,” “higher self,” “true” self, or “soul” self. The ‘S’ represents the Divine within, that is part of, and or the same as the universal Self or larger Self, that from Yoga Vedānta, (one of the philosophical influences of this dissertation) is the absolute Brahman.⁴¹ The Soul of the soul.

In the textual gesture of sSelf, the small font in front of the capitalized font implies a preface, a preparatory state and location of one before that one grows in awareness, transforms and or expands to realize the fullness and presence of

⁴⁰ Yoga regards life as “a continuing relationship between two fundamental experiences, prakriti or the manifest realm, and purusa/ātman, one’s higher self” (Chapple, 2008, p. 3). Moving from embeddedness in Prakriti to awareness of and being in Purusha, is the goal of Yoga. Hari (2006) explains Prakriti as the creative principle, the manifest reality, and Purusa as the unmanifest soul that animates all manifestation. *For the Vedāntin, Purusa is Brahman.

⁴¹ Ātman and Brahman. Ātman is the higher Self, Self, soul, residing within the human as the vital principle and spark of the Divine or Supreme Soul, Cosmic Soul, Absolute, Universal Consciousness (Brahman). (Walker, 2019, pp. 162-410). From traditional Advaita (nondual) Vedānta, “Brahman is realized to be one’s true Self” (Fort, 1998, p. 5).

Self. Yet the fonts, as metaphorical textual gestures, also exist as unique representatives of an understanding of separate formation—the subjective small self and the divine Self within. On the page, they are made intentionally separate and recognizable so that they (the textual forms) can work and exist independently *if* for whatever reason there is (within the Sādhaka) no inclination to seek to know or expand their understanding of their self. Which is (in my experience) rare, and is usually a stopping point of resistance to attend to assimilation before either moving forward or giving up. When resistance to movement dominates for the Sādhaka, strengthening of ego identification often results, followed by a contraction away from Self, also a form of movement, but more closely aligned with the resonance of stasis. To represent these possibilities textually in context, the small font ‘s’ will be presented upright alongside of the ever-present Self, reinforcing the distinction of identity with self and the conceptual separation from Self, forgoing the spiritual movement of participatory transformation for the time being.

For the reader hesitant to attempt the spiritual journey through self to Self, I point out another intentional feature of the performative gesture of sSelf and sSelf ... there is no forward slash⁴² between the small ‘s’ and the larger ‘S’ to indicate a border-space or division (however permeable) between the locations of self and Self. Neither is the small ‘s’ apprehended and or separated from the

⁴² Referencing the forward slash in the visual metaphor a/r/tography (Irwin & Cosson 2004) presented as a borderland or third space between roles, identities and disciplines of artist, teacher, researcher, placed as an invitation to scholarly nomadism across and within a space defined for intermingling, discourse, and hybrid meaning-making processes in arts-based research. In Sound sSādhana, I have defined the two selves as locations, and their movement relative to each other as representative of the spiritual journey from dualistic understanding to holistic nondual perception.

larger 'S' by a bracket. Note also, when the small self literally leans into the larger Self (Ātman) in sSelf. This is a textual expression of spiritual activity—showing movement and intent, a leaning in and longing towards Ātman-realization. Yet still the small self remains present though changed. The small 's' is not taken up, assimilated and dispersed, or annihilated in its proximity to the Self. The meaning here specific to this dissertation, is that the small self is required for this journey, and needs to be realized too⁴³. When we embark on a sSādhanā journey, we take our selves with us. Every part of us, self and Self. The small self is a portal to and within the Self of which All is Self.⁴⁴ Om Tat Sat.⁴⁵

Sādhaka

In beginning of the spiritual journey that is sSādhanā, the seeker becomes a Sādhaka. The Yogi Sādhaka is a seeker on the spiritual path who engages sādhanās (spiritual practices) towards the purpose of Self-realization—Ātman and Brahman realization. For the Sādhaka, the spiritual path that is sSādhanā is a calling to Yoga, to experiential realization of Wholeness. On the journey of sSādhanā, the Sādhaka seeks to know the truth of self and Self, the purpose of life, and the meaning of existence. To this end, there are many paths and as many sādhanās as there are Sādhakas. For a self-directed, spiritually inspired and curious Sādhaka, the sSādhanā journey can be one of engaged conscious

⁴³ By realizing the small self, I mean awakening to small-self reality that is embedded, contingent, identified with embodiment; then realizing potential and awakening within one's lifetime moment to moment. A process of rigorous introspection (according to Swami Chinmayananda), and/or a joyful exploration through Sound sSadhana.

⁴⁴ Including the concept (construct) of small self and large Self

⁴⁵ Om Tat Sat—All is One, All is God, One Being, Absolute Reality, meaning integral to both material goodness and spiritual pursuit—Bhagavad Gita 17:23) (Swami B. V. Tripurari, 2001, p. 516)

participation in a developing, deepening, and continually maturing sSādhana process of sSelf-cultivation and sSelf-education. For this research, each participant was invited into the sSādhana process as a Sādhaka, a seeker, a practitioner of practice-based spiritual inquiry through direct first-person experiences of specific sādhanās (practices) towards exploration of sSelf and Sound sSādhana.

sSelf-Inquiry

The spiritual activity (or in this case, journey) of Ātman-realization expressed in the textual gesture sSelf, requires engaging in experiential inquiry of Self (higher self, Ātman) through the self (the identified, contingent, and conditioned self) by the self (the located “I”). Chapter 13 verse 24 of the Bhagavad Gītā explains that through the various practices of yoga—meditation, inquiry, and action (in their many forms)—the aspirant can “behold the Self in the self by the self” (Sivananda, 2003, p. 344). Though expressed simply enough, the journey requires much from the Sādhaka.

One of the requirements is personal preparation in readiness for the journey, and another is selecting a set of practices (sādhanās) suitable for one’s temperament and skill level, towards the transformation and evolution of one’s temperament and skill level. Which means, that either the Sādhaka⁴⁶ is self-aware at the beginning of her journey, as in aware enough to discern her natural disposition, need requirements, and skill deficit, so as to choose her own path

⁴⁶ Sādhaka —spiritual seeker on the path of Sādhana. One who has turned their mind towards knowing sSelf.

and practices; or, that she allows the teacher/outer guru to design (or co-design) and or assign the perfect sādhanā—that is, a sādhanā that aligns with the temperament and needs of the aspirant or Sādhaka to be. Whether one or the other, each aspirant needs to be conscious in the application of their sādhanā, and, if not yet fully conscious, they need to be intentional.

As a system of personal transformation, Yoga comprises many different paths and practices (sādhanās). Particular to cultivating self-reflective awareness in this Sound sSādhanā design is the practice of Svādhyāya⁴⁷—self-study, whereby the Sādhaka studies the self and the Self alongside and through mantra, contemplative art, music, sacred writings and teachings—and, Ātma-Vichara—self-inquiry, self-interrogation that leads directly to Self. Both forms of inquiry attempt to dissolve a sense of ‘I’ as separate from everyone and everything else.

Alternatively, studying the small self from the location of the higher Self (as witnessing consciousness), the Sādhaka becomes aware of the habits and patterns that bind, and comes to see the ways that the small conditioned and contextually contingent ego-identified-self obstructs and or obscures their higher Self. Through sSelf-study (Svādhyāya) and sSelf-inquiry (Ātma-Vichara) practices, the Sādhaka shines the light of awareness on the areas of their self that require transformation so that they can take action through specifically targeted

⁴⁷ Svādhyāya~ The 4th Niyama or Yogic Observance, means the study of the Self through the self, and sSelf-study, usually pursued through scriptural study and mantra. Within this research, Svādhyāya was observed primarily through sound and breath practices, for example, Toning, Mantra chanting, witnessing awareness states and changes in thought and behaviour provoked by the practice, reflecting the meaning of the Mantra into one’s daily life, reflecting upon the evolution of self through one’s Sound sSādhanā endeavours, which included contemplative meditation, reflective writing, field notes, poetics, and long-form composition.

transformative practices. In this practice, the Sādhaka develops witness awareness and the responsive active principle of participatory self-evolution.

Svādhyāya as sSelf-study

Svādhyāya is a Sanskrit term, meaning self-study through contemplation and chanting of sacred texts and mantras that specifically pertain to liberation—*Mokṣa* (Moksha) Svādhyāya: *Sva* meaning “self”; and, *Dhyāya* from the root *dhyai*, which means “to contemplate, to think on, to recollect, or to call to mind”, together translate as “Self-study”—to study one’s Self through self—sSelf. Not to be confused with the Western practice of psychoanalyses (Sovik, 2014, p. 2), the premise of Svādhyāya is that “individual awareness is never separate from the infinite consciousness in which it has its being ...” (p. 3). The aim of Svādhyāya is to bring the experience of that immense Consciousness, the Self, into self-awareness (p. 3).

We engage Svādhyāya to “move toward” one’s Self (meaning one’s inner-self, higher self, Ātman), “to return” to one’s Self, to “come back (by some means) to who we are”, meaning that through Svādhyāya, we come to an increasingly deeper level of sSelf-awareness and sSelf-understanding (Kraftsow, 2002, p. 23). In another interpretation of Svādhyāya, *Sva* means “self”—the self that belongs to me—and *adhyāya*, which translates as “study and investigation” as the means by which we discover the unitive state of Yoga.

T.K.V. Desikachar (1995, pp. 13–101) explains that with the help of Svādhyāya we come to know ourselves. Who are we? What are we? What is our relationship to the world? How do we relate to others and to the world?

Although difficult to find the answers directly, and to see ourselves clearly and honestly, we can see a reflection of our mind and our actions as we read and study certain texts, listen to certain kinds of music, or as we chant and sing, or write reflections and poetry. “All learning, all reflection, all contact that helps you to learn more about yourself is svādhyāya” (Desikachar, 1995, p. 101). The outer forms are our reference points. They are mirrors with which to study ourselves.

We Sādhakas may study and experience our individual sSelf through material art practices including the sonic materiality of sound and the mixed materiality of the sounded voice. We can also study our sSelf through our own actions and relationships.

If we are willing to look at behaviors, motivations, and strategies we habitually use to maintain our own self-image, we can use svādhyāya to pierce through the veil that this self-image creates and into the nature of our own essential being. (Kraftsow, 2008, p. 1)

As nature, we are part of continual creation and transformation. To practice Svādhyāya in sSādhanā means to bring awareness to action, to breath, to reverberation, making the journey of awakening participatory and intentional. Through participation in intentional self-transformation we may refine our behaviors, patterns, strategies, skills and capacities. For Yogis of Sound Yoga, Sound sSādhanā is a spiritual process through which the philosophy and practices of Yoga play out.

In this research, Svādhyāya weaves through all the mediums of reflection: breath, voice, listening, meditation, writing, painting, composing and conversing

in Satsang. Here, our Svādhyāya sSādhanā is sSelf-study alongside of sacred sound practices—OM sSādhanā, Kharaj sSādhanā, Shadaj sSādhanā, Swara sSādhanā, and Mantra sSādhanā—of the Sound sSādhanā Research palette.

This Sound sSādhanā research emphasizes Svādhyāya as a path of sSelf-knowing through one’s own actions and experience over another’s experience or words about experience. For successful Svādhyāya, each Sādhaka was tasked with cultivating the attitude of a sSelf-researcher engaged in knowledge gathering within their own direct experience, and to reflect upon the sSelf within that direct experience as the actual teaching and as an opportunity to ignite the Guru⁴⁸ within. The specific techniques for gaining this kind of experiential knowledge are collectively called Svādhyāya.

Ātma-Vichara (sSelf-Inquiry)—the direct path

For Swami Chinmayananda (1976), Guru of Advaita Vedānta (nondualist philosophy), the question of “how do we relate to others, ourselves, and the world?” comes from our deep embeddedness in the relational field of existence. We are, explains the Swami, deeply involved in our embodied, cultural, familial, historical, political, relational experiences and identities. sSelf-inquiry by way of Ātma-Vichāra is the direct means by which to pierce through our contingent

⁴⁸ The Guru within is the primary Guru and one’s inner teacher. The outer guru’s task is to ignite, to plant seeds, to point the way, to return the question to the Sādhaka, and to activate the student’s inner teacher, their primary Guru. For this purpose, the outer guru is important. To develop the inner Guru takes many years of sSādhanā. The Guru, the true Guru, is not a person nor an outer personified authority, but rather is a presence, an energy field that streams forth continuously for the benefit of all those who are able to connect to it and be nourished by it. In the presence of such a teacher, what you encounter is “the voice of the Self” the teacher within oneself. The Sādhaka’s work is to find and listen to the voice of the Self. Swami Chetanananda (1995).

reality. For Swami Chinmayananda, the question of “how do we relate to others, to ourselves, and to the world?” requires disassembling to find the deeper underlying question of the Sādhaka. The questions then become: What world? Whose world? Who is the “I” and where is the “other”?

Immersed in the worlds of our own creation, each world unique to each persona, the questions of Ātma-Vichāra are intended to take the questioner directly to Source (Self). To ask not “what do I see, feel, hear, taste, sense, etc., but who is the seer, the hearer, the taster, the one who senses? Who is the perceiver, and who seeks to know? Who am I?” Ātma-Vichāra is a practice of deep introspection into the nature of Self beyond contingencies of the relative field of existence (self). Ātma-Vichāra is one of the reflective self-interrogative practices in the Sound sSādhanā palette and can be applied in combination with sound practice, meditation, and reflective writing.

Psychonauts: The Sailors of the Soul

The term *Psychonaut* combines two ancient Greek words: *Psychē* meaning “soul,” “Spirit,” or “Mind”; and *Naútēs*, meaning “sailor” or “navigator.” Thus, a Psychonaut is one who navigates the soul; a sailor of the soul, one who seeks to investigate their mind using intentionally induced altered states of consciousness for spiritual, scientific, or research purposes” (Blom, 2009, p. 434). Psychonautics involves the “exploration of the psyche as the means to study and explore consciousness (including the unconscious) and altered states of consciousness; and rests on the realization that to study consciousness is to transform it”

(Cohen, 2018). A notion that resonates with the sSelf-study and sSelf-inquiry practices in the Sound sSadhana Palette.

Stanislav Grof (2019), founder of transpersonal⁴⁹ psychology, defines Psychonautics as “the systematic pursuit and use of holotropic states of consciousness for healing, self-exploration, ritual activity, artistic inspiration, and as a spiritual, philosophical, and scientific quest” (p. 449). The term ‘holotropic’ was created by Grof to describe an experiential state of consciousness in which the Psychonaut actively seeks an expansion of consciousness towards wholeness. The holotropic state of consciousness is sought by Shamans and Mystics who work within an expansive state of consciousness far beyond the consciousness of everyday concerns.

There are multiple ways to induce the holotropic state, including psychotropic plants and potions, trance dance, chant, ritual, and breath work. In this Sound sSādhanā research project, we explored the use of breath and sonic practices to shift and move into and through states of awareness, and to activate and explore expansive states of consciousness.

As sound Yogis of the Sound sSādhanā research, we embodied our explorations through singing, sounding, chanting, toning, humming, listening, reverberation, silence, and re-sonance. Because our research invoked an enhanced awareness of, and a cultivated sensitivity toward, the body’s physicality and physiology (Cohen, 2018), we ventured into a realm of inquiry

⁴⁹ Extending beyond the boundaries of the personal—expanding beyond limitations of identified self.

called Somanautics. Further, engaging embodied practices with the intention of invoking, activating and exploring expanded states of consciousness, we entered the realm of *Psychosomanautics* (Cohen, 2018).

An embodied spiritual inquiry regards the body as the home of the human being, a place and source of spiritual insight, a microcosm of the universe and the great mystery, and as “pivotal for enduring spiritual transformation” (Ferrer, 2008, p. 4). In this Sound sSādhanā research project, we entered the exploration of consciousness through the sonic dimension, a realm of inquiry that I call *Psychosononautics*⁵⁰ (Anderson, 2020). To be more specific, we entered the exploration of consciousness through the sound created by our own embodied voice and presence. A realm of inquiry and way of sound exploration that I call *Psychosomasononautics*⁵¹ (Anderson, 2021).

The practice began with exploring the embodied voice, the materiality of voice, the singer and artist, the body mind heart and consciousness out of which the voice was created. Through specific singing practices we intentionally activated, entered, and explored consciousness through the vehicle of the voice. As the creator, sounder, resonator, activator and experiencer of the voice vehicle, the Psychosomasononaut⁵² was tasked with cultivating and sustaining awareness whilst travelling inwards on their own vocal sound current, without losing

⁵⁰ I created this term specifically for the work I do with sound. The Psychosononaut is a voyager, a ‘soul sailor’ who enters altered states through the sonic dimension. Though not the focus of this dissertation, the topic will be further explored and defined in future research.

⁵¹ Realized through contemplation and while editing my final drafts. Inspired by an edit of Dr. Charles Scott.

⁵² The Soul Sailor (Psychonaut) who explores consciousness through the vehicle of their own embodied voice.

control of or attention to their own sound current and the source of that sound—their embodiment.

Cultivating sSelf

Specific to this Sound sSāadhanā design and research, cultivating sSelf means the intentional refinement of the small self as artist and person to such a degree that the larger Self (Ātman) shines through one's person and art. Cultivation, the growing and nurturing of direct experience, skills and characteristics conducive to one's evolution, happens through attention and practice. The cultivation of sSelf by the self, requires the intelligent directing of one's energies towards one's evolution. Simultaneous to the refinement of artist and artistry is the cultivation of direct experience of Self through ongoing immersive experience in Sound sSāadhanā (sāadhanā as practice, and Sāadhanā as continual immersion—Praxis). In Sound sSāadhanā, the way to Swara (the soul saturated voice expressing Self in swara) is through swara sāadhanā—lengthy practice of refining and illuminating the musical note.

Swara

... when a singer or player pursues the swara, he is after his own essence without which the only unchanging and immortal thing in him is left out of his creation. (Menon, 1976, p. 76)

From ancient Indian texts—the Swara, the most primary element in music—is not said to be the physical note alone, but, *that which is revealed* only after unceasing repetition (abhyāsa) of the note itself. Along the way much is revealed to the one who is practicing. Swara is a multidimensional sounded tone

that reflects the body, mind, breath, and consciousness of its creator. Swara is produced not only by the vocal chords of the singer, but by the entire internal expanse through which the very breath travels (Chawla, 1991). Swara lies beyond the well-placed note that can be written down on a musical score to be reproduced by tapping the correct piano key, bowing the appropriate string, or singing a perfectly pitched note within a scale.

Finding and cultivating Swara is the story of Sound *s*Sādhanā. Only Swara that is born of *s*Sādhanā allows the musician access to Self. For only through *s*Sādhanā can the student of voice move into the region of [their] own essence (Menon, 1991, p. 37).

Broken down to its Sanskrit roots, the root *Swa* refers to the inner self [Self] of the student, the resident deity that inhabits all created things, and the root *Ra* which refers to a shining out of this inner self. In combination, the word *Swara* would mean the radiance of the inner self and this is the essence of the *Swara*. (Menon, 2001, p. 36)

The paradox here is that Swara only exists when the singer sounds it. Swara is an act of human utterance and is a function of that particular singer's breath, body, heart, level of consciousness, and the space and time in which their sounding occurs. Additionally, "The perfection of *swara* consists of the potential dissolution of the singer, where the delicate distinction between embodiment and identification is of utmost importance" (Biswas, 2011, p. 100). Swara is the vibration of a constellation of a fully embodied moment experienced as Divine. The singer sounds the *s*Self of their embodied presence. Holding awareness of presence simultaneous to sounding swara, is the portal for Swara. Without the

individual, their body, their life and their voice practice within that life, Swara could not be.

sSwara

Here, sSwara means both the musical note and a soul filled sound. This textual gesture shows there is a difference between the two. In this dissertation swara written with a small 's', means a musical note, as in Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni Sa—the sargam (solfege) of Indian music. The singer can perfect the swara (note) by polishing and perfecting its qualities over time and with practice; however, this practice may not necessarily be experienced as personally or spiritually transformative, especially if undertaken without self-reflection, meditation, or solely for ego advancement. The perfection⁵³ of the musical note (swara) is only a part of the journey of a spiritual Sādhanā. Sound sSādhanā is practice-based spiritual inquiry in which the singer adds reflective practices and sSelf-study (Svādhyāya) to their sSādhanā. The goal is alchemical transformation—to uncover and sound sSelf as a musical note out of which the soul shines.

⁵³ Perfection is a journey of refinement. Finding a perfectly pitched note is a dynamic practice. Each day the singer attempts to perfect pitch (sur) and to beautify tone. The journey is daily over a lifetime of practice. Perfection is a moment glimpsed. For all singer Sādhakas reading this and worrying about their vocal imperfections, sound sādhanā is the way. The sādhanā is in the continual seeking of sur alignment and presence. However, perfect sur (pitch) is not solely what is meant by perfection. Ātman (soul) is perfect, so the work then is to refine the voice, to clear the small-self concerns and complexes out of the way so that the innate perfection of the soul (Self, Ātman) can shine through. While developing and polishing the voice in sādhanās, the Sādhaka is clearing the way for the soul to shine through. The way to begin is to recognize and remove all masking, to allow the natural voice, the original (close to the origin of creation), authentic (honest to one's own person) uncovered voice into presence, and to support one's own voice no matter how small, fragile and undeveloped. The natural voice becomes the seed to be cultivated in sādhanā.

Written with a large ‘S,’ Swara means the original voice of the practitioner after having removed all masking⁵⁴ of their natural sound, thus revealing the soul quality of the singer. Swara takes many years of sādhanā, during which time, the artist is transformed through a simultaneous refinement of their art. To Dhrupad master and Guru Ramakant Gundecha (2019), “Swara means enlightenment” (Satsang, 2019). Eventually, after years of committed sSādhanā, we get out of our own way to reveal Swara. The paradox of Swara is that we need our self to get there.

Music culture critic Raghava Menon (1998) writes of the “Swara obsessed” singer as being amongst the most subversive of cultural forces of the ancient past (p. 92). He tells the tales of the Swara musician who “lurks in the periphery of common concerns, menacing the social order with strange and disquieting values (93), making people feel restless and wonder as they go about their daily business whether there was something in all this that they are not able glibly to explain” (94). The work of the Swara musician is in provoking awakening to the subtle level of reality permeating the ordinary world. The Swara musician’s work in the world is to remind the listener of their own soul, to elevate the listener from a limited egoic perspective of life into an expanded reality where insight and revelation can be experienced directly.

⁵⁴ Masking of the natural voice happens both consciously, as in stylistic training or mimicry of favourite singer, person, or authority figure; and, unconsciously, wherein the voice reflects habits, patterns, and differing characteristics of and in response to cultural conditioning and context. Multiple identities and aspects of personality play out through voice, as if different voices for different situations. Often masking the natural voice and distancing self from Self, soul. We explore a little of this idea in the Satsang on Voice.

The textual gesture sSwara points to the potential journey and the inner knowing that one's practice is an opportunity to go further and deeper in exploration of one's own sound and presence. Here, the small 's' is not italicized. It does not lean into the capitalized 'S,' thus indicating the potential of a student of sound to remain with the understanding of swara as synonymous with music note. However, there are some contexts within this dissertation where the small 's' leans into the large 'S.' Now that you have an understanding of how this textual gesture performs, e.g., sSelf and or sSelf, or sSādhanā and or sSādhanā, you might recognize its movement as meaningful and relevant within its literary context. The swara practices can lead to Swara, but not inevitably so. A constellation of necessary elements needs to align.

Vibrational language of Cosmic origin

Sound sSādhanā uses Sanskrit language and terms that have been passed through oral tradition, in voice classes, workshops, scriptural study, performance, and in Satsang. Sanskrit is a living language of an ancient culture. Thus, direct translation of Sanskrit into modern English is not always possible. There are contextual circumstances that often hinder or are required for full understanding, and the meaning of a Sanskrit word can change depending upon how and where, and by whom it is used. For example, the word 'Sādhanā' in a secular context⁵⁵ translates directly to practice within the material realm, the

⁵⁵ Where Yoga has been secularized for commodification, and made into a practice for a health and well-being market, removing its roots of Vedic history, culture and philosophy. And where Yoga has been modernized, medicalized, and transformed into a system of physical culture that posits health, fitness, and stress reduction as reasons for yogic practice, foregoing Hindu motivations and goals such as enlightenment (Jain, 2014, p. 61–62). Yoga is often offered as a

realm of the finite, with no mention of inquiry into matters beyond the boundaries of the known and seen.

Yet Sanskrit, is also known as Devanagari—Divine Script; and, Deva Lingua—the language of the gods and script of divine origin (Ashley-Farrand, 2009). As one of the oldest of the ancient languages still in use today, Sanskrit is revered for sacred scholarship: scriptural learning and recitation, mantra chanting and ritual, transmitted through teacher to student, guru to disciple, in sacred learning environments, in Satsang, and in devotional music class. Sanskrit is a living vibrational language that holds the creative principle within its multiple forms and permutations. Mantra scholar Ashley-Farrand explains,

classical descriptions of mantra are grounded in the idea that this entire creation at both the manifest and the subtle levels is nearly endless combinations of the finite vibrations that scholars and mystics alike call the Matrika—The Mother: The Sanskrit alphabet. (p. 5)

Everything in the universe, from the gross level of being to the most refined and subtle, and from the highest to the lowest of forms, including all the beings and inhabitants of all the levels and realms of existence “are composed of various permutations and combinations of the Matrika—The Mother: The Sanskrit Alphabet” (Ashley-Farrand, p. 5). To understand the cosmology of Sanskrit, is to view the world and its entirety as vibration, which is in essence,

synthesis of Western psychotherapy, physiotherapy, and some modified āsana practice (Kraftsow, 2002, xvii).

sound, and this sound can be heard (with the inner ear⁵⁶) if the listener listens closely and deeply enough.

The ancient contemplatives, ṛṣis (rishis) and sages, received cosmic vibrations aurally through deep and close listening into the universe and into existence. They perceived these vibrational differentials as sound forms—seed syllables—and these seed sounds were heard and interpreted as the language of the Divine, the language of the Cosmos. Swara Yogi, Swami Bhatnagar explains:

Tradition teaches that the sounds of Sanskrit were used to create the universe and all the objects within it. The fifty two sounds of the Sanskrit alphabet encompass most of the sounds found in the major languages of the world since ancient time. The creative potential of Sanskrit is at the root of the mysterious power of Mantra. In addition to mantra, the tradition provides a sophisticated Sanskrit vocabulary with which to describe the fundamental laws of the universe and the spiritual nature of human beings (2009, p. 4)

Sanskrit, in the form of Mantra,⁵⁷ Sūtra,⁵⁸ and poetic verse, has been passed from generation to generation through oral tradition, retaining within its form and

⁵⁶ Means refined perception and discernment of the subtle vibration and reverberation of sonic matter within creation, transformation and Being. An expanded listening into both produced (āhata) and intrinsic sounds (anāhata).

⁵⁷ Mantra is a Sanskrit word with many shades of meaning: “tool of the mind,” “divine speech,” and “language of the human spiritual physiology” (Ashley-Farrand, 1999, p. 8). Derived from the root sound ‘manas’ meaning “mind,” and “traī” meaning “to protect” or “to free from,” in its most literal sense, Mantra means “to free the mind” (the cognitive, creative mind). Mantra is at its core, an instrument used by the mind that eventually frees one from the vagaries of mind. The journey from mantra to freedom is a wondrous one. The mind expands, deepens and widens and eventually dips into the essence of cosmic existence. On its journey, the mind comes to understand much about the essence of the vibration of things (p. 6)

⁵⁸ The simplest meaning of the word sutra, is “thread.” A sutra is ... the bare thread of an exposition, the absolute minimum that is necessary to hold it together, unadorned by a single “bead” of elaboration. Only essential words are used. The reason for this is that sutras were composed at a time when there were no books. The entire work had to be memorized. Patanjali’s sutras (like all others) were intended to be expanded and explained. The ancient teachers would repeat an aphorism by heart and then proceed to amplify it with their own comments for the benefit of their pupils. These comments also were written and preserved for us. Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood (1981).

sound the original heard vibrations—the seed syllables—a condensed form of Mantra.

Within the body of the mantra lies an inner view of reality ... one that can comprehend the whole, grasping the totality in a single point focus of direct perception and immediate experience. The universe itself is ultimately an expression of a single mantra or vibratory sound energy. (Frawley, 2011, p. 23–24)

The sound Yogi begins and returns to the beginning, to the seed syllable OM to sound creation, to feel and recognize their sSelf as vibration and creation. “By repetitively reciting and meditating upon *Om*, the individual reaches, or attempts to reach the seed of everything, the imperishable, eternal sound that creates the universe” (Irlandini, 2013, pp. 66–67). The mystic sound OM is the most important seed mantra of all, and is, according to Patañjali’s Sūtra 1:27 the word expressive of God.

Swami Satchidananda (2008) translates sutra 1:27 as “OM is God’s name as well as form” (p. 42). Sounding the seed syllable OM, we create the sound and the experience of what we speak and seek. OM contains all (and awe).

There are hundreds and thousands of names for God but none of them conveys the exact idea of God. They may give a picture of one aspect of God, but not a fullness. God is, was and always will be—without beginning or end, infinite, omnipresent. For such a great One, there should be a name that conveys those same ideas. Not only that, but by repeating it the name should manifest God in you. (Satchidananda, 2008, p. 43)

To have the experience of God and Creation, to feel oneself as God and Creation, the sound Yogi seeks to attune the self to the sound current of the universe:

The act of hearing and saying the mantra ... 'tunes' one to the basic sound or vibration of the universe; ... by a continual hearing and chanting, one purifies and transforms one's life until it vibrates in harmony with the divine, which is itself pure sound. (Coward and Goa, 2004, pp. 5–6)

For the sound Yogi, Mantra connects us to the primal energies, ideas, principles, and archetypes of cosmic intelligence that is part of a universal language rooted in sound. Chanting the sound forms,

... serves to link our individual intelligence with the greater intelligence that pervades all space, extending our awareness into the infinite and Eternal. To chant a mantra at a deeper yogi level is to think with the entire universe and to access wisdom and experience of all beings. (Frawley, 2011, p. 23)

As a yogic path, sound is a vehicle and a portal. Sound can carry any meaning we place upon it, and can also transport the sounder/listener into ever-refining layers and levels of consciousness.

Mantra scholar Pandit Rattan Mohan Sharma (Satsang, 2019) explained that beyond the liberative and initiatory contents, the power of Mantra is held within its vibrational matrix, substance, and formation. Meaning that its inherent power (including philosophical content and liberative intention) can be accessed by sounding its form. The reasoning behind this understanding resides in oral tradition. These Sanskrit mantric forms and formulas have been chanted, recited, sung, performed, prayed with, used as a vehicle for sacred knowledge transmission, and sounded tens of thousands of times a day by tens of thousands of devotees of God, knowledge and Swara, over a period of more than ten thousand years. Sharma explained that the vibration of the Sanskrit syllables has been potentized over thousands of years by the sound sādhanās of all the yogis,

devotees, and sādhanas before us, some of whom would have been realized beings with an elevated understanding and access to consciousness gained through their practice. Their sādhanās (sets of spiritual sound practices) have strengthened the vibration and enhanced the transformative power of the Sanskrit syllables still sounded today. When chanting, singing, uttering or meditating upon the ancient mantras, the sound yogi taps into a collective vibratory force⁵⁹ that will penetrate, seed, activate and accelerate spiritual⁶⁰ transformation.

The practice of potentizing sound forms is reciprocal, charging both the sound and the one who sounds. The sophisticated vibrational language of the Sanskrit syllable in the form of seed mantra and mantra composition, is a vehicle for working with the energy potentiality within the subtle anatomy of the human body. Thus the term Sādhanā, if used in the context of spiritual musicianship and or the creative process of an artistic Sādhanā, takes on deeper meaning, an esoteric meaning—spiritual practice towards spiritual transformation—pointing towards the potential for personal and inner transformation when understood and applied in the context of Yoga.

⁵⁹ Collective vibratory force equates to a culmination of energy composed of intention and practice. Cultivated over thousands of years the culmination becomes substance. Thus the Mantra becomes substantial in its power. Potent.

⁶⁰ Spiritual transformation here means movement towards realizing Wholeness—a moving towards and into alignment with spiritual energies both immanent and transcendent. This Sound sādhanā research focuses on embodied sound practice and the pursuit of direct experience of awareness states and expanded consciousness. As sound Yogis, we seek a fully embodied spirituality through our embodied practice, “embracing the fullness of human experience while remaining firmly grounded in body and earth” (Ferrer, 2008, p. 2).

Throughout the Sound *s*Sādhanā research, we Yogi Sādhakas took up the language of Sanskrit for the purpose of spiritual attunement, bridging ancient language and technology with 21st century life and spiritual practice. Attempting to touch into Source (Self) through sounding the vibration of the Mātrika, we did not seek English equivalency for Sanskrit language and terms. Rather, we explored how Sanskrit reverberated through our practice of sounding and chanting.

Direct Experience

The context for Sound *s*Sādhanā research is practice—voice cultivation, deep listening, *s*Self-study (Svādhyāya), and introspection as *s*Self-inquiry (Ātma-Vichara), all taken up as practice towards gaining first-person direct-experience—to speak from one’s own practice and to know through one’s own experience. In Sound *s*Sādhanā, specific voice and listening practices are performed to still and tone the body, steady and lengthen the breath, clear and focus the mind, to induce altered / expanded states of awareness through which to view sound, artistry, and *s*Self. Sound *s*Sādhanā brings action and inquiry together in practice. Meaning is made in the *s*Sādhanā journey, and the self is transformed in continuum. Each Yogi is tasked with moving their personal *s*Sādhanā forward through their daily practice(s) (*sādhanās*).

Sound *sādhanās* are part of every vocal artist’s day. Every music lineage has their own voice culture. *Sādhanās* range from foundational to complex, and every student must learn the foundational practices before advancing in their *sādhanā*. The rate at which one learns is dependent upon the quality and rigour

of their practice. Sound sādhanās are often set practices, but are also flexible, depending upon the qualities of the student.

The quality of one's sādhanā affects the depth and breadth of learning. The knowledge gained in a serious sādhanā is profound, and thus the artist progresses in relationship with their art. When the artist recognizes the relationship between their personal development, their artistic development and their sādhanā, then the art of personal cultivation becomes intentional and participatory. Daily sādhanā expands into Sādhanā. Thus we have what I have defined as a spiritual movement—sSādhanā—extending inward and outward and beyond daily practice into all worldly engagement. For this research, I designed Sound sSādhanā as an intentional process of sSelf-inquiry and cultivation, and invited the Yogi Sādhakas to seek their own direct experience.

Practice-based Spiritual Inquiry

In the context of this research, practice-based spiritual inquiry involved learning and refining specific techniques through regular (daily) sound and inquiry practice and feedback between Yogi and teacher, Yogi in Satsang, and between Yogi and their Self. The Yogi Sādhaka was required to fully participate in their own Sound sSādhanā so as to obtain direct experience from their inquiry of sound and sounder. For the purpose of personal transformation, which is Yoga's primary directive (Svoboda, 2001, p. xv), each Yogi in this research was invited to be their own researcher, investigator of self, and seeker of Self through Sound sSādhanā—practice-based spiritual inquiry—and to be the merged subject/object/artistic medium of their study.

Specific to this research, spiritual inquiry means the inquiry into the subtle realms and expressions of Being through the sound and reverberation of one's own voice and person. From a Yogi perspective, 'Being' involves and includes the entire process of existence, interbeing and interconnection between species, matter, and consciousness, from the Cosmic expanse to the microcosmic presence of the energies, elements, and forces underlying all. For a sound Yogi, spiritual inquiry is pursued through singing, listening, and tuning oneself to Nāda (Cosmic vibration, both sounded and unsounded).

Spiritual inquiry through sound entails following sound inwards to explore the sSelf, tracing the utterance back to the source of its creation (self) and further to before its creation, to the primal energy of the universe (Self). From a Nāda Yogī perspective,

The original form of this sense perceived universe is primal energy. It is pure, transparent and eternally noumenon, unmanifest When energy is in its pure form nobody can perceive it. Nobody can know the force of electricity without the movement of electrons. The force is known by its effect, its result. (Sarasvati, 2007, p. 7)

All that we are (according to the Nāda Yogi) is a result of primal energy brought into being through vibration. The Nāda Yogi knows this vibration as Nāda, the primordial sound current, and cosmic music. As all things vibrate, all things sound, including ourselves. We are cosmic music, and the goal of the sound Yogi is to attune to and follow the sound current back to the primal energy Source of all. The goal of the Nāda musician is to consciously maintain the paradox of both—to align with the sound current and immerse with the Source of Being—to “become one with the note” (Bhawalkar, 2018) while simultaneously singing and

holding steady the note. The goal of the sound Sādhaka in this research was sSelf-inquiry throughout the journey. To such purpose, practice-based spiritual inquiry is necessarily embodied, the artist needs to remain wholly in the room—body mind and heart, infused with spirit.

Through the embodied journey of practice-based spiritual inquiry, our senses, perceptions, voice and artistry are refined. One's total vibration is refined. We become refined persons who can tune into refined matters, energies and forces, and potentially rest in primordial energy for creative recharging. However, the journey is not easy. When following the sound current back to the Source as we do in Nāda Yoga meditations, or while working to steady body, breath and voice in singing Kharaj or Shadaj Sāadhanā as a Yogi musician, it is possible that the unseasoned practitioner will meet obstacles on their journey.

The Yogi might come face to face with their own self,⁶¹ the small self, in which all that resists transformation, and all that requires attention, surfaces. At this point the Yogi may experience dissonance. Moving from dissonance to consonance⁶² is the journey of Sound sSāadhanā. The work of the Yogi Sādhaka, is to approach dissonance as an opportunity for sSelf-knowledge, participatory transformation and self-evolution. To this purpose, practices of sSelf-study

⁶¹ Face to face with self here means to see one's own face, the identity that is projected by the ego to the outer world. The idea of seeing one's own face would be impossible without a shift in the location of the one who views. Sound practices slow the breath and the brain waves in the sounder, resulting in a meditative state and an expanded way of viewing or seeing. Long tonal sound practices like Om, Shadaj, and Kharaj, change time to no-time. In the dimension of no-time, the sounder can view their self singing, and the construct of self out of which they sound. Vedānta speaks of mind and matter as the subtle and gross forms of one and the same reality. The duality of the seer and seen, the observer and the observed is overcome in the field of pure consciousness, of which the seer and seen, the observer and the observed, are but two poles (Ranganathananda, 1991, p. 86).

⁶² Harmony. From tension to release. From dullness to clarity.

(Svādhyāya) and sSelf-inquiry (Ātma-Vichāra) were added to the Sound sSādhana palette.

Practice-based spiritual inquiry here means seeking access and insight into the subtle dimensions of Being through first-person participatory action and embodied exploratory intention. Practice-based spiritual inquiry means intentionally cultivating awareness in the process of awakening within a spiritual practice. To practice consciously. Creative reflective practices of writing, drawing, and or mapping for the purpose of documenting intention, experience, insight, and transformation, add inquiry to an experiential spiritual practice. If awareness in inquiry is cultivated and intentional within a practice, spiritual experience, as the goal of a spiritual practice, can happen moment to moment while in process, instead of at some future time and place.

In sSādhana, philosophical inquiry and action come together. Practice-based spiritual inquiry is pursued through embodied sound practices that over time develop and deepen the sound practitioner's capacity for tuning into subtle states of awareness towards the purpose of exploration and direct experience of consciousness. For a sound Yogi, the universe is vibrational, meaning that every sound and every action creates vibration.

Sufi musician philosopher Hazrat Inayat Khan (1960) expounds on the vibrational universe, informing us that we are formed by vibration, we live and move in vibration, are surrounded by vibration and contain vibration. Every thought, mood, inclination, and all conditions of life are vibration and are dependent upon the activity of vibration. In this vibrational universe where our

thoughts and actions create vibration, and where all sensations are caused by various levels of vibration from gross to fine—the finest of which are imperceptible even to the soul, by massing together the vibratory universe on the plane of audible sound, consciousness might know itself.

Khan (1960) explains that “it is the active part of consciousness itself which turns into sound” (p. 4). The musician, brings all of the process of Being into play when a sound is intentionally created. “Creation begins with the activity of consciousness” and it is through intentional acts towards awareness whereby “the knower becomes known to [herself] and where consciousness bears witness to its own voice (Khan, 1960, p. 4). As noted above, the first Rishis and Sages heard the permutations of Cosmic vibrations and heard them as the Mātrika, the mother of language—Sanskrit. The sound Yogi works with Sanskrit Mantra, seed syllables, and pure tones without language, thus moving from language in-formation and conditioned meaning of object, subject and idea, to pure sound that carries its own intrinsic power within its sonic materiality.

Embodied Practice from a Sound Yogi perspective

As practice-based spiritual inquiry, this Sound sSādhanā is an embodied practice. In Sound sSādhanā the Sādhaka seeks direct experience of that which they seek. Theory, philosophical inquiry, sacred scripture, story and discourse are listened to, heard, discussed and meditated upon, and then composed, sung, chanted, lived and breathed through the body heart and mind in singing practice and singing workshop Satsangs.

In this Sound sSāadhanā⁶³ the Sādhaka embodies their inquiry as a singing artist. Specific to this sSāadhanā design, the Sādhaka's task is to remain embodied whilst sounding and inquiring into sSelf and sound rather than transcending the body into a blissful disembodied reality through sound. Though some Yogic lineages and Yogic sound practices pursue disembodied transcendence, in this research the Sādhaka attends to body, voice, expansion of awareness, a multifaceted awakeness, and a steadiness in that awakened expanded state.

For steadiness in transformation and maintenance in expanded formation, the body, in all its human, animal, natural and cosmic dimensionality, is integral. The Yogi Sādhaka's body is to be steadied and strengthened through sound, breath, and asana practice, the mind made peaceful, steady and focused, and the attitude inspired. An embodied sSāadhanā cannot be completed as a thought, as a memory, or as someone else's story. In this context, embodied means to step into the role of Sādhaka, to be responsible for your own learning, motivated and inspired in your own practice, intrigued by your own potentials, and determined to cultivate capacities for refined awareness—refined viewing, listening, sensing.

In this dissertation and through this research the participants pursued sSāadhanā as Yogis. Which means that when speaking of the body and of embodiment, a Yogi is not limited to the modern medical view of the body as a

⁶³ In this Sound sSāadhanā design the Sādhaka is also an artist at work whose task is to explore sSelf while refining and developing their voice. This research design required the Sādhaka to remain with the creation of sound simultaneous to their inquiry into the sSource of sound (self and Self). Some Yoga lineages use singing as a devotional practice to enter disembodied bliss states. However, in the sound lineages that I am drawing from the artist remains present though immersed in bliss so as to skillfully transport the listener to bliss. That said, a personal practice can explore bliss states, and a powerful sound sādhanā can lead to deep meditative silence in Source. Wherever you see the visual gesture sSadhana you will know that I am speaking to my own design and the parameters of inquiry specific to this research.

combination of chemistry, biology, and structure. Yogis have access to the Ayurvedic position that

... views the human body in terms of consciousness, intelligence, information and energy as held in a physical field of organs, tissues and channels. As such the body is not simply physical but is merely a physical point of focus for forces that extend to the entire universe. Though the physical body itself is mortal, it is connected to wider energies and powers of immortality and eternity. Though it is limited in size, its connections extend out into the infinite. (Frawley, 2019, p. 64)

Viewing the body through the Ayurvedic lens allows the Yogi to consider energies and forces within, throughout and around them, and to envision how they might through practice, affect, sublimate, direct, focus, attune and create with those same energies and forces. A sound Yogi could explore the depth and breadth of their aliveness in relation and connection with the earthly and cosmic qualities reflected in their own voice. Through their voice (which includes breath, heart, body, mind, soul and consciousness), the sound Yogi has access to sSelf—the mortal self and the eternal Self.

Sādhanā

Sādhanā, pronounced Saadhanaa (Bhatnagar, 2009), is a term most commonly misinterpreted simply as ‘practice’, but Sādhanā is so much more than that. Sādhanā is a creative endeavour (Menon, 1995, p. 146). In the creative world of the Yogi musician, Sādhanā is a spiritual endeavour, a spiritual journey directed towards a spiritual objective, and “uses music as a medium to transform the inner nature of the musician so that after a prolonged period of Sādhanā the musician’s art has a power that seems incalculable (Menon, 1995, p. 146).

⁶⁴ <https://www.vedanet.com/the-ayurvedic-view-of-the-human-body-audio-by-dr-david-frawley/>

In keeping with the understanding that “each Sanskrit word has dozens of possible meanings” (Slatoff-Ponte, 2015, p. xix), and that “awareness of the context in which a word is used is imperative to its individual interpretation and therefore to our understanding of the work as a whole” (p. xviii), in this dissertation there is room to explore and embrace Sādhanā from various different perspectives and interrelated levels of application. There is the formal or intentional practice that is sādhanā; the attitude, application, and inquiry of sSelf that transforms regular practices into sādhanā and potentially Sādhanā; the holistic path as the practice / processes of sSādhanā; and, the philosophical stance, the praxis of awareness in everyday that is Sādhanā.

As a singular or specific practice, a sādhanā, if performed diligently enough, will eventually extend beyond the boundaries of a formal or intentional practice, through the transformation of the practitioner (Sādhaka) to permeate everyday experience, perception and response to and within the relational world. In which case, the textual gesture ‘sSādhanā’ will be used in this dissertation to symbolise such a journey of transformation.

To differentiate these terms and meanings, ‘sādhanā’ with the lower case ‘s’ means a specific practice undertaken as spiritual practice particular to a Sādhaka’s disposition, facility, and purpose. When written as plural, sādhanās are a set, a constellation of specific practices designed as a purposeful response to the wholistic expression and potential of the individual Yogi Sādhaka. Such a palette will be integral to the Sādhaka’s personal development in the pursuit of the Yogic goal, that being liberation from limited identity with self to realizing Self, and in this case, sSelf (embracing all).

‘Sādhanā’ with the capital ‘S,’ is used here to mean ‘a *way* of being’—a philosophical stance and embodied way of viewing and participating in any given unfolding reality, through and beyond the formal or intentional sādhanā (as practice), to experiencing the spiritual in the everyday and the everyday moment to moment unfolding as spiritual. In this way, Sādhanā means a continual participation in awakening and remaining awake.

To live consciously in Sādhanā is to continually guide one’s mind “to the light of constant awareness of the divine presence in everything” (Chapple, 2008, p. 79). To approach practice as a sādhanā or to live the way of Sādhanā, involves a particular quality of attitude, intention, and attention in specific practices (sādhanās) and in one’s Praxis (one’s way of being, living and working in the world as Sādhanā). Specific to this Sound sSādhanā research, sSādhanā is a journey of sSelf-education and sSelf-realization through specific sādhanās. Thus, sSadhana is a practice-based spiritual inquiry—a way of participatory sSelf-cultivation and conscious embodied unfolding into full awareness of Being.

Mokṣa (Moksha)

Mokṣa is a Sanskrit word created from the root *muc* meaning to free, let go, release, or liberate. Mokṣa is translated as “Liberation ... release” (Iyengar,1993, p. 334); “Spiritual prosperity” (Bhavani (2016, p. 6), and “final emancipation” (Macdonell, p. 236). Mokṣa is what is strived for when one has the desire to be free from bondage and suffering on all levels of Being, and is a key element in Yoga where one can be awakened and liberated within this lifetime.

According to Krafsow (2002), the ancients classified Mokṣa into two categories of liberation: “freedom that is temporary or relative, and freedom that is permanent or ultimate” (p. 12). Freedom from temporary suffering and bondage could include psychological liberation from one’s habits of mind which lead to patterns of behavior that perpetuate suffering. Whereas the more permanent category of Mokṣa refers to the return to one’s Source, to a “pure spiritual experience of Reality” where one knows “the whole universe as the Self” (Deutsche, 1966, p. 18). In realizing the totality of Self, all separateness falls away. One who knows the Self becomes the Self.⁶⁵ Thus, freed from the fetters of separateness (identification with the separate self) one attains ultimate liberation.

Krafsow (2002) explains that “the desire for freedom arises in relation to an awareness of suffering” and that to move toward permanent or ultimate freedom, “our first step is to become aware that we suffer and to begin to understand why this is so” (p. 13). Yogic practices and meditations cultivate the Witness and or Observer Self, where one can ‘see’ the mind, the psyche, and the habits of attachment. Yoga sādhanās have been created specifically within a system of self-transformation to assist the Sādhaka in clearing and enlightening the conditioned self.

Specific to this research, Mokṣa is explored through sound practices that include specific kinds of “chant conducive to deliverance” (Macdonell, p. 236). For example, the Mokṣa Mantras in the Sound sSadhana palette with which the Sādhaka can choose to engage with a notion of a deity as a guide through a

⁶⁵ Paraphrased from The Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad III, 2, 9. (Easwaran, E. 2003, pp. 116–118).

sound meditation, through the attributes and aspects of worldly form and energies, towards Mokṣa. Here, Mokṣa Mantras are used to bridge the temporary and the permanent. The path of liberation for the Nāda Yogi requires full immersion in practice, attunement with the sound current, absorption in the Nāda, and dissolution into the Source of all Sound.

The journey into and through immersive Nāda experience can be enlightening for the Yogi Sādhaka. Meaning that the journey of a sound Sādhaka in this research can be educative and illuminating. The sound practices offer experience in Self, and such experiences are cumulative. Meaning that with daily practice over time the Sādhaka cultivates their presence in Self. Which also means that the Sādhaka is recognizing and exploring both the temporal and the eternal in their practice, slipping between temporary Mokṣa and glimpsing ultimate Mokṣa. In their sādhanās, the Sādhaka distances from their identification with suffering to immerse with Self, a Self that embraces and expands beyond all sufferings.

Yoga

The Sanskrit word “Yoga” is derived from the root ‘yuj’ meaning to bind, join, attach and yoke, to direct and concentrate one’s attention. “Yoga” also means union or communion (Iyengar, 2001, p. 1). If considered at the gross physical level,

... the union is between the upper brain and the lower brain, the conscious with the subconscious. At a subtle level, the union is between one’s individual consciousness and cosmic consciousness.... (Johari, 2000, p. 9)

From the Yoga perspective, “individual consciousness is an expression of cosmic consciousness, divine reality, the source, the substratum of the manifested universe” (Johari, 2000, p. 9). Both are the same. Both are consciousness, which is indivisible ... Whole.

Remember the Mantra of Wholeness—

Om.

‘That’ is whole; ‘this’ is whole; From ‘that’ whole ‘this’ whole came;

From ‘that’ whole ‘this’ whole removed;

What remains is whole.

Peace, Peace, Peace.

Saraswati⁶⁶

Individual consciousness and cosmic consciousness are separated by subjectivity—the I-consciousness of the individual. The Yogi seeks realization of their divine nature and release (liberation, Mokṣa) from the limitation of the self. Upon dissolution of the individual consciousness, union with cosmic consciousness takes place (Johari, 2000, p. 9). This union is called Yoga.

Yoga is also one of the six orthodox systems of Indian philosophy. A system that teaches the means by which individual consciousness can unite with (or be in communion with) cosmic consciousness, and so secure liberation—Mokṣa. Yoga is a practice, a path, and a way of being in the world. On the physical level, “Yoga” means to unite all the parts of self toward the yogic goal of liberation (see Mokṣa). The body complex is the first instrument you “learn to play ..., drawing from it maximum resonance and harmony” (Menuhin, 2000, p.

⁶⁶ (Saraswati, 2014, p. 13).

ix). Yoga as practice, intends to harness, direct, and concentrate focus towards mastery of bodily nature towards higher pursuit (as opposed to being the unwitting servant of the bodily impulse).

In Sound *s*Sādhanā, the Sound Yogi practices voice cultivation in the way of yoga sādhanā (path of practices) towards Yoga (communion (dual) and or (nondual) union or unity). When a musician’s sound practice is approached in the way of *y*Yoga, the totality of the Yogi’s human faculties are focused into their art, from swara (musical note) to Swara (Self), and thus through *s*Swara to *I*śvara—through the musical note to communion with, and immersion in, the Divine.

This dissertation design works specifically with foundational voice cultivation practices sourced from Dhrupad⁶⁷ and Khyāl that are rooted in Nāda Yoga.

Nāda Yoga: The Yoga of Sound

The system of Nāda Yoga is also known as the Yoga of Sound. Nāda Yoga is a path of exploration of consciousness through sounds, the aim of which is to purify and harmonize the gross and subtle energy fields of the body and bring them in alignment with their natural vibration (Devi, 2021). This Sound *s*Sādhanā research explores both inner and outer sound, two forms of Nāda—inner nāda

⁶⁷ Dhrupad is the oldest form of Indian Classical music that survives today in its original form. The word Dhrupad is derived from Dhruva the steadfast North Star (Polaris) and Pada meaning poetry. The nature of Dhrupad music is spiritual, a form of devotional music that traces its origin to the ancient text of Sam Veda. Dhrupad is not music for entertainment but is practiced to induce feelings of peace and contemplation in the listener. The Gundecha Brothers claim that Dhrupad is Yoga, Dhrupad is Nāda. It is Yoga because it uses yogic techniques of breath (Prānāyāma) and concentration (Dhāranā) to gain harmonious union and oneness with the subject of meditation (Samādhī). The subject here is Nāda and the way is through vocal sound. Samādhī is the experience of oneness. The journey to Samādhī is sādhanā, *s*Sādhanā.

and outer nāda. The sound practices of the Sound sSādhanā palette are manifestations of the outgoing nāda. Mantra, Toning, Kharaj, Shadaj, Sargam and Swara sSādhanā, are all outgoing nāda practices of the Yogi musician. In this context, outward forms of nāda are created intentionally and towards cultivating voice. We produce the outer sounds with our own embodied vocal instrument. In this sense we are creators acting upon the outer world.

Inner nāda is the inner music, inner sound current, and the inner dance of life. The inner nāda music has not been intentionally created or caused by a human player. Though our embodiment sounds in heart beats and breaths, there is a deeper sounding, the uncreated sound of silence, the sound of the void. Which is not an empty silence at all. When you listen into the inner nāda you are tuning into that “which transforms the world of the senses back into the cosmos of pure energy” (Sarasvati, 2007, p. 12). Listening into inner nāda, we can hear the sounds of our aliveness and, listening closer, we hear the sounds of our coming into being. The inner nāda is “an inestimable sacred intermediary” (Michael, 2010. P. 50) between that which is divine within and the embodied self. The sounds that are emitted in this intermediary space of coming into being “sparkle like the flickering light of a star” (p. 42). This inner nāda music is considered primordial sound and the master of transformation.

In Sound sSādhanā, the focus on inner nāda leads to the experience of one’s Self. Nāda Yoga means union with the Self by means of nāda, the inner music (Sarasvati, 2007, p. 13). The goal of the sound Yogi is to bring the two forms of nāda together, to bring the inner nāda through the outer expression of nāda, and to seek the inner nāda through the outer expression of nāda.

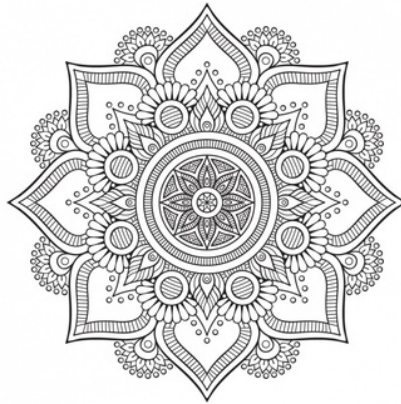
What is important to this Sound sSādhana research is how and to what aim and with what spiritual value the Yogi pursues the inner sounds. Whether in search of full aesthetic immersion or in search of a full awakening to one's immersion, the research design includes inquiry practices of Svādhyāya (sSelf-study) and Ātma-Vichara (sSelf-inquiry) to support the journey. In Sound sSādhana we enter our inner soundscape through specific voice practices that integrate Yogic Prānāyāma (breath science), Pratyāhāra (selective attention), Dhāranā (concentration), and Dhyāna (meditation).

Yogi

In the world of Yoga, a yogi is a practitioner of yoga, an “adept at Yoga” (Desikachar, 1995, p. 242); “one who follows the path of yoga” (Iyengar, 2001, p. 465); and “a living symbol of the most basic goals of Yoga” (Kraftsow, 2002, p. 14), which are to uphold responsibility (dharma), serve the highest good, and, ultimately to attain freedom (Mokṣa). The Yogi spends their days with sādhanās and lives a life of Sādhana. In this Sound sSādhana research, everyone was given the opportunity to be a Yogi in sound. To be on the path of Yoga (union) through sound sādhanās. To come into mastery of their own practice and to develop their Praxis. As Yogi Sādhakas in sSādhana research, participation included researching and documenting their own direct experiences in sound as yYoga.

Researcher: Thus Yogis and Sādhakas ... now that I have shared that which sits upon my tongue, I invite you to consider what sits upon yours. Consider the physical emotional cosmic materiality of your voice, the quality of your sound, and the words you utter, and how the composition of these elements

might colour your perceptions, create your realities, and shape the worlds around you. When you embark on the quest to cultivate awareness of how you reverberate, affect, activate, create and evolve your realities through your sounded, re-sounded, and unsounded voice (vibration)⁶⁸ you will be taking the yogic path of Sound sādhanā.

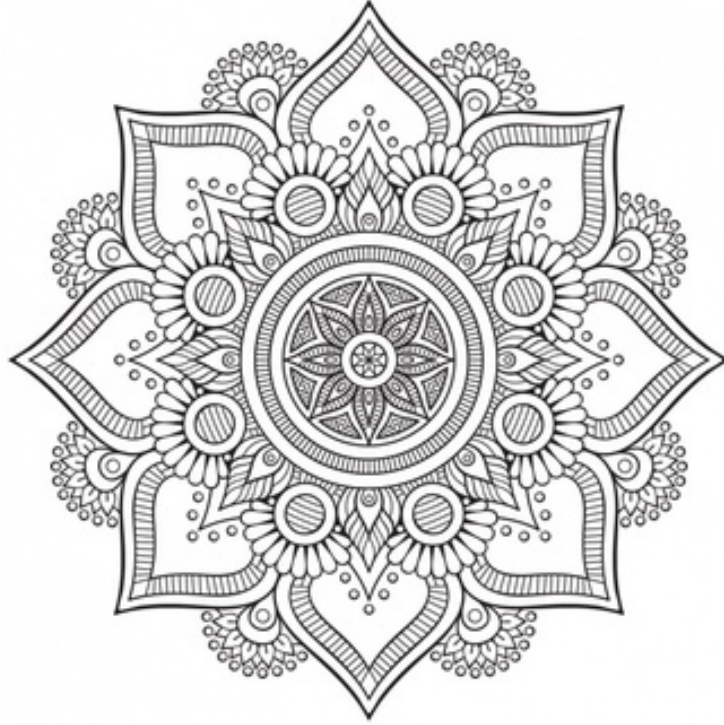


All our words, soundings and sādhanās emerge from a single utterance

Om

⁶⁸ The frequency of our personal vibration ... how and what we emanate ... reverberate— perception of which can be refined with effort over time and through appropriate sādhanās.

Satsang Section



Parts of the Whole that is Sound sSādhanā

Invitation to Satsang

I now invite you dear reader to witness a series of Satsangs in which you will find discussions on themes relevant to this research on Sound sSādhanā—Satsang, Sādhanā, Practice, Voice, Oral Culture, sSelf-inquiry, and Re-sonance—as practice-based spiritual inquiry. Each Satsang opens in breath and sound meditation with the purpose of bringing all the parts of us (as individuals and as a group) into presence and into fullness. As facilitator of each Satsang, I offer a short presentation on a subject relevant to our practice and relevant to the Sound sSādhanā research and practice. After the main theme is presented, the participating Yogī Sādhakas respond. I have included the Sādhakas' voices in the Satsang text, as they reflect multiple perspectives and offer a realistic Satsang experience. After the responses will come the sound practices chosen from the Sound sSādhanā Palette—an archive of sound, breath, listening, and meditation practices designed and curated specifically for this Sound sSādhanā research. I emphasize that all the teachings, responses, and practices within these pages are drawn from an oral experience of an oral culture and tradition. Thus to reflect the orality of the research, the Yogī's experiences are written in first-person and thus the original voice of the experiencer. The written word is shaped and presented through a Satsang format, with conversations and guided sound, breath and meditation practices, in an attempt to bring you, dear reader, into a living experience of an oral teaching culture. I invite you into presence to listen closely and to follow where the voices guide you into practice and into Sound sSādhanā—into spiritual inquiry through sound practice. Meaning that you must

eventually leave the text on the page and explore the truth of your matter and spirit through your own breath and sound. Om̐

Prayer for Teacher and Student

Om̐

Saha Nāvavatu Saha Nau Bhunaktu

Saha Vīryam Karavāvahai Tejasvi Nāvadhitamastu

Māvidvisāvahai

Om Shānti Shānti Shānti

Om̐

May both teacher and student be protected. May we be nourished.

May we work together⁶⁹ with energy and vigour.

May our study be enlightening.

Let there be no animosity amongst us.

Om, Peace in the Cosmos, Peace in Nature, Peace in Me.

⁶⁹ At the beginning of Sound Sādhanā, we chant this invocation together to activate a relationship conducive to learning and to producing quality work—the very best that we can offer at that moment. This invocation makes our relationship conscious and intentional, and sets the tone of mutual respect, integrity, and receptivity between teacher and student. The relationship of learning between teacher and student holds a world of its own and is separate from the everyday world. More on this subject will be found in the Satsang on Oral Culture.

Satsang~ Project Sādhanā: The Gathering of Yogi Sādhakas

Om Yogīs

Praṇām⁷⁰

With my hands in prayer mudra I welcome you into presence.

Let us begin by grounding ourselves in that which comes before sound...Breath.

Close your eyes and bring your attention inwards

Inhale deep into your lower belly ...

Exhale completely on a long breath ... releasing every thought you are holding

Inhale deeply ... fill your belly and expand your rib cage with breath and life ...

Exhale completely on a longer breath, releasing all expectation of what is to come

Inhale deeply ... fill your entirety ... your body ... your energy field around you

Exhale completely on a long steady breath ... awaken clear space within you

Now together we will chant the seed Mantra Om three times. Visualize this foundational sound practice as a preparation. As way of preparing yourself for Satsang—a way of attunement—tuning yourself within, tuning yourself to this moment in time, and tuning yourself in relation to the group.

⁷⁰ From *pra*, “complete,” and *nam*, “salutation.” Place your hands, palms together, over your heart and say “Praṇām”. This salutation, with the hands in the position of prayer, is expression of reverence to God or to one in whom the Divine is manifested. Similar to Namaste. This joining of hands symbolizes the meeting of two souls.

Inhale deeply...

O—————MMMmmmm

Inhale ...

O—————MMMmmmm

Inhale ... and

O—————MMMmmmm

Breathe ... and Listen into reverberation of your sounding

Silence—————

Allow yourself to experience Omkar's⁷¹ resonance and the communion of group sounding ...

Allow yourself to be still and spacious ... clear ... aware of yourself in this moment ...

Open your eyes and come into the room ...

Om and Welcome to my Sound sSādhanā research and inquiry.

Thank you for your curiosity and willingness to venture forth on a journey of Sound sSādhanā—practice-based spiritual inquiry through Sound. In our first Satsang as a group, we will introduce ourselves to each other and tell of our

⁷¹ Omkar is the name of OM. The Omkar.

individual relationship to Sādhanā and sound, as practice, as a path, and as a way of being in the world. After our sharing, you will be given some foundational practices from the Sound sSādhanā palette so that you can begin your personal Sound sSādhanā journey. In the true spirit of oral tradition and Satsang, and as the facilitator, teacher, and primary researcher for this Sound sSādhanā research project, I begin our Satsang today with a story by way of introducing myself and my connection to today's Satsang subject that is sSādhanā.

My story of sSādhanā began twenty years ago when I spent time in an ashram for yoga teacher training and was initiated into Yogic Sādhanā. I use the term 'initiated' rather than 'introduced', because of the depth of receptivity I felt in that moment towards the Guru Yogi of the ashram. I revealed to him that I had travelled my entire life as a spiritual journey. That I had no guide except intuition and reflection, and the wisdom I carried was hard earned, gleaned from personal experience with the many difficulties faced on the path of self-transformation. "You are speaking about the path of Sādhanā" said the Guru Yogi with great certainty, "And it seems to me that you have been on this path from the beginning of your life journey". At that time, I had no understanding of the term Sādhanā, but felt an immense relief to know that there was an actual name for the ordeals and learning my life had presented me thus far.

Through Satsang with the Guru Yogi, I came to understand that Sādhanā was more than a set of practices. It was also an attitude, a disposition grounded

in a view of the world as beginningless⁷²—where life is continual and the opportunity for beginning again and again on the path of refinement continually presents itself in every moment, thought, and action. The Guru Yogi explained that as a Sādhaka, one’s journey within this beginningless cycle could be purposeful, it could be a journey of intentional awakening, sSelf-refinement, sSelf-realization, enlightenment and liberation. He explained self-realization as both the refinement of the small self—through a process of constant practice, study and introspection—and the realization of the expanded Self (Ātman)—the quality in each of us that is always there but mostly hidden from view by misidentification with the small self. Enlightenment, he explained, can be a process of recognizing the true Self within and also cleansing the self of the weight of the past, clearing and or editing of one’s Saṃskāras⁷³, the impressions made in one’s formation, one’s shaping and conditioning⁷⁴.

The Guru Yogī explained that I could view my life and the events and experiences within it as Sādhanā. I could also participate in the events of my life as Sādhanā and engage sSelf-inquiry for the purpose of self-refinement and sSelf-

⁷² Based in Hindu worldview of “creation is beginningless, that our personalities are structured by the karma or memory traces of previous actions and thoughts, that we are reborn from past lives, and that this process of birth-death-rebirth will continue until release from rebirth is realized (Coward, 2008, p. 125). Until we realize we are not our *saṃskāras*.

⁷³ *Saṃskāra*—impression, subliminal imprint (Bryant, 2009, p. 591), a mark, either good or bad, upon the mind, the psyche, and upon the unconscious, creating and shaping the conditioned-self, culminating in unconscious habit, expectation, projection, inherent tendency and innate disposition. *Saṃskāra* is related to Karma in that every Karmic act leaves a *saṃskāra*, an impression. Through sSādhanā we create new and helpful *saṃskāras*, intentional impressions, towards an intentional and skillful shaping of self in and for the world.

⁷⁴ The Conditioned self: layers of impressions that form a structure through which we perceive the world. It is not an external structure pressing down and obscuring clarity, rather, “it is the stuff out of which we are made” that colours reality and conditions our response. The work of the Yogi is to recognize and remove the layers of conditioning (Krishnananda, 1993, 2019, p. 23).

understanding. Through an intentional Sādhanā, I could refine and develop myself so as to act skillfully in the world. The idea was revelatory to me. For though I had always considered life as a journey and as an opportunity for learning, for me the learning usually happened after a particularly difficult life event or experience, after a great deal of personal suffering and reflection.

Sādhanā made sense inside of the ashram environment, and was pursued through multiple paths: ascetic bodily practices of *Āsana* (posture) and *Kriyā* (purification); scriptural study and Satsang (spiritual discourse); spiritual and devotional sound practices of Nāda Yoga, *Bhajan*⁷⁵ and Mantra⁷⁶ chanting—all of which purified, clarified, and focused the Sādhakas towards self-realization. The sādhanā practices were arduous and disciplined, but within the walls of the ashram with a group of other trainees guided by a master Yogi, all I had to do was to follow along, train hard, and keep myself awake and receptive to the teachings. Waking times, meal times, training and practice times, Satsang and rest times, were all planned for us at the ashram. There was a rigidity to the training that helped me push myself towards a way of being and moving in the world with conscious intent.

During my time at the ashram, I was introduced to the idea of a conscious journey, actively aware of my process of continual awakening. Now, after many years and through my own experience, I understand that the opportunity for sādhanā is everywhere. Everything, whether a moment, an event, a thought, a

⁷⁵ Bhajan is a devotional song sung with reverence.

⁷⁶A Mantra is an instrument of mind and of power, a sound formula sounded or unsounded. The mantra is an ancient expression of tangible power to be wielded to specific purpose, a spiritual formula and a spiritual practice in itself.

taste, or a sound, a memory, or a feeling, could be experienced as Sādhanā, whether in the present moment or in reflection. Sādhanā can be a way of life, a philosophical stance and way of being.

When I first heard the term Sādhanā directed at me by the guru of the ashram, I was surprised to know that there was a term for what I had been doing all my life. Yet, I have since learned that the concept, practice, and philosophy of Sādhanā can penetrate, permeate, surround, and pass through all relationship, and that it is the work of the Sādhaka, if they are discerning and perceptive enough, to know the needs of their own vital learning, and to choose the particular inquiry that is specific to them. If the Sādhaka is not ready to consciously choose, then seeking direction from a wise and practiced teacher/guru⁷⁷ to begin the process, is advisable.

21st century Sadhguru (2018) defines Sādhanā as the means, the instruments, and the practices of spiritual growth. However, as a dynamic living praxis, Sadhguru explains:

We are talking about using every aspect of life – both internal and external – so that it is a continuous nurturing for your life. ...towards betterment within and outside... to keep moving to a newer and newer possibility. Sādhanā is that which facilitates that. Everything can be sādhanā. The way you eat, the way you sit, the way you stand, the way you breathe, the way you conduct your body, mind and your energies and emotions – this is Sādhanā. Sādhanā does not mean any specific kind of activity, Sādhanā means you are using everything as a tool for your wellbeing. (Satsang, 2018)

⁷⁷ Thus begins the discernment process regarding the outer teacher/guru and their teachings.

Sādhanā as praxis, is a way of being, a way of seeing, a way of knowing and a way of recognizing all activity as potential for coming to know sSelf through conscious locating and participating within the larger process of Being—of being a dynamic living process continually evolving and coming into consciousness.

As a set of formal or intentional practices, sādhanās are for those of us who forget and need to be reminded that the opportunity for knowing the self as already one with the Cosmos, is within everything and every moment and every place; that we are already in Sādhanā, in evolution and transformation, and have never left it or lost it. Sādhanā as a practice, is consciously undertaken for the purpose of not forgetting the knowledge of ones expanded Self. There is a knowing and there is a choosing, the combination of the two are a completeness, a life path chosen by the Sādhaka. That is not to say that all Sādhakas are awake, but they may just be awake enough to know that awakening further is a possibility and so take up the work of sSādhanā.

At the ashram I learned the valuable lesson of participatory self-evolution. Meaning that yogic knowing would come only through direct experience, through my own experiments and embodied explorations. Through my own practice. My own sSādhanā. To be purposeful on my journey, I needed to find a formal sSādhanā particular to me and my unique dispositions. Outside the ashram in worldly life I was a voice artist and a singer, and believed that Spirit flowed through me when I sang. I found alignment with the Yogi Guru of the ashram, a masterful Nāda Yogi and singer, who introduced me to Nāda Yoga, Mantra, and devotional sound practice. Working with the foundational yogic

sound practices eventually led me to study Indian music forms of Khyāl and Dhrupad through which to continue the search for sSelf through *Swara*.

I became a student and practitioner of Indian Classical Music, and was initiated into two lineages and their practices based in oral tradition in which sound and ancient wisdom are woven together as story, poetry, chant, and song. I experienced the transmission of knowledge flowing from ancient teacher through my contemporary teacher into me, the student, through listening, sounding, singing and listening, followed by long hours of sitting and practicing. My sādhanās are drawn from my singing practice, and my teaching practice comes from my singing practice. For me, sSādhanā has become an exploration of life through Sound, just as my teaching of voice art has become a teaching of sSādhanā. In my life, voice, sSelf-study, sSelf-inquiry and sSādhanā, were destined to come together as one ever-evolving multidimensional and multifaceted praxis that is Sound sSādhanā.

sSādhanā

Yoga Sādhanā calls to seekers of sSelf-knowledge. Pursuing sSelf-knowledge through sSādhanā is considered a divine pursuit. Modern Guru Ananda Mehrotra in Rishikesh tells us that Sādhanā is a holistic term for it encompasses all the practices and approaches that help us attune⁷⁸ with Source⁷⁹. As a sound Yogi you are to tune yourself as an instrument in an orchestra.

⁷⁸ We tune ourselves in harmonious relationship with Source (Self). Tuning (aligning) the small self with the higher Self. In Sound sSādhanā we tune to the Tānpūra drone that represents the universal and cosmic Praṇava—Om—Nāda Brahman

⁷⁹ Source in this context meaning Ātman and Brahman. Ātman as the part of Brahman, the divinity within each of us.

Attune your small self to Self, to Source. You come to recognize the parts of you that are out of tune and work to bring those parts into harmony and alignment. Thus, according to Mehrotra, Sādhanā is a philosophical stance, a way of inquiry, a way of meaning making, a practice of reality selection, and a way of skillful manifestation and artful self-creation in the world.

Sādhanā can also involve existential inquiry. For it is a participatory turn towards truth and purpose, and the desire to make meaning of life, death and rebirth⁸⁰. The call to sSādhanā is for the seeker who desires deepening knowledge, experiential knowing, and a way of flowing with the nature of being. Mehrotra explains:

Sādhanā, the techniques, the teachings, the path of yoga, helps us gain attunement so that the music of life can flow through us and this life can be lived as a dance and not a burden. ...An individual who is not in a state of sadhana gets caught up in experiencing life as an existential burden. ... You can live this life either as a burden or a dance, but to live this life as a dance you must first have an instrument which is finely tuned. If the instrument is out of tune the music will be distorted, there will be only noise and no dance. (2019, p. 1609)

Mehrotra (2019) describes Sādhanā as the way and means by which to attune and tune ourselves, to “tune our consciousness, tune our mind, and tune our body to experience our own source knowledge, to experience the state of Yoga” (pp. 1609–1610). Mehrotra describes Yoga Sādhanā as a holistic path and

⁸⁰ For a Yogi, each awakening and each revelation can be termed a new birth, a new sense of self in the world (Chinmayananda). The concept of rebirth points to the beginningless cycle of Karma that we can come to understand through a Sādhanā that includes sSelf-inquiry and sSelf-study. Without deep introspection we will reincarnate our habits and patterns over and over again. The option is to enlighten ourselves with awareness practices, and take action to shift or create new karmas and new saṃskāras .

process, and Yoga as a holistic system into and through which all the forms and streams of Yoga flow. Sādhanā then, must be shaped to the needs and point of personal evolution of each Sādhaka, each Yogi.

Beyond the means, content, and specific practices that might define Sādhanā, B.K.S. Iyengar (1993) finds a deeper definition of Sādhanā in the practitioner's disposition, attention, and intention whilst engaging Sādhanā. According to Iyengar, Sādhanā is to be understood as an embodied study and investigation. Sādhanā is the pursuit of a goal through repeated practice performed with observation and reflection towards perfected execution (p. 22). Which is no mere repetition or simple practice towards accomplishing a goal. Iyengar's definition of Sādhanā speaks to the quality of mind and application of focus towards cultivating skills and intelligence in their application. To be observant and reflective in practice requires an awakesness, an investigative curiosity and willing participation in the unfolding event.

One of the most successful approaches to integrating voice cultivation with sSelf-study and sSelf-inquiry practice that I have experienced is in engaging one's voice cultivation practice as Yoga sSādhanā. As sSādhanā, sounding, singing, listening, reflecting and responding practices become awareness practices. In the ideal approach to sSādhanā, the Sādhaka immerses in a conscious engagement with perception, which requires attending to whatever comes to light within each practice. In this way, a sound sSādhanā practice will be unique to each individual depending upon their disposition and their goals: refinement of voice quality, acquisition of skill, establishing a meditation practice, and or deepening the knowledge of 'sSelf-in-presence'—awareness of

the composition of the small self; and experiencing the transcendent Self as both the inner-self and universal self (as one and the same), in the present moment.

Sound sSāadhanā

Sound Sāadhanā is the domain of Nāda Yogīs, singers and musicians. This Sound sSāadhanā research is designed specifically and intentionally to bring Sāadhanā through voice cultivation sound practices as a way of research that is sSelf-research. We are going to take our spiritual inquiry into and through a myriad of vocal sound practices that I have gathered together into a palette especially for this research purpose. As spiritual musicians and Yogis, the practices will be shaped and co-created with you in response to your unique constellation of abilities and potentials, taking into account the contexts from which each of you came and to where each of you will ultimately return after our research together is complete.

In answering this call to Sound sSāadhanā, you have agreed to take up the mantle of “Yogi”, and thus to embody a Yogi’s investigative spirit and commitment to personal evolution as you journey the length of a three-month Sound sSāadhanā research project involving weekly sound classes, biweekly Satsangs, and daily voice cultivation sound sādhanās. The invitation here is for you to explore the possibilities of vocal sounding⁸¹ practices as yYoga and as sSāadhanā—practice-based spiritual inquiry, whereby thought and action and

⁸¹ Sounding—singing, toning, uttering, chanting—whether sounded, voiced, unvoiced, envisioned—forms of re-sonance: speaking, discussion, listening—Nāda Yoga: listening into sound before sound, listening to thoughts, mind, energy—reflecting and writing as forms of re-sonance, words and thoughts that re-sonate through text—re-sonation texts. Sonate, from the Latin: Sonare, meaning ‘to sound’.

reflection come together in a “self-driven” process towards the goal of sSelf-realization.

I emphasize this process as “self-driven”, because even though I am facilitating this research project, I am inviting you to empower yourselves as sSelf-researchers, as adventurers in sSādhanā and explorers of sound and consciousness throughout our time together. You are to be the researcher of your sSelf through sSādhanā, to explore being the scientist and the subject/ object of your experiments, the initiate and the initiator, the guru and the disciple, the experiencer and the witness, the sounder and the sound. You will also be the scribe of your experiments and experiences through various forms of reflective writing.

Through sSādhanā, your personal sound practice will be transformed into a spiritual practice for sSelf-inquiry and sSelf-study. Which means that this research is meant to be experiential and fully embodied. We are not going to just talk about sSādhanā and music and spirituality in Satsang. We will be actively engaging in sSādhanā, each *through* our own sound practice. In this research process, you will learn sound creation techniques, voice cultivation practices, reflective writing practices and processes to add to your daily sound practice. As a fellow Yogi and Sādhaka, I will be attending to my own sSādhanā alongside of you and having my own experiences throughout this inquiry. Om

The Gathering of Sādhakas

Yogi 1: Om and Praṇām

I am a professional artist, scholar, teacher, and researcher with a 30-year experience as musician and composer. The thought of researching music as a yoga-based spiritual inquiry attracted me to this research initiative. I have some experience with Indian music practices, particularly Carnatic music (South Indian), and I use Mantra chant and other forms of sound in my meditation practice. I sing Om mantra and chant some mantras that I learned at the Ashram, but I lack discipline in sustaining a regular singing/meditation practice. So I think a sound sadhana practice would complement my daily yoga sadhana practice of asanas and meditation.

I have composed and recorded music that is both ambient and meditative for 20 years and have published several long-form selections of music. That aside, I feel a strong impulse to ground myself in a daily vocal practice, and am intrigued by the opportunity to immerse myself into a sound sadhana practice. I know the benefits of a regular practice to musicianship and compositional ear, I also think that a regular sound sadhana practice might assist my teaching and mentoring. I teach at a digital media university and am called to teach and mentor graduate students daily. This Sound sSāadhanā practice might help to develop clarity of speaking and improve my own listening abilities. Finally, I have already experienced many insights just from the asana and breathing practices of Yoga, but I feel that a more intentional and regular practice might spark new ideas and thoughts, particularly within the areas of my research interests. Om

Yogi 2: Om. Namaste and Hello everyone.

I am a Dancer, Somatic Therapist, Visual Artist, Yogini, Student of Integrative Voice, and a Baker of pies. I arrive here with a lifetime of dance training and experience as somatic therapist and bodyworker. I am interested in Sādhanā as an active practice, that is, a practice of doing, and a practice of bringing thought and action together. I have a dancer sensibility and a kinesthetic intelligence. Which means that I move through the world bodily, dancerly. As a somatic therapist, my world is predominantly sensorial, tactile, and physical. Thus, I am particularly interested in exploring sounding and listening as embodied practices. I am curious about the effect of sound on the brain and the nervous system, and what happens physically when I am sounding.

One of the motivating factors for pursuing Sound sSādhanā research is health related. In my own sadhana practice, I want to deepen my exploration of the physical vibration of sound and probe the possibilities of physical stimulation and rejuvenation. I am a mature student of integrated voice and meditation looking to develop my voice and musical skills further, and am drawn to the Sound sSādhanā research to experience *Satsang*, the bi-monthly gatherings of fellow Sādhakas, where I desire to explore the reciprocal exchange of spiritual energy and inspiration. I love group work, as it makes me feel that we are all on this journey together. The work is lighter when shared, and we can inspire and encourage each other as we go. I am happy to be here in this amazing work of Sādhanā. Om

Yogi 3: Om Shānti.

I am a Singer, Musician, Spiritual Teacher and Practitioner, Yogini, and Mother. I come to the Sound sSādhanā research with years of experience as a spiritual teacher, practitioner, professional singer and spiritual seeker. I confess that I have so much information from so many divergent sources that I am overwhelmed and unclear as to how to work with what I have gathered, which teachings to follow, and whose voice to listen to. I have lived in ashrams in India and have experience with gurus and mantras and Indian classical music practices. I know that a regular practice is beneficial to the voice as I have had the experience of transforming my voice into gold after months of daily voice practice. However, I am a new mother and lately have been noticing a lack of personal reflective time. So I feel ungrounded and scattered, and feel that my energy is pulled in too many directions. I find focusing on anything for any length of time an ongoing challenge. Because of my lack of time in a day, I have a tendency in every area of my life to speed up. So I am seeking a way to slow down time, to find space for a regular personal spiritual practice, especially a practice that involves the voice, because in my busy and fast-paced schedule, I have no time now for a singing practice. In addition to continuing a successful singing career, I am working on building a business and establishing financial well-being. To fulfil my goals, I desire to cultivate a focused and organized mind, and to establish a personal reflective and spiritual practice that makes sense to me, created especially for me at this time in my own present life context. Om

Yogi 4: Om Everyone.

I am a cross-cultural world music multi instrumental artist with over forty years of experience in sound making, performing, and teaching sacred sound. I am also a world traveller, a spiritual seeker and Bhakti. I too have spent time in ashrams performing the work of a kirtan musician, and am knowledgeable in the deeper practices and intentions of spiritual music, sacred sound, ritual and chant. I am here because I am interested in exploring and developing voice for performance and recording sacred music. I come to this Sound sSādhanā research with experience in formal ascetic sadhanas that have been given to me by my spiritual gurus in an ashram environment. Now that I am living outside of the ashram environment, I desire to re-establish a formal sound sadhana practice that can sit within my ongoing Sadhana continuum as a reminder for when I sometimes forget my sadhana and am drawn into the world of ego. I am continually questioning and refining myself as a sacred musician and teacher in the world, and am interested in this Sound sSādhanā research as a platform for philosophical and theoretical discussion, and as an opportunity for the acquisition of new techniques and skills towards my own purpose as a sacred artist and spiritual seeker. Om

Yogi 5: Om Everyone.

Pranam. I am a Sound artist, Singer, Spiritual Mentor and Teacher, Nāda Yogini, and explorer of Psychosomasononautics. I am a sound artist specializing in voice in all its forms and possibilities, and am curious about teaching and mentoring singing and listening as awareness practices and as sSādhanā. I am also curious if

listening to one's own vocal practices could be a way to self-teach, self-refine, and self-awaken. I believe it is. I am fascinated by the philosophy and practices of Sādhanā, and I am drawn to develop and share the ideas of Sādhanā philosophy and practice through the medium of voice and exploration of toning, chanting, singing, sounding and listening. My sSādhanā during this research process is to explore awareness through the shifting identity locations of Teacher, Researcher, Mentor, Facilitator, Yogi and Sādhaka. Om.

Yogi 6: Om Everyone.

I am an international entrepreneur and creative director and designer of technology driven interactive installations; a graphic designer, teacher of digital media, a Greek scholar, and curious Psychonaut. I am a busy person in the world with multiple business projects going on at any given time. As a Greek scholar I come with a highly logical mind, yet privately, I am a romantic philosopher who spends time dreaming and exploring my psyche while questioning my place in the universe.

I come to this research not as a former yogi, nor as a practitioner of meditation. I have no formal or intentional contemplative practice. However, I want to participate in this study so that I can acquire such a practice. I would like to develop myself as a person, to find new ways of thinking and working on myself that may lie outside of the logical realm. I am willing and open to explore embodied awareness practices of sounding and listening, to take up dharma studies, and to develop a reflective practice with singing and writing. My life

goals require that I gain self-knowledge and mastery over myself. I come to this study with every intention to commit, not just to this research but to myself. Om.

Facilitator: Welcome Yogis.

Each of you come with your own experience and expertise regarding spiritual inquiry, sound, and yoga. I invite you into a foundational singing sounding sādhanā practice that will also strengthen and enhance the unique set of skills you bring to Satsang. The content of a foundational sādhanā can be the same for everyone regardless of life experience; however, the benefits of that same sādhanā will be unique to each Sādhaka. The foundational practices are deceptively simple and will challenge your ideas of what a voice practice is. Mastery of the practices can take a lifetime. However, a determined daily practice will bring profound results to the artist Sādhaka and their art. Within this short time we have together, you could transform your voice and your person through Sound sSādhanā.

Let us move now into a set of sādhanās from the Foundational Sound sSādhanā Palette created specifically for this research. You will notice that I have added points of inquiry as invitation to sSelf-reflection, so that you can begin to explore the sounded voice as an awareness practice and as sSelf-inquiry. We will use the Tānpūra as the representation of the fullness of Om—the cosmic primordial sound at the very beginning of creation—and allow its re-sounding overtones, microtones and harmonics to evoke in us the experience of transcendence and cosmic unity.

Repeat until you realize yourself as part of OM and your voice begins to shine

Return to silence

Listen into the reverberations of the sounded OM ...

Listen into the silence after the sounding ...

Breathe ... easy ... gently ...

Reflect on your experience ...

Examine your sensations of sounding and listening ...

What did you feel, see, hear while sounding?

What happened to your breath? Your voice? Your mind?

Did you remain present in your body and in the room or did you go somewhere?

Were you aware of yourself as the sounder in the room while sounding OM ?

Write reflectively on your immediate experience.

Write reflectively on the reverberations of your experience.

If you are curious to explore further, repeat this sādhanā, adding something new to each repetition. For example, repeat the same sādhanā but with your eyes half open to the world about you. Then repeat the sādhanā a third time, opening your eyes fully to the world about you while sensing into the world within you.

Repeat once more, opening your eyes on every second OM. Reflect after each new set of repetitions, and write field notes of your variations and experiments.

Write reflectively on your experiences using the same points of inquiry asked earlier and add your own questions to the inquiry. Follow your curiosity.

This OM voice sādhanā with its variations could be your sole practice for the duration of our work together or could become one of the components of a more complex set of sādhanās. You will only know if OM sādhanā is for you through your own practice and inquiry. Enjoy your explorations.

Variation on OM

Now we will venture deeper into sounding through and beyond the syllable OM to explore its variant AUM. The AUM sādhanā is well suited to the Psychosonaut—the explorer of consciousness through sound (Anderson, 2020). AUM works through its parts, the smaller seed mantras and component phonemes A, U, and M. Each phoneme represents a stage of consciousness⁸⁵—‘A’ waking, ‘U’ dreaming, and ‘M’ deep sleep, with the silence after the sounding as the fourth sound—the state in which the Self can be realized. Chanting AUM brings forth the full vibratory experience of creative Being in one sound. The ‘A’ expresses the moment of creation and our awakening to possibility. The ‘U’ expresses the gathering and directing of creative forces towards manifestation; and the ‘M’ sounds the movement of dissolution of all that came before. In the silence after the movement through creation, manifestation and dissolution, is the Source and the potential of all that is to come. In this way, AUM expresses the entirety of the Cosmos in one sound. Through the practice of OM and AUM a

⁸⁵ Each represents a stage of consciousness according to Upanishadic literature (Dyczkowski, 1987, pg. 252). Through AUM and OM the Yogī seeks to merge into Cosmic sound and beyond into the Source of all sound.

sound Yogi transcends mundane reality to merge with Cosmic sound and beyond into the Source of all sound.

The AUM and its parts work on the levels of consciousness. Initially, you might not experience the subtle divisions of consciousness, or find the source of Being, or realize the Self; however, with a sustained practice (*sādhanā*), you will probably experience your inner world coming forth to be articulated and brought into consciousness (Menon, 1989). As artists, this recovered or surfacing material could be received as inspiration towards creation and conscious self-unfoldment (Anderson, 2015). As a Yogi, this material can be an opportunity to view and receive self as part of wholeness from the location of Wholeness (Self), to be a discerning witness to self, and to consider dharmic action where action is required. As a Psychosomasononaut (Anderson, 2020)—explorer of consciousness travelling on the sonic dimension of the embodied sSelf—each offering from the subconscious can be viewed as a portal back into the subconscious realm for further exploration.

To sound AUM in 4 parts, we will divide the syllable OM into three phonemes A, U, and M⁸⁶ and articulate each phoneme separately, giving time to each sound in long sustained single tones, noticing where and how the sound

⁸⁶ The entire *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* expounds the meaning of OM. There it divides OM into 4 stages: A, U, M, and *Anagata* (the one that is beyond verbal pronunciation). A is the beginning of all sound, pronounced simply by opening the mouth and making a sound. Audible sound begins with Ā. As the sound moves forward towards closing the mouth, the sound becomes Ū. Closing the lips while continuing to sound becomes the M. Aum includes the entire process of sound and all other sounds are contained in it. Thus, OM is the origin, or seed, from which all other sounds and words come. OM is dormant in all other words. (Satchidananda, 2008, p. 44). “AUM stands for the supreme Reality. It is a symbol for what was, what is, and what shall be. AUM represents also what lies beyond past, present, and future” verse 1, *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, (Easwaran, 2003, p. 60).

vibrations resonate in the body⁸⁷—both the physical and the subtle body. Once the three phonemes have each been intoned seven times, we will meditate on their reverberation in the silence that follows. After sounding the individual seed mantras A, U, M, we will put them back together and create a sound flow through their entirety as AUM. Beginning with breath, and ending with breath in silence.

AUM in 4 Parts

Some additional notes for this sādhanā.

Tone each single sound seven times before moving onto the next.

‘A’ is a long vowel sound Ā as in father.

‘U’ is also a long vowel Ū and sounds like the oo in mood

‘M’ sounds like the end of Hum as it buzzes on your lips when your mouth is closed. When you hold the Mmmm long enough you can direct the vibrations upwards to your forehead.

Take your time as you tone. Maintain the integrity of the shape of each phoneme. Feel how and where the sounds and shapes resonate in your body (meaning your entire body complex including physical, emotional, energetic, mental, and psychospiritual). Breathe long and deep. Tone for the full length of each exhalation. Tune each tone to the Tānpūra Drone.

⁸⁷ Meditation on AUM adapted from Sadhguru (2018) meditation workshop.

Continually seek and find your Sur (pitch).

Finding pitch (sur) and staying in tune is very important. For the musician artist, this sādhanā will refine your listening, your pitch and your voice. For the Yogi, the practice of tuning can be a sādhanā of attention and refinement of perception. As a musician Yogi in sSādhanā, you will receive these combined effects from your efforts. Remember Sound sSādhanā is an embodied sound practice in which attunement of your own physical, emotional, energetic, mental and spiritual body complex is as important as tuning your musical ear and voice to swara and Tānpūra.

Activate Tānpūra

Breathe ... Listen ...

Attune to yourself to the room ... to the Tānpūra

Bring your awareness to your breath

Inhale deeply and smoothly ...

Exhale into a long Ā tone (the same ā as in father)

Ā—————

Inhale through your nose ... and exhale through open mouth on Ah ...

Ā—————

Inhale deeply through your nose ... and exhale a steady tone

Ā—————

Inhale smoothly ... and exhale on Ah while watching your sur (pitch)

Ā—————

Inhale with ease...and exhale a beautiful long-toned Ā

Ā—————

Inhale ... and exhale a steady tone Ā ...

Ā—————

Inhale ... and exhale a smooth stream of Ā ...

Ā—————

Inhale ... and exhale through small 'oo' shaped opening into a long tone Ū

Ū—————

Inhale deeply through your nose ... and exhale a long tone Ū

Ū—————

Inhale smoothly ... exhale ... joining your breath with long tone Ū ...

Ū—————

Inhale through your nose ... and exhale ... sustain the uuu tone for the length of your breath

Ū—————

Inhale deeply through your nose ... and exhale a steady stream of breath and

Ū—————

Inhale deeply ... and exhale completely seeking sur through uuu ...

Ū—————

Inhale ... exhale on steady uuu

Ū—————

Inhale through your nose and close your mouth to sound the mmm

M—————

Inhale ... exhale and feel the vibration in your throat, mouth, lips, and face

M—————

Inhale ... and exhale on mmm ... feel the vibration in your skull bones

M—————

Inhale ... and exhale on mmm ... feel the vibration resonate your eyes and brain

M—————

Inhale ... and exhale on mmm ... notice where your tongue lies

M—————

Inhale ... and exhale through mmm ... relax your tongue, let it float

M—————

Inhale ... and exhale ... move your sound forward to the front of your face

M—————

Come to rest

Silence————— for 7 minutes, breathe easefully and listen deeply into the reverberation of your sound practice. Listen also into the silence after the reverberation.

Reflect on your experience. Notate. Experiment further ... find new pathways ... follow your curiosity.

Now move onwards to the sound flow AUM.

AUM as one continuous Sound

When the AUM is produced as one sound, breath and tone move sequentially through the shapes of A, U, and M, vibrating and activating important energy systems of the body while traveling through each sounded form on the way to silence. With repetition and close attention to vocal sound as it travels, you will be able to feel, hear, and see the vibrations of tone within your own body. The “Ā” activates the area of the navel, vibrating and stimulating the digestive system. The “Ū” sound resonates within the heart area, activating

blood circulation. The “Ū” finishes at the tip of the tongue as the mouth closes into the “M”, focusing the vibrations forward on the lips. From there, the vibrations move into the head and out through the nose. The containment of the tone in the head area, stimulates the vibrations in the brain, and helps to activate the pituitary gland which in turn helps the overall improvement of the body (Knapp, 2011, pp. 9-10). As your body resonates and vibrates with the sounds you produce, the qualities of your sound will be affected.

Here in the flow of AUM, is the opportunity to experiment with your own vocal sound production as an embodied awareness practice. You can explore vocally, vibrationally, and energetically, the many resonating features within your own body—your skull bones and face, eye sockets, neck, throat, soft palette, hard palette, tongue, lips, sternum, ribcage, chest, lower back, belly and bowel, knees, feet and spine. Simultaneously, you can experience and further explore the shifting states of awareness evoked through your own experimentation with voice pitch, tone, microtone, texture, depth, and the shaping, sounding, and sustaining of breath. Consider this AUM sādhanā as an opportunity to bring awareness to your embodied voice, to your sound production, and to the many affecting elements of your sounding.

Pay close attention in your sādhanā as you experiment. Listen ... Observe ... Contemplate ... Reflect ... Notate.

The AUM Flow

Activate Tānpūra

Close your eyes and bring your attention within while also listening to the drone.

Imagine your breath as the primordial breath before all sound ... all vibration ...

all creation. Inhale deeply through your nose ... and exhale smoothly ...

Imagine yourself as the vessel through which consciousness expresses

Inhale deeply through your nose ...

Open your mouth and exhale a stream of primordial breath through A U M

AAAAAAAAAAAAUUUUUUUUUUUMMMMMMMMMMMMMmmmmm

Inhale deeply ... and exhale slowly through the changing tones

AAAAAAAAAAAAUUUUUUUUUUUMMMMMMMMMMMMMmmmmm

Inhale ... and exhale smoothly through the tones from wide to narrow to closed

AAAAAAAAAAAAUUUUUUUUUUUMMMMMMMMMMMMMmmmmm

Inhale deeply and exhale slowly through and between each tonal shape

AAAAAAAAAAAAUUUUUUUUUUUMMMMMMMMMMMMMmmmmm

Inhale ... and exhale smoothly through the mantra ... listen into the developing microtones

AAAAAAAAAAAAUUUUUUUUUUUMMMMMMMMMMMMMmmmmm

Inhale ... and exhale ... linger in the microtones between each shape

AAAAAAAAAAAAUUUUUUUUUUUMMMMMMMMMMMMMmmmmm

Inhale fully ... and exhale ... feel into each and every shape in your mouth as you sound

AAAAAAAAAAAAUUUUUUUUUUUMMMMMMMMMMMMMmmmmm

Come to Silence for the length of 7 AUMs ...

Listen into the reverberations of your Sounding

Listen further into the silence after their dissolution

Now rest with all awareness in the silence of the AUM

Praṇām

To complete your sādhanā place your hands in prayer mudrā

Praṇām to the teachers and Gurus—all your teachers and gurus who have influenced your presence today, human and non-human, present and not present, living and no longer living

Praṇām to the Tānpūra—the ground and cradle of support during your voice sādhanā

Praṇām to the sādhanās—the multitude of practices cultivating sSelf, sSwara, Art and Artist

Praṇām to the Sādhakas—those who accompany, support, and reflect sSādhanā

Praṇām to sSelf—to the Wholeness of you, your presence and your journey of awakening

Om Śānti Śānti Śāntiḥ Om



If you find resonance with these practices (sādhanās), you can take them into your personal daily Sound sSādhanā for further exploration and experimentation.

Om

Satsang~ The sSādhanā of Satsang

Om Yogis

Praṇām

With my hands in prayer mudrā I welcome you into presence and into Satsang.

Take a moment to arrive to here and now in Satsang. Come to stillness.

Close your eyes ... follow your breath inwards, and scan your physical body from within.

Observe and acknowledge your level of physical comfort or discomfort, and respond by adjusting yourself into a more comfortable and sustainable position. Next, scan your emotional self. Observe and acknowledge your emotional state, any feelings you may be carrying into this moment, and open up receptive and creative space within for new thoughts and feelings to arise during this Satsang. Scan your mind and psyche. Observe your thoughts, concerns, anxieties ... any weighted themes that may be churning around and around ... and see if you can open up space within your busy mind. Make a mental note to return to your concerns later. For now, make yourself spacious ... receptive to this moment in Satsang.

Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose and fill your lower belly ...

Exhale completely on a long breath ... releasing all points of resistance you may be holding

Inhale deeply ... fill your belly and expand your rib cage with breath and life ...

And exhale completely on a longer breath ... releasing all expectation of what is to come

Inhale deeply ... fill your entirety ... your body and your energy field around you

And exhale completely on a long steady breath ... feeling yourself wholly present in body, mind, heart, spirit and place. We will chant the seed Mantra OM three times to attune ourselves. The first OM to attune yourself within yourself, the second OM to attune to this moment in time and space; and the third OM to tune yourself in harmonic relation to the group.

Breathe and ...

O—————MMMmmmm

Breathe ...

O—————MMMmmmm

Breathe ...

O—————MMMmmmm

Silence ...

Allow yourself to experience Omkar's resonance and the communion of group sounding ...

Allow yourself to be still and spacious ... clear ... aware of yourself in this moment ...

Open your eyes and come into the room ...

Om and Welcome to this Satsang on Satsang Sādhanā

What is a Satsang, and how do we come to Satsang? What do we hope to find? And how might an ordinary meeting become a Satsang? Some of us have attended a Satsang or two in the past and some of us have years of experience of Satsang. The question is, have we ever wondered what a Satsang is, and how might it differ from other kinds of gatherings or meetings? The answers to these questions will be found in the experience of Satsang.

The form and content of a Satsang depends upon context. In this Sound sSādhanā research project, Satsang is a place and space where we gather for spiritual purpose to receive support in our individual sSādhanā journeys, and to evolve⁸⁸ collectively—to move as a group through the sSādhanā process of sSelf-education and spiritual awakening. Here, a Satsang is an occasion for learning from the lives and experiences of our fellow Yogi Sādhakas and to reflect upon our own life path. Today, and over the course of three months, we will meet in Satsang with a sense of Unity, of Oneness, to share, care, chant, listen, contemplate, meditate, and learn together (Bhagavan, 2005, pp. 14-17). We are a gathering of seekers, of Sādhakas, Yogīs on a spiritual quest to know the depth of sSelf as Yoga (as Oneness, and as Wholeness). We are here in Satsang to share

⁸⁸ To evolve—to develop, refine, advance intellect, skill, consciousness, artistry. In Yoga the goal is to evolve the everyday, habitual, half-conscious, unaware egoic being, into a fully conscious, aware, awake person who: is in mastery over ego, habit, and senses; keeps counsel with their inner Self (Ātman); and who acts skillfully and ethically in the world.

our individual journeys with each other, and to bear witness to each other's progressive transformation and spiritual evolution⁸⁹ across a short course of time.

In Satsang “the seeker, by definition, is on a path of self-discovery. Sādhanā, or the process of self-improvement, is a long and slow process, requiring considerable and sustained effort to maintain a healthy body and sharp mind” (Rybak et al, 2015, p. 148). Therefore, in support each Yogī Sādhaka in Sādhanā, our group gathering and each teaching will be a *Satsang*, which, for the purpose of this Sound sSādhanā Research, is an intentional spiritual learning environment that “helps to elevate the mind to a higher⁹⁰ level from the lower level of worldly thought” (Amartyananda, (2016, App.14). The meaning of the term ‘Satsang’ is carried in its Sanskrit form—*Sat* meaning “truth”, and *Sang* meaning the “company of”, or “in association with” somebody who represents or who is a seeker of truth (Rybak et al., 2015, p. 147). Thus the term *Satsang*, means to be with truth, to gather with other seekers of truth to share in truth⁹¹, to

⁸⁹ Spiritual evolution—to continue on the path of self-refinement, and self-betterment. “To go beyond our past, to the higher future hidden within us” (Frawley, 2014, p. 73). Fundamental to the Indian view of human nature is that the imperfections with which we began life can be perfected through spiritual practice, potentially within this lifetime. To realize states of perfection, human limitations such as egoistic thought and action along with illusory notions of the self, have to be overcome completely. This is not so much cancellation of our ordinary experience of human nature as an expansion of our personal consciousness into pure consciousness (Coward, 2008, p. 4). Spiritual evolution means to consciously engage in sSādhanā towards dissolution of a sense of division between the self and Self, thus realizing sSelf.

⁹⁰ The notion of Higher and Lower states or actions delineates the quality of consciousness, thought process, and action engaged in our basic human survival—our needs, instincts, and daily habits—from the quality of thought and action that is filled with consciousness, awareness and choice in finer pursuit. By ‘finer pursuit’ I mean engaging perception, observation, curiosity, and inquiry. And by ‘quality’, I mean the *Gunas*—Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas—which, as our basic substance on all levels and all bodies (yogic and subtle) of our being, pervade everything—consciousness, thought, word, action, higher and lower—in unique combinations continually refining and recombining as we grow. As such, basic everyday acts necessary to living can be undertaken with the light of awareness. Thus the most basic of acts can be elevated to high art. The single tone practice is a perfect example of this idea.

⁹¹ In this research, we gathered together with true heart and clear intention for sharing on spiritual practice through sound. Parameters of engagement were clearly stated and upheld by

associate with true people, and to gather together in sacred presence with other holy seekers.

In in the context of Yoga and the Sanskrit “Sat”, ‘truth’ is described by various practitioners and authors as “ultimate reality” (Feuerstein, 2001, p. 459) “pure being” (Iyengar, 1993, p. 342); “existence” (Satchidananda, 2008, p. 245); “eternal existence” (Mishra,1973, p.533). For this Sound sSādhanā study, Satsang is a purpose-based group environment, a place/space of shared intention, and a process of inquiry. Here, Satsang is offered as a beneficial, interactive, and experiential space within which the individual Yogi Sādhaka can energize their personal sSādhanā through association with other Sādhakas and receive inspiration through sSādhanā teachings.

The practice of Satsang for spiritual education⁹² and personal development is a very old one in Indian Yogic Culture, and its form is used throughout Yoga communities around the world. For example, when I was travelling in Northern Australia a few years ago, I needed to find company, but not just any company, the kind that would nourish my soul. In a small coastal town in Queensland I found a Satsang. Without knowing any of the individuals in attendance, I followed the open invitation to Satsang and energized my own Sādhanā within its community. The experience was uplifting. I was raised up into witness

the facilitator. For all of us, Truth meant to be located in Self, in Soul while in Satsang and when engaging with each other. The teachings were a combination of sacred literature and oral teaching of Master Artists, Yogis and Gurus and on the subject of *Vidya* (knowledge). Awareness of Sat was present throughout. All the Yogis were present in Sat. The facilitator held the intention and the space for Sat.

⁹² Spiritual education will differ from group to group depending upon the facilitator, the lineage, and the main spiritual beliefs of the people holding the Satsang. Satsang is a form, a container, a format for group work.

consciousness, out of identification with the mundane, out of attachment and suffering, and into gratitude, clarity, and bliss.

However, not all Satsangs are the same. Some Satsangs can be static⁹³ or rigid⁹⁴ events. They might offer strict re-presentations of original material from a specific lineage reiterated by the senior disciples of the original master in adherence to the original teachings. Other Satsangs might offer a talk by an initiate, a master musician, or advanced Yogi.⁹⁵ The talk will contain a theme, often told through story and reference to spiritual writings. The practiced teacher then weaves the theme into a modern context, so that the sangha (the community of truth seekers and true hearts) can bring the ancient teachings into their contemporary lives for personal transformation purpose. The teaching often leads to chant and meditation. After which, there will be an opening for questions and response before culminating in a final meditation.

There are different ways that people hold Satsangs. But ultimately, a group Satsang is a facilitated gathering of Sādhakas—a gathering of seekers for the purpose of receiving spiritual transmission and illumination through association, spiritual practice and spiritual-inquiry. In this research, Satsang is intended to be a supportive context and way of relating within which to awaken and activate the intuitive, intelligent and discerning qualities within each of us. In this context, Satsang is a space in which each Sādhaka gathers and contributes

⁹³ Fixed in time and structure.

⁹⁴ Inflexible in presentation, hierarchy, system, doctrine.

⁹⁵ All three could exist as one person—One who is a master Yogi, Musician, and Spiritual teacher advanced in self-mastery and who is established in Self.

insight, affirmation, encouragement and inspiration on their sSādhanā in association with other Sādhakas on the Yogic path.

In the initial stages of Sādhanā, Satsang is indispensable (Amartyananda, 2016), for in the early stages of self-transformation, one can easily be distracted by internal and external forces and to be drawn away from their practice. To counter such tendencies “Satsang emphasizes continuity and perseverance [in one’s sSādhanā], thus keeping the individual seeker on the path of learning... (Rybak et al., 2015, pp. 148-149). Here in Satsang, we pursue meaningful connection through shared spiritual experience and spiritual inquiry within which we seek higher purpose and deeper meaning to our individual and collective worldly existence.

In keeping with the intention of this research, which is to remain focused on Sound sSādhanā as Yogic inquiry⁹⁶, we will not be using the Satsang environment as a space in which to directly share or process grief or trauma, or use Sangha to directly engage and process personal, cultural, or political wounding. Which is not to say that we do not each carry our own measure of suffering and our own need to be heard regarding its weight; but rather, that we take this time to guide the mind into focus within Satsang, into spiritual-inquiry regarding our own sSādhanā, to delight in the opportunity to sit in truth beyond the contents of our minds and beyond the content of our everyday lives⁹⁷.

⁹⁶ The understanding of mind as written in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali and Sādhanā as written in the Bhagavad Gītā.

⁹⁷ Individual Sādhanās that involve personal processing and engaged activism in the world of the Sādhaka are not negated here, but are outside of the parameters of this Sound sSādhanā research project. Indeed, for Sound sSādhanā, the yogic musician attends to practice in the way of sonic brahmacharya (*brahmacharya*), directing their energy in pursuit of music, art and swara with whole

Indeed, for Sound sSādhanā, the Sādhaka musician needs to create a space apart from their everyday world so as to pursue music, art and sSwara with whole mind body spirit.

Satsang emphasizes “transcendence of conflict in conjunction with a calmed mind and relaxed body” (Engelman, Clance & Imes, 1982, p.80). The space and time created for Satsang, is a space and time outside of the everyday, and is intended as a space and place of respite and recharge. To rest the mind. To wrest the Self from the mind, and the mind from the stuff with which it daily wrestles. “Satsang is a place of withdrawal. Withdrawal from the world. Satsang provides a sacred space in which we can close the door to the world outside” (Singh, 2011, p. 82). Again, not to say that all that we are putting on hold for the duration of Satsang is not of importance or value, or that it might not hold meaning and impetus for one’s own spiritual journey and purpose in the world. But Satsang reminds us that we need to find time in our daily lives for meditation and conscious spiritual practices (82) that strengthen and balance us for the world. Besides, Satsang is more than its content.

Satsang—the act of Satsang and the environment of Satsang—offers a spiritual charging, “a subtle effect which can elevate us spiritually and can protect us from the influence of worldly distractions that slows spiritual progress. Satsang helps us maintain our spiritual flame” (Singh, 2011, p. 82). As a form of subtle activism, the spiritual flame can be carried within each Sādhaka

mind body heart spirit. The result of Sound sSādhanā is advancement of artistry and artist (Sādhaka). It is not (in this instance) the continuance or resolution of worldly inquiry. Though in many cases, much is resolved by the shift in attention and the resulting advancement in awareness of the Sound Sādhaka. A wise Guru offers specific Mantra, and a time and context based sādhanā to assist the Sādhaka in their personal sSādhanā journey in the world.

from Satsang into the world to ignite and positively effect whomever comes in association with it. This spiritual charging is one of the most important aspects of Satsang according to Taylor (2007), as it shows us that spiritual illumination is communicable.

Feelings of bliss can spread from person to person, and so can the vision of oneness for the universe, the awareness that the essential reality of the universe is a limitless ocean of Spirit, and the experience of transcending the ego and being reborn as a deeper and higher Self. These experiences are transferable—under the right circumstances, they can be passed from an enlightened person to others without any loss of intensity. (p. 4)

Satsang reveals that “our apparent individuality is an illusion, that we are parts of an indivisible ocean of consciousness” (p. 5), and thus available to the charge, the energies and inspirations of each other.

Realizing our interconnectivity is important, because just as the spiritual charge is communicable through presence, association and reception, so too are the deep emotional impressions and expressions of a disturbed mind⁹⁸ and psyche. To meet any such potential, this Sound sSādhanā research project includes forms of sSelf inquiry (Ātma-Vichāra) and practices of sSelf-study

⁹⁸ Satsang is not a grief circle or a counselling circle necessarily, and though attendees may arrive carrying their burdens of grief and traumatic life experience, they attend Satsang for a different purpose, to be calmed, balanced, uplifted. As a group work format, Satsang can be used for Western psychotherapeutic group processes, Rout, A. K. (1987); Rybak, C., Sathaye, D., & Deuskar, M. (2015); Rybak, C., & Deuskar, M. (2004); Rybak, C., & Deuskar, M. (2010); however, ground rules need to be in place, permission from all participants received, the purpose of the gathering clearly stated and understood, and the group carefully facilitated. This research was not for psychotherapeutic purpose, did not engage Western psychology or therapy in any form, and invited only healthy, self-maintaining individuals with full knowledge of the research process and their part within it and in agreement to take full responsibility for their own well-being. Here Satsang was used as a Yogic form for group interaction. The constraints to inquiry were inherent in its yogic meaning and intent: as a place of spiritual communion, transmission and upliftment through listening and engaging in spiritual discourse, inquiry and practice, specifically, sound practice as Yoga.

(Svādhyāya) for each Yogi to cultivate an understanding of their own mind process, and to bring themselves to steadiness by their own practice and authority.

For the purpose of our research, the personal work and inner attunement of each individual Sādhaka is essential to harmonious and productive group participation so that, as a diverse group of individuals with varied mindsets, energy levels, and experience in spiritual and personal process work, we can come together with a common purpose and intention (Rybak et al, 2015, p. 152-53). In this context, Self-attunement means bringing the ego self into harmony with the inner self (Self, Ātman) through a process of refinement. Attunement follows a process of listening and perceiving both harmony and dissonance of your shifting inner states, then responding skillfully, bringing yourself to mastery over the same states. We tune our self, much like a musical instrument, for example:

First I need awareness to know that I am out of tune. Then, knowing I am out of tune, I will clear the way through my inner dissonance until I am in tune. Or, knowing I am out of tune energetically and have not yet cultivated the capacity to harmonize my dissonant nature, I am vigilant and respectful of how I am in relationship with myself and other selves.

From the perspective of Yoga, “we learn that consciousness is not the same as mind. Our true identities transcend and include more than the contents of our minds” (Rybak, 2004, p. 194). Adding to that, “the true nature of yoga is positive and life embracing ... its aim is to improve the quality of life” (Rout, 1987, p. 37) even when life involves suffering in its many forms. Satsang is for the

purpose of sSelf-education and sSelf-illumination⁹⁹ within the company of other spiritual seekers, and is meant to enhance the sSādhanā experience and support the Sādhaka in their journey of sSelf-awakening.

sSādhanā, as practice-based spiritual inquiry, finds revelation and transformation through action, through active participation in inquiry-based yogic practices. In our Satsang we can listen to, discuss and theorize on the subject of sound, yoga and spirituality as philosophical inquiry. We can give and receive acknowledgement, affirmation and inspiration towards our personal evolution; however, eventually, we need to come back to the source of our knowing—our own practice—and bring our inquiry and action together in pursuit of direct experience through Sound sSādhanā.

In our Sound sSādhanā practice today we will sing a peace mantra together in a specific way so as to experience the power of Satsang to build a spiritual charge and bring about a shift in group energy that we can integrate into our everyday worldly interactions. Remembering that we are still individual Sādhakas with our own personal sādhanās, this practice will demonstrate how our individual and personal work has value in group work, and can contribute to the world in a positive way.

⁹⁹ Illumination—bringing in the light of awareness. In Yoga, light is knowledge. Knowledge that illuminates. sSelf-illumination means coming to know and to see (through insight) the nature of the small self and the expanded Self, thus one can be enlightened by the revelation, illuminated. Direct experience through practice can illuminate an idea, bringing insight and understanding.

According to Scholar philosopher Eknath Easwaran (2009), Mantra¹⁰⁰ repetition, works through the individual to affect the world.

Repetition of mantra is a dynamic discipline by which we can develop and gain access to inner reserves of strength and peace of mind. With the mantram we gain confidence and control of our mind and energy resources so that we can transform everything negative in us and make our greatest possible contribution to the welfare of those around us. (Easwaran, 2009, p. 20)

Thus, mantra chanting, singing, speaking, visualizing, listening, thinking and contemplating, activates inner healing, clearing, energizing, and strengthening in the one who chants, refining the small self and the mantra's intention with each recitation.

As a “tool of the mind” mantra can be wielded to free the self from “the vagaries of mind” (Ashley-Farrand, 2009)—the mind's tendency towards inconsistencies and whimsies, wandering everywhere yet nowhere in depth. You can use Mantra Sādhanā to harness all distractions towards intentional transformative purpose; and, in the journey from Mantra to Mokṣa (liberation), according to Ashley-Farrand, the mind expands, deepens and widens, and eventually dips into the essence of cosmic existence. On its journey, the mind comes to understand much about the vibration of things (pp. 6). Through Mantra

¹⁰⁰ Mantra in Sanskrit means instrument of the mind—‘tra’ is tool or instrument, and ‘manas’ is mind. Mantra is a primary tool of Yoga for calming the mind, which is necessary to allow us access to the higher Self. Mantra is used to internalize the mind and senses, and is one of the best means to bring the mind into the state of samadhi or yogic oneness, absorption and bliss (Frawley, 2010, pp. 27). My own teachers Kalpana Prasad and Pt. Rattan Mohan Sharma add depth to this explanation and hold that Mantras are powerful verses created thousands of years ago by Sages and Sacred musicians, potentized through thousands of years of repetition. The mantras reverberate with the intentions, the sadhanas, and the voices of all the yogis, saints, and gurus past and present. Thus, each mantra contains its own power and intention, they are sacred formulas, so we must apply them with care and respect. Sharma added, “even if one does not believe or is lazy in their practice, after 108 repetitions they will experience the transformative power inherent in both the mantra and the practice” (Personal Satsang, 2019).

Sādhanā (a spiritual and purposeful mantra practice), the Sādhaka gathers direct experience and knowledge of the way of the vibrational universe and the power of Mantra. When wielded by group intention, the Mantra is amplified to become a great creative force¹⁰¹ in the world.

In a recent Peace summit Satsang in Rishikesh (2019), Yogi Ananda Mehrotra explained how the power of mantric consciousness is a dynamic force that can be cultivated through group mantra chanting. He said, as we chant, the experience of the mantra will change. As one's perception of the mantra refines, the mantra moves deeper and deeper into subtle levels of being. Basically, Mantra chanting is a vehicle that takes the chanter to the unified field¹⁰² to vibrate at the level of the mantra, which in this case is Peace.

When there is a shared intention and attention in working together, the space between us dissolves. Our minds are morphogenic fields¹⁰³, because we have bonded as a group, we tune to each other's frequencies. If we sincerely intend to reverberate on the level of the Peace Mantra, to attune ourselves to the vibrational frequency of Peace, and chant long and deep enough to reverberate

¹⁰¹ Also a destructive creative force, a dismantling and skillful refocusing of energies. Destroying illusion, obstruction, dis-ease, reusing freed energy towards healing and clear intent.

¹⁰² Unified field from the Yogic philosophical stance is fundamentally a field of consciousness constituting the deepest reality and the true identity of everything in nature. The term "consciousness" is clearly distinguished from the highly individualized and anthropocentric sense of the term common to everyday experience: it is used to denote a completely universal field of "pure, self-interacting" consciousness—consciousness aware of itself alone, devoid of any individualizing influence or external objects of experience—Maharishi Mahesh Yogi interview in Hagelin, 1989, p. 8-9

¹⁰³ Based on Rupert Sheldrake's hypothesis that a mind can be influenced by another mind with which it has bonded via form of communication (telepathy?) over time and space, a connection through morphic resonance, an information-transfer matrix. (Horgon, 2014).

the unified field with its amplified frequencies, we make Peace possible for other beings (human and more than human) who might be oblivious to the possibility.

On the conceptual reality of the matrix of connection, Sufi mystic and musician Hazrat Inayat Khan (1996) explains, “all things and all beings in the universe are connected with each other, visibly or invisibly, and through vibrations a communication is established between them on all the planes of existence” (p. 7). These vibrations convey the conditions of one being to another through a vibrational matrix. The more refined the vibration the farther and deeper it reaches.

Kahn explains that vibrations have length and well as breadth, and even if they only last a fraction of a moment, one vibration creates another, and that one creates another and thus a myriad of vibrations arises out of one. “The reach of the vibrations is according to the fineness of their starting-point” (p. 7). A word that is spoken reaches only the ear of the listener, whereas the thought preceding the word can reach and vibrate the mind of the other. Continuing on with this theory, the finer the vibration, the more intense and pervasive the effect. Thus, “the vibrations of the soul are the most powerful and far-reaching, and run like an electric current from soul to soul” (p. 7).

Saints and sages spread their peace not only in the place where they sit, but even in the neighbourhood where they dwell; the town or the country where they live at peace in accordance with the power of the vibrations they send out from their soul. (Khan,1996, p. 8)

How then, might we Yogi Sādhakas attune our souls to the powerful vibrations¹⁰⁴ of Peace so that we too can radiate its vibratory powers into the world?

Surprisingly, to reverberate on the level of Peace according to Mehrotra (2019), we practice reverberating the frequency that is already part of our self, increasing its resonance and effecting the atmosphere and all the beings within and around with the intensity of that which is inherently part of us (Self). Rather than something to achieve or a goal to be reached (although it is that too), Peace is intrinsic and is always with us. Peace is not an incidental property, but an essential nature to be nurtured and developed through the reverberation of mantra.

Thus, when chanting the Peace Mantra, release all thoughts, thought systems, beliefs, philosophies where I am separate from the other—people, animals, element or earth. Disown what I am not. For the more I indulge the notion of separation, I will always try to achieve, compete, master, and conquer the other. With ever deepening and intentional awareness in action, eliminate that which blocks the Peace that is already there. Through continued and persistent attention, strengthen that resonation of Peace so that it radiates and reverberates the unified field (that which connects us and of which we are all a part) with the frequency of Peace. This frequency is in alignment with our greater (higher) principles (as opposed to envy, grasping, competition, and

¹⁰⁴ Realize peace within first, to be peaceful, and to resonate with peacefulness. Based on the hypothesis that everything is vibration including all forces and qualities, thus to intentionally (consciously) tune ourselves to vibrate on the level of Peace. How we do that is through clearing obstacles to peace, inner obstacles. One method is mantra chanting to bring the mind into meditation beyond obstacles of mind or body.

conquest, etc). By focusing the power of our attention through the Peace mantra, the Peace vibration is made available at a subtle level and thus more possible on the grosser-material level for other beings who might be unaware of such a possibility. ‘Attention in intention is one of the more powerful applications of our awareness’, for attention collapses probability into matter; thus, the peace vibration becomes available on the level of materiality. This phenomenon is amplified when we chant together with a shared intention. There is an incredible power in that. (Mehrotra, Peace Summit Satsang¹⁰⁵, 2019).

You could, with intention and steadfast discipline, refine and attune your perceptions to the finer vibrations of soul/Self (Ātman) through the work of Sound sSādhanā —through sound practices, mantra, meditation, contemplation, reflection, and Satsang. If these reverberating radiating positive creative qualities of soul/Self are cultivated, practiced, experienced and carried by one person, by their very nature they are communicable and thus bound to effect and uplift the Whole (unity, the Self). Thus in the act of communion, in Satsang, the work of the individual effects the Whole. If there is a true desire to uplift another, to be of service to another and to community, to give and share love where love is needed, the way is through your own personal sSādhanā. Your practice and your self-evolution¹⁰⁶ will emanate, pulse, and radiate from out of your very presence to contribute to the creation of joy and upliftment of the Whole—One’s Self ...

One Self ... Om

¹⁰⁵ Paraphrased

¹⁰⁶ One’s Sādhanā is “evolutionary action”, intentional, purposeful refining of small self, awakening to Self (Ātman), liberating the Self(Ātman) from the egoic mind, thus the Self shines and radiates forth to affect all beings.

Sādhakas in Satsang

Yogi 1: In a way, you are asking us to retreat from our normal day to day activities. The Satsang is a retreat. In which case, anything we speak to is mind. And the only centre is to let that all out and to go back to Ommm and centre in ourselves and in meditation.

Facilitator: We are not leaving the city or moving away from our daily lives in a literal sense. But Satsang opens a space for spiritual practice, discourse, and contemplation within the everyday events and concerns. We in turn are asked to create space within ourselves for Satsang to happen.

Yogi 1: I think you are creating a retreat. That is what a Satsang is. These are mini retreats.

Facilitator: Yes, this is a mini retreat inside a studio, inside of the city and inside of our daily lives. We come into Satsang. This is our bubble, our refuge.

Yogi 1: I think that is one of the differences here from the yogis in the caves and mountain retreats. For in Satsang you don't have to retreat from the world completely to keep up your practice. The practice is doing what we are talking about, it is regular Satsang. The ability to retreat from the world for moments during the day.

Facilitator: Which supports an understanding that Satsang can happen anywhere anytime, in an elevator, over breakfast, over the telephone, or over skype.

Satsang can happen between two people, between a person and an animal or an element of nature like a tree or a stone, a stream, or the rain, the sky, or the wind.

Satsang can happen between you and a text, a close contemplation of any sacred and deeply resonant written or sounded work. Satsang can also take place inside of yourself ... talking to and from your Self (Ātman) in the state of Sādhanā, in the spirit of Satsang, bringing your singular self into attention and focus, guiding your singular self towards higher and more refined thoughts and actions.

As an intentional environment favourable to the elevation of mind, a Satsang could be in the company of people, of holy people—saints, yogis, and sages; or could also be through attending spiritual discourse and classes, the reading of uplifting books, listening to certain kinds of elevating music, singing mantra and bhajan; walking or sitting peacefully in and with nature. Swami Amartyananda (2016), explains that in the initial stages of one’s journey, Satsang is indispensable. However, instead of always depending upon the external input, eventually we must be able to Satsang directly with “the Ātman, our true nature and our constant companion” (p. 14). An elevated proposition that leads us to consider the idea of the inner Guru as our primary teacher.

The key difference between Satsang and other circle gatherings, is that if the participants were to express emotionally or tell a traumatic event or story, the facilitator (the discerning other or your own discerning inner guru) will always bring the conversation and attention back to presence, back to the spiritual path and spiritual teachings. Which in this context, is the Yoga Sādhanā path of practice-based sSelf-inquiry; and, the Yoga Vedanta¹⁰⁷ (dual and nondual)

¹⁰⁷ Yoga Vedānta. Vedānta is understood as one of the six orthodox schools of Indian philosophy. Vedānta emerged from the Upaniṣads, the end chapters of the Vedas that teach Vedic philosophy through the form of Stories. The writings include the Brahma Sutras, the Bhāgavad Gītā and their commentaries by Sri Sankaracharya, the 8th century philosopher saint. Vedānta

teachings of how mind works, how suffering works, and how sSādhanā matters as a way to alleviate suffering, gain sSelf-knowledge and achieve liberation (Mokṣa). In Sound sSādhanā, attention will be directed towards Om, towards sound and especially sur (pitch) and swara (musical note), and towards an ever-deepening sSādhanā practice as the key to personal transformation. You will be guided towards cultivating direct experience through your own practice. Your own sound practice.

If a Sādhaka is particularly identified with trauma or grief, and cannot seem to make space within for new learning, the teacher will offer the Sādhaka a personal sādhanā for the transformation of grief. There needs to be action and movement, a way out of the static circular, a release from the continual up and down spiralling discourse on grief. Otherwise the vibration will sink very low and depression and dissatisfaction will result. Satsang is meant to be uplifting. To elevate the mind to higher thought and purpose.

Yogi 1: Yes, that is what makes it different from an Encounter group, or a Sadness Circle that I recently experienced where everyone spoke their grief but there was no facilitation to move or redirect the grief towards further inquiry or action. It was purely an expression of grief for the sake of grief. We were invited to commune in grief and to witness each other's grief and to sit deeply in the emotional experience of grief. For me, the element that was missing from the discourse, was consideration of a spiritual discipline—a spiritual practice.

teaches knowledge of the Self, Brahman, and Oneness, Wholeness. Yoga draws from the stories and teachings of Vedānta, particularly the stories of Krishna and Arjun in the Bhagavad Gītā.

Facilitator: What about spiritual purpose and spiritual direction along with spiritual discipline and practice? Many people today seem adrift from a purpose in the world and so cannot take purposeful action. And what about a discussion on spirituality, a discussion about our belief constructs, our ontologies, how we are in the world, and why we are the way we are, and see the way we see? Some people have yet to deeply consider how they know what they know and how they are in the world. Perhaps the fear of change and the resistance to self-inquiry are the forces preventing movement.

In this Satsang, we all come with unique backgrounds. We were born in different places of the world and influenced by different religions and cultural practices. We also practice Yoga through multiple pathways. Some of you are Bhaktas (Devotional practitioners) and some Jnanis (Knowledge practitioners, teachers and scholars). Almost all of us are practicing Yogis. We are all so different and yet, we are all here together within a Yogic formation (Satsang)¹⁰⁸ that is being facilitated in a Yogic way (sādhanā as process) towards Yoga—union.

As individuals in a group process, we are yoking ourselves to something greater¹⁰⁹ than ourselves as individuals. In this way, Satsang as group process can be understood as yYoga (as process, as path, and as union). Here we have the

¹⁰⁸ A Satsang is a living phenomenon and is contextual in time and place. The Satsang is a dynamic phenomenon that will change depending upon participants needs, teaching and themes. The Satsang is not a static entity and thus, writing a Satsang is counter to the nature of a Satsang. Each Satsang is unique yet we are all seekers of truth and meaning.

¹⁰⁹ “In this larger sense, yoga can be understood to be any process by which one learns to “yoke” oneself to something larger and transcendent beyond the solitary individual. A group can serve as one such thing to which one can be yoked, paradoxically, in order to achieve liberation (Rybak & Deuskar, 2004, p. 193).

opportunity to be liberated from the idea of being a singular person alone on their life path, or in this case, on their spiritual path. We are together to uplift, support and further ourselves and each other. Not to dwell in worldly hardship, but to remind each other to focus and actively engage in our individual daily sādhanās. Meaning, we are all different, all embodied, all challenged in the world and yet, we are united in Sādhanā and here to remind ourselves and each other to remain in Sādhanā no matter how difficult life can sometimes be.

Yogi 5: I don't intentionally bring my troubles to group Satsang, though I do come seeking answers and upliftment. I know I will find answers during Satsang once I sit and listen for a while or as soon as we begin to sing together. I gain altitude from my concerns and eventually come to understand my challenges as personal work I have yet to do. In Satsang I experience my true path. I can be present as a spiritual seeker and practitioner without apology—without the need to hide my true purpose in case I offend someone with my 'spirituality'. Satsang clears and focuses, affirms and uplifts, and most definitely energizes my practice.

Facilitator: Within this research, Satsang is the opportunity to share the experiences and results of personal sSādhanā with a group of other Sādhakas who are also working within a personal sSādhanā. As this research is Sound sSādhanā, each Yogi Sādhaka brings the stories of their experiences in their daily sound practice, and shares whatever creations might be wrought through their spiritual inquiry in sound and reflective practices.

Yogi 1: I am enjoying the periodic gathering of Sādhakas, as an opportunity to share how the sSādhanā process is going for me and to hear others speak about

their process. I feel both empathy and also new insights from others that I consider as I continue my own sSādhanā.

Facilitator: I have read about the old Holy women¹¹⁰ travelling and giving Satsang in Rajasthan, India. They are Bhaktas—devotional practitioners and lovers of God who travel from village to village gathering the village women into Satsang to share songs and stories of the Divine. There, “Satsang becomes a bhakti context for the construction of community, a celebration of meeting others with love” (DeNapoli, 2013, p. 106). Women gather together and share the stories of their lives, and the Holy women make these stories into divine teachings, bringing happiness, bliss and spiritual purpose to the daily lives of ordinary people.

The teachers are elder women who have seen a lot of the world and have heard many stories from many women. They see the common threads that link us all, life, illness, suffering, death, birth, joy, and celebration, the fullness of humanity itself. Their Sādhanā is to bring Satsang to village life as a way of “remembering and loving God together and in doing that, loving one another as individual manifestations of God,” for as Bhaktas they sincerely believe that “To love others is to love God; to love God is to meet God” (106).

The Bhakta women listen into the sufferings and the joys of each village woman and then weave each story into a teaching and into song, lifting it up as an offering to God. Everyone is enriched and enlightened by the experience. The work of the women saints is a weaving, a crafting. A loving and care-full

¹¹⁰ DeNapoli, A. E. (2013). Vernacular Hinduism in Rajasthan. *Contemporary Hinduism*, 97-113.

crafting. The stories, the lives, the songs, and the spiritual teachings are their materials. For these special women, there is no retreat from the world. There does seem to be the understanding that every part of life can be transformed and wrought with spiritual purpose. Their own purpose, their own Sādhanā as spiritual practice, is the calling of Satsang and the spiritual work that happens within.

Yogi 2: I am experiencing what Cynthia Bourgeault¹¹¹ calls an inclusivity of beautiful souls. It is so great to hear everyone's stories. It gives me more inspiration for commitment to the Sādhanā process. Group Satsang makes the journey shared. A burden shared is a burden halved.

Yogi 6: When I hear or read another's story that reveals something personal on their journey, something that I can also relate to, I am inspired in my own writing and encouraged by their revelation.

Yogi 2: I feel a deep connection to what other people are doing in their Sādhanā. Connection is the important part of the experience for me, as it feels like we are doing something really purposeful and helpful ... Uplifting ... Inspiring.

Yogi 3: I am so happy to be here just to have this time to drop into peace. Inside the group I can go instantly into meditation. That is when I realize that I am so tired. Underneath all my busyness and rushing about, all my plans and all my experiences with spiritual practices and gurus and yoga, I am really tired. I just want to be still and peaceful. This Satsang comes at a perfect time in my life.

¹¹¹ Cynthia Bourgeault (2006) Christian contemplative, author, musicologist, chanter of psalms.

Yogi 1: I think the purpose of Satsang is to become aware of your own story, the continuous pulling from all the threads of past experience and events, and to bring yourself to let go of all the threads and stories. Because it does not matter. The only thing that does matter is full perception in the moment of self and beyond self in the moment.

Facilitator: Maybe all the threads and stories matter and it's just that we need perspective from overwhelm, from entanglement and identification. For are we not also pulling the threads of experience into the moment to make sense of the present teaching? As a reference point? Perhaps it is not the story but the attachment and identification with the suffering the story brings that is pulling ... narrowing the possibilities for growth, evolution, and transformation. Perhaps elevation from overwhelm and suffering is what is sought through the telling of the stories?

Yogi 1: The Facilitator's job is to pull people back from the abyss of mind to a centered awareness of themselves in the present no matter where the conversation goes.

Facilitator: To invite people to listen deeply beyond their own story? Yes, the facilitator's work is to remind the Sādhakas to stay mindful, to remain present with what is here with us right now, to listen to what is being said and to how it is being spoken. I invite everyone to watch what rides upon their tongue. I invite a beginner's mind, but I know that is not a simple ask, or an easy task, because we are not empty. We all came from somewhere. We enter the room with all that

came before. We are constellations of matrices¹¹², networks of conditioned responses informed by our experiences. We view the world through our beliefs and weave our limited vision into stories. Who are we if not our life stories? To say we are more than our story is to initiate sSelf-inquiry. That too is the work of the facilitator ... Om Praṇām

Om as call to and practice of presence

Sādhakas, from here onwards the sound and the sounding of Om shall be our call to presence. Remember, Ātman (Self) is always present. Yoga (Wholeness) is always present. The Sādhaka who is still working on refining the self is not always present (as in present tense). For our purpose, presence means embodying the fullness of all that you are in this present moment in time. Thus, courage and honesty will be required of you on your journey as Sādhakas. To facilitate presence you will need to centre yourself, to 'come to centre', which means to bring yourself home to yourself from wherever you have wandered, whether past or future, memory or fantasy or yet-to-be reality, and to locate your awareness within the fullness of your presence, here and now.

As we move forward and Satsang becomes our way of being in relationship with each other, we will use a sounded Om as the starting and the finishing place for our Satsang together. If and whenever the group discussion begins to stray from purpose, from topic of discussion, and from the room, I will

¹¹² Koestler (1964), meaning conditioned environments from which we perceive, places of embedded identity, locations that can be activated under certain conditions. Matrices plural, means that there are multiple conditioned spaces, much like worlds, realities in which we might dwell along a time line or accessed all at once in moments of timelessness for example, within the vertical viewing field of meditation.

sound the Om mantra to return us to presence, to centre, to attention to here and now. The sounding of Om will be an invitation to join me in sound and in presence.

O—————MMMmmmm

Listen closely into the ever-finer reverberations after the sounding ...

Bring yourself to this moment ... and to this moment ... to each moment one after the other and side by side ... passing by and in passing ...

Move your attention to your breath, and let your breath anchor your focus through each practice to come.

Practices (sādhanās)

In preparation for singing we will do three breath practices to bring your attention fully into the room and into your body so that you can focus your full intention on the mantra to come. In Sound sSādhanā, mastery of breath equates to mastery of mind, body, and vital energy for the support and production of the voice (Khan, 1960, p. 31). As a sound artist there is value in knowing the quality, strength, content, and parameters of your own breath. Viewed as revelatory sādhanās, breath practices are also awareness practices for cultivating access to various awareness states.

Our practice today begins in breath and awareness before moving into word and Mantra. We will begin with the Awareness Breath, a simple practice

that requires you to shift your attention away from the outer expression of you, to a process that is happening within you outside of your everyday awareness.

Awareness Breath

To begin ... Bring your awareness to the unconditioned breath presently moving through your body ...

Experience the breath that underlies and enables all your living processes and all your sounding ... Observe the exchange between breathing and seeing ... breathing and thinking ...breathing and listening ... breathing and being ...

Gently hold your awareness on the breath's journey for a continuum of five minutes or more ...

Exhalation Awareness Breath—Clear and Release

This next breath awareness practice is an intentional practice that both purifies the incoming breath and cleanses the body and mind in the outgoing breath. This breath is a *sāadhanā* on its own, and is also a preparatory *sāadhanā*¹¹³ for meditation, singing, chanting, and reflection in Sound *sSāadhanā*.

Let us begin.

Inhale deeply through your nose...purify your breath as you inhale...Exhale through your mouth ... release all tension, thought and emotion on a lightly sounded sigh

¹¹³ Preparation for Satsang, singing, chanting, learning, sacred work, sitting steady, meditation...purifying body and mind states so as to be receptive to knowledge transmission. To come prepared to class, to performance, or to a meeting rather than waiting to be led, guided, instructed or directed in your preparation, is to be self-regulating.

Exhale ... focus your exhalation through your lips in the shape of ooo... a long soundless breath like a steady stream of wind through a hole in a cave

Ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

Imagine yourself gathering all your faculties and energies together on one focused breath ... Ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

Keep your focus throughout inhalation and exhalation.

Now add sound to your breath and use your breath to support your sound.

Inhale...

Oo—————

Inhale...

Oh—————

Inhale...

Ā—————

Inhale...

E—————

Inhale...

Eee—————

Continue onwards to mastery of technique.

Over time as your sSādhanā evolves, you could adapt this breath and sound sādhanā to explore and develop vocal tone, dimension, texture, colour, and resonance as preparation for singing, chanting, and toning. Continue to seek, find and refine your pitch (sur). Combine your breath practices with sound and close listening. To evolve your sSādhanā further, consider your sound practice as an opportunity for sSelf-study and sSelf-attunement.

Now let's bring intention to your sound as it rides upon your breath. We will hold the intention for Peace as we sing the Peace Mantra. Your breath, heart, energy and intention in combination with the Sanskrit words will build a spiritual charge that you can direct to wherever Peace is needed.

Peace Mantra and Four Levels of Sounding

Adding awareness to breath, and breath awareness to Mantra repetition, will strengthen your intention and empower the Mantra. Spiritually charged in group chanting, intentional Mantra becomes a powerful creative force in the world. In a Satsang of one (you and Self), you can charge the Mantra with your spirit, and your breath awareness, presence, and intention. Before you sound, access Peace within yourself first so that you can chant the Mantra from the place of experiencing Peace. Set your intention to share this fullness with all the beings of the world including yourself.

Come to stillness ... move to the peace within you underlying all thought

Deep breath...

O—————MMMMMMMMMMMMMM

LÖH KAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH SAMASTHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH

SUUUUKHEEEEEENO—————

BHA VAN TUUUUUUUUUU

LÖH KAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH SAMASTHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH

SUUUUKHEEEEEENO—————

BHA VAN TUUUUUUUUUU

LÖH KAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH SAMASTHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH

SUUUUKHEEEEEENO—————

BHA VAN TUUUUUUUUUU

O—————MMMMMMMMMMMMMM

SHAAAAAAAAAANTI

SHAAAAAAAAAANTI SHAAAAAAAAAANTIHEE

Explore inwardly and outwardly the paradox of individuality and unity,
singularity and interconnection with others, other selves, other beings, all beings.
Bring your intention through your heart as you sound and offer your prayer ...

May All Beings in All Worlds and Dimensions Be Happy.

Let your sound and your prayer be an offering.

To evolve your sādhanā and bring awareness to multidimensional sound play,
you can explore the subtlety of these 4 levels of sound:

Chant the mantra 3x with full voice—the sounded voice

Chant the mantra 3x in a whisper—the intimate breath voice

Chant the mantra 3x with your mind, continually recollecting and envisioning
each word upon your heart.

Listen into the reverberation of Peace beyond the produced sound, word,
intention

Repeat as many times as you need. Reflect. Notate. Journal.

All of the above breath and sound practices are part of our Sound sSādhanā
Palette, and can be added to your sSādhanā research.

Let's finish today's Satsang with three Oms

Deep long breath ...

O—————MMMmmmm

Breathe deep and steady...

O—————MMMmmmm

Breathe deeply...

O—————MMMmmmm

Breathe into Silence for 3 minutes.....

Praṇām

To complete your sādhanā...place your hands in prayer mudra for the closing gratitude practice...

Praṇām to the teachers and gurus, including your inner Guru and all beings who have influenced your presence today—human and non-human, present and not present, living and no longer living.

Praṇām to the Tānpūra—the vibrational tonal ground and support during your voice sādhanā.

Praṇām to the sādhanās—the multitude of practices for cultivating sSelf, sSwara, Art and Artist.

Praṇām to the Sādhakas—those who accompany, support, and reflect the sSādhanā journey.

Pranam to sSelf—to the Wholeness of you, your presence, and your journey of awakening

OM Śānti Śānti Śāntiḥ OM



Sound sādhanā is practice-based spiritual inquiry through voice and wisdom
cultivation
by way of oral/aural transmission.

Satsang~ Oral Tradition and Knowledge Transmission

Om Praṇām Yogis

With hands in prayer mudra I welcome you, the wholeness of you, into presence and into Satsang. Take a moment to arrive to here and now. Come to stillness.

Close your eyes ... follow your breath inwards ... and scan your physical, emotional, mental, and energetic body from within. Notice how you are in this moment in mind body heart. Inhale deeply ... and exhale, removing all that is in the way of you being fully present, receptive, and connected. Breathe in a willingness to explore and venture forth into practice and discovery with all your heart and soul ... and exhale ... blowing away all doubt, cynicism, resistance ... Inhale ... clear a path inward. Make yourself spacious ... receptive to life and mystery, to new ideas and perspectives ... Prepare to dive deep into OM, into the very substance of the universe As you tone, imagine the vibration of OM creating, sustaining, dissolving and re-creating you again and again, wave after wave of vibration eternal ...

Breathe and ...

O—————MMMmmmm

Breathe ...

O—————MMMmmmm

Breathe ...

O—————MMMmmmm

Silence

Listen into Omkar's reverberation ... sense the communion of group sounding ...

Allow yourself to be still and spacious ... clear ... aware ... and curious

Open your eyes and come into the room ...

Om and Welcome to this Satsang on Oral Tradition and Knowledge

Transmission

The story of Sound Sādhanā that I am sharing here was passed to me by a master artist in a traditional guru disciple relationship based in respect, commitment, and devotion to experiential knowledge, oral teaching, and sacred sound practice. As the student, I felt a deep respect for the artistic mastery of the teacher and the quality of teachings imparted. I made a commitment to practice the trainings that were given to me, and connected with devotion to the spiritual and artistic lineage flowing through the teacher to me. Though invisible to the eye, such interpersonal forces and energies exist between teacher and student during the transmission of oral teachings.

To receive the teachings through transmission required a deep receptivity on my part. I was not sitting before the guru simply to observe, to be entertained, or to gather tools to perform. I was seeking transformation through sound. More specifically, I sought training in sacred sound practice so that I could affect transformation in myself through my own sacred sound practice.

Since this one event, I have practiced the teachings for many years and am now passing the knowledge onto you. In this way, I share from a place of experience. I offer this story that is both a personal anecdote and the way of knowledge transmission in the Sound Sādhanā tradition. Without personal experience, I could only tell you of another's experience, of which crucial elements would be missing. Even so, I can give you the teachings and my experience of them, but ultimately it will be up to you to have your own experience and to make the practice your own.

My story begins at the feet of a Dhruvad master.

I waited silently and watched as he prepared himself and his Tānpūra for the dual task of sounding my initiation. He lifted the Tānpūra and placed the hollow gourd base into the cradle of his lap, leaning its long wooden neck close to his own. Wrapping one arm around the instrument's body to secure its upright position, the master pointed his other hand skywards, placed his thumb gently but firmly against the shaft's outer wood, and laid his fingers across the heavy loose strings. With one long exhalation, his fingers began to undulate in a steady mesmerizing rhythm. 1 2 34—1 2 34—1 2 34... each string sounding a myriad of sonic sub harmonics and shimmering microtones, creating nuanced frequencies unfamiliar to my ear and mind. All I heard was the swirl of formlessness, the sound of continuous becoming, a sonic weave of echoes and resonance with no beginning, middle, or end¹¹⁴. The master's fingers continued

¹¹⁴ (Menon, 1998). In almost every one of Raghava R. Menon's books on Indian Classical Music, there is a chapter on the Tānpūra in which he describes in the most poetical and lyrical of terms the experience of being with the acoustic Tanpura. The shape of the actual Tānpūra instrument is very much the shape of a person. The instrument has a body and a long neck, and the more it

without pause. It was as if this act alone was my lesson for the day—the conscious and participatory act of simultaneous creation and immersion with the sonic ground of being—the vibrational matrix.

As a spiritual musician, the play of the Tānpūra equated to maintaining the constancy and quality of the fundamental sound substance that all else was to become one with or be held in relation with. I was being offered a demonstration of how one can be so exquisitely awake in their practice, that the playing and maintaining of the acoustic drone is an extension of the realized self, and not an unconscious gesture. What I experienced, was an expansive awareness in action, moving through differing mediums simultaneously, attending to all forms as one...singing and playing while the hand and fingers continued creating a ground of constancy and sound.

The Dhruvad master’s presence and playing enveloped me in a cocoon of timelessness and vital sensitivity. Listening...Waiting.

I was entranced. Open to this wonderful opportunity. To learn the art of singing from an actual Dhruvad Master.

The master began to sound—

NAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

sounds, the warmer its tone and deeper its resonance. Over time a relationship between Tānpūra and singer grows into “something indefinable...something more of the spirit than of the earth” (Menon, 1976, p. 46)

One long beautiful rich baritone basso tone so sonorous that it vibrated the air about him, reverberating through and beyond his physical person through me to fill the room.

His voice rode smoothly upon his breath. His body filled his voice.

His demeanor calm, steady, grounded.

AAA ...

Behind his eyelids his eyes searched, seeking alignment with pitch and tone, seeking the elusive perfection of sSwara. He began to slowly maneuver his voice away from the tonic and down into the lower octave. My ears, mind and heart followed.

Listening closer and ever closer.

His voice winding and spiraling

Lower and ever lower.

I could no longer keep my eyes from closing as I rode alongside his every breath

Immersing myself in his descending tone,

breathless,

falling into beauty

fainting into ecstasy

AAA ...

I held on with my attention as long as I could until I felt my self no longer sitting on the floor in lotus before the guru.

I was no longer an “I”.

The “I” had surrendered to the deepest vibration to become realized within sound and sensation.

The “I” dissolved into bliss.

Finally, he stopped singing, opened his eyes and looked at me.

“Now it’s your turn” he said, while continuing to strum the Tānpūra.

“Oh” I replied, as if waking up to the reality of what I was being asked to do.

To create a particular quality of sounded tone so profound, full, and steady, with a voice connected to and through the body to the Earth and the Cosmos.

This was a task far beyond singing as I had known it.

I heard in the teacher the true potential of voice and sound. I heard the original voice of Being. Uncluttered. Unmasked. Real. True. I longed for immersion.

And I longed for the knowledge found and expressed through the practiced self.

I took a deep breath and began to sound.

aa

I searched for the same ground, attempting to fill out my voice so as to reflect his strength and resonance in my light lyrical tone. I closed my eyes to reach for

courage, for a source of power and support. I found doubt, fear, hesitation, vulnerability and anxiety.

I breathed then sounded, forcing myself to sing my courage.

aa

After all my years of vocal training and performing experience, I recognized that I was once again at the beginning. Each new tone was a beginning. Each new breath brought me back to the beginning. As a theatre performer and singer in the Cirque du Soleil, I performed the same show twice a day, six days a week for years. I sang the same songs thousands of times. Yet no two performances were alike. Every time I sang, even though the songs were the same, I was not. So much about the context and environment had changed. Each new performance then, was a new beginning and opportunity to present myself anew. Now, within the foundational practices of Shadaj, Dhrupad Kharaj, and Swara Sādhanā, I recognize a continual renewal of opportunity to consciously participate in the beginningless cycle of my becoming.

The master¹¹⁵ listened into my voice, and said to me, “I will give you a set of practices, a way to develop your voice. These are the same practices that my teacher gave to me and the same practices that I do every day. If you do these practices every day from now on, you will be as I am now, though I will always be at least ten years ahead of you in terms of practice.” And there it was, a

¹¹⁵ Pandit Uday Bhawalkar is a Dhrupad master of the Dagar lineage, the oldest of the ancient families of Dhrupad which is the oldest of the Classical Indian music forms. I had the good fortune to study privately with him while he was a visiting scholar at University of Washington, USA.

prescription to a great voice. All I had to do was to practice every day for ten years and I would have what I so desired.

Understanding Oral/Aural Culture of Sādhanā through Sound

My experience of learning within the oral tradition of voice cultivation and singing practices of Indian Classical Music, Sampurna Yoga, and Nāda Yoga, informs my research process, and my way of teaching, facilitating and mentoring. Oral/aural culture is the container that holds all the parts of Sound sSādhanā: Nāda Yoga—listening, inner vigilance, and sound meditation, sSelf-study (Svādhyāya) and sSelf-inquiry (Ātma-Vichara), and Indian music foundational voice cultivation practices.

The teachers of sound sādhanās are living archives of an oral wisdom lineage, who pass knowledge through singing, devotional teachings, and through their presence. They are each unique expressions and translations of a culture, a philosophical worldview, spiritual belief and practice, and personal life experience. In spiritual Sādhanā, we find our teacher by following resonance, tuning into a particular quality in a voice and aligning with a particular path or approach to sound. To explain how this Sound sSādhanā vision came to be, I will need to pull multiple threads of influence that together form the inspiration for this research study. What follows is a literary attempt at describing the complexity, depth, and spiritual intimacy that permeates sSādhanā through Sound.

Oral Tradition and Sonic Transmission

Documenting what is an Oral tradition and way of teaching and learning is a difficult task. I can type the words and share the transcripts of conversations or teaching sessions, but much of the actual experience of listening, sharing, and personal transformation, becomes lost in the translation. One of my first Indian voice culture teachers explained that, the written word is only the bare bones. It is not the composition and certainly not the elements or the music. You need the teacher, to teach you technique, form, and character; you need the guru, to inspire, ignite, and deepen your Sādhanā towards mastery, and; in your practice, you must allow Divine Grace to flow through the composition as Nāda. (Sagar, singing class, 2004).

In the oral tradition of the singing lesson, particularly in a Nāda Yoga and Indian voice culture class, the teacher or guru is practiced in the art and knowledge the student desires to know. Thus, knowledge and experience emanates from the teacher/guru's presence, filling the space and whomever is sitting within it with Swara. The quality and intensity of emanation is dependent upon the quality and intensity of the teacher/Guru's own sSādhanā. When the student is ready, the quality of presence of a practiced and knowledge-filled teacher/guru, ignites the student's longing to know. Presence meets receptivity and the receptive one is transformed in the meeting.

The quality of energy and spiritual transmission between teacher/Guru and student depends upon the depth and strength of the teacher's personal sSādhanā and the receptivity of the student. When the teacher is a living

embodiment of the teachings, wisdom gleaned through praxis is alive in the process of teaching. The student receives and embodies the energy, experience, personal transformation and knowledge of the teacher. By participating in the living practice of the teacher, the student expands their own life-world and creates for themselves new ways of experiencing and acting. In part a mimetic process, which, “is at the center of many processes of education, self-education, and human development (Wulf, 2017, p. 7-8), ritual knowledge is passed through oral transmission, facilitating both continuity and change, as well as experiences of transition and transcendence (p. 7). Thereon, the development of the student depends upon the depth of their personal sSādhanā, and their commitment to practice inspired by the quality and mentoring of the teacher /Guru.

Before going further, there are important and noted differences between teacher and or Guru, as the two roles or ways of being present with the student. Within the territory of the spiritual musician, the teacher is one who teaches and guides the intellect and heart, giving form, structure, knowledge and encouragement. The teacher teaches students. The Guru calls forth spiritual aspirants, and seekers. The Guru guides from self-realization with speech arising from awareness of soul, and is considered the living embodiment of realized spiritual truths. The Guru¹¹⁶ is a vehicle, whose body, speech, mind, and

¹¹⁶ As my own teacher /outer guru expressed to me years ago, if the guru expresses in a way unbecoming to a guru, then he/she is no longer a guru. To know this, is a quality of discernment the sādhanaka needs to cultivate. The prayer between teacher and student proclaims mutual protection and nourishment from the relationship, saying, “let there be no animosity amongst us”. A Sādhanaka needs to know the meaning of their prayers and mantras, to know what sits upon their tongue, to know that knowing is an awakening process, and to take part in the refinement of their own discernment.

spirituality is used to guide the seeker/ aspirant to realization of immortality (Yogananda).

In my experience, the teacher and the Guru can reside together in one person—the eternal Guru (as spiritual knowing) can flow through the teacher, and be glimpsed in moments of immersive receptivity. Important to note however is that the search for transcendence or the perfect swara does not belong to the Guru or the teacher. The search is yours. Only you can see through *your* eyes, feel through *your* heart, and hear through *your* ears, the truth within *your own* sound.

I am inspired by the writings on Swara development by Menon (1976) wherein he notes that the training for the elusive Swara is possible only through a personal search. The student must search within to know that Swara exists. The teacher can only guide the way. The Guru who has cultivated their own Swara can inspire and ignite the student. But no one can give you your own Swara. For Swara is already here. Swara only needs to be realized—uncovered and cultivated.

In the area of spiritual musicianship and yoga, the written teachings of the Bhagavad Gītā¹¹⁷, Mahābhārata, Rāmāyaṇa, Upaniṣads, Purāṇas, and Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali, are brought to life through the refined character and artistry of the

¹¹⁷ The Bhagavad Gita “has been translated into every major language and perhaps a hundred times into English alone; commentaries on it are said to be more numerous than on any other scripture. Like the Sermon on the Mount, it has an immediacy that sweeps away time, place, and circumstance. Addressed to everyone, of whatever background or status, the Gita distills the loftiest truths of India’s ancient wisdom into simple memorable poetry that haunts the mind and informs the affairs of everyday life” (Eknath Easwaran, 1985, 2007, p. 2)

teacher/guru—as one who lives and sings their sSāadhanā. Sacred knowledge is passed to the student (Sādhaka, Aspirant) in Satsang (spiritual gathering for devotional purpose), through performance and teaching of Raga (melodic composition), Bhajan (devotional song), Mantra (sacred word formulas), myths and story, and through discourse on the lessons of these forms.

Through the telling, the embodied wisdom (experiential knowing), devotional attitude (reverence for the sacred), and expressive capacity (quality of musicianship) of the teacher/guru, illuminates the sūtra, story and song, bringing ancient wisdom of the historical and cultural past into the student's life context and particular constellation in time. The ancient melodies and stories, and wisdom crystallized within each composition, are made relevant to the present, to Now—to “here” where “life is happening now. And now. And now” (Mehrotra, 2019, p. 48). In this way, the written word is released from the page to live in a timeless present—an engagement in paradox—passing knowledge relevant to the present time (context) while rendering present time¹¹⁸ (temporal) irrelevant.

Sound sSāadhanā is a practice-based spiritual inquiry and wisdom cultivation process passed on from teacher to student by way of oral/aural

¹¹⁸ In Yogic terms there is no time, so there is no beginning, or middle, or end. Time is a great Paradox. For the Yogi, Lord Shiva was the first master of yYoga. Shiva is also known as the Lord of Time, as Kālātman—the timeless eternal one, and as Mahākāla—great time, beyond all time. Knowing this, “the history of Yoga fundamentally starts from a timeless domain. ... when we speak about the history of Yoga, it's only a history on one level, a linear history for the sake of intellectual understanding. For practitioners of Yoga, there is no history of Yoga. There is only Yoga” (Riffing on Mehrotra, 2019, p. 37, and Chapter 8 &9 of the Shiva Purana). In Sound sSāadhanā, the Sādhaka glimpses the domain of Mahākāla, and practices balancing between time and timelessness—the temporal where nature and embodiment function in process, and the eternal true nature of Ātman, where bliss resides.

transmission. Sound sādhanā is a process rooted in experiential practice and inquiry¹¹⁹. The sounds and songs, wisdom teachings, stories, and ways of practice, are taught through sitting with the teacher, or the Guru¹²⁰, the practiced one, the one who carries forth the music lineage that started long before the written word. The teacher sounds and the student listens, then the student sounds in response and the teacher listens then responds.

Oral transmission of voice and singing involves the teacher and student in a circle of sounding and listening, learning and sounding, listening and teaching. The wisdom teachings, composition and techniques, and the personal practice of teachers and gurus past, live on in the connection between teacher/Guru and student. Each Guru is a student of another Guru, and remains connected to the knowledge passed from their own Guru even if that Guru is no longer living. The wisdom teachings are practiced, assimilated, and passed on to the student for practice, assimilation, and teaching. The circle of connection between student and Guru/teacher, is a special reciprocal relationship wherein one role assists the other in continual cultivation of their potential.

¹¹⁹ Thus, practice-based inquiry.

¹²⁰ Guru~ Sanskrit: *Gu* means “ignorance”, and *ru*, “dispeller”. The Guru is a dispeller of ignorance” (Mlecko, 1982, p. 33). In Yoga and in spiritual music culture, the Guru is more than a teacher. The Guru is a spiritual teacher, “one who has studied the Vedas and who has direct knowledge of the Ātman through Anubhava— [first-person] experience” (Sivananda, 2003, p.151). A Guru is a “being who has raised [herself] from this to That”, and thus, has free and unhampered access to both the realms” (p. 150). The Guru manifests the teachings in a personal form and links the student to the Divine-within through initiation and spiritual guidance. “The Guru is a help” explains Swami Sivananda, “but the actual task of practical sādhanā falls on the aspirant himself” (p. 152). Further writings on Guru can be found throughout this thesis.

In the oral music tradition, the student is not solely a receiver of tradition, rather,

they play an essential and active part in their teacher's recall of the tradition. ...The student stimulates the teacher's memory through the activity of structured instruction and through the evaluative process of listening to the student's response. (Alter, 1997, pp. 82-83)

As oral music traditions rely on repetition as a method of memorization, "what is repeated copiously by the teacher during instruction is repeated endlessly by the student during practice" (p. 82). Repetition is key for learning and yet no utterance is the same as the one before. Once the student becomes aware of the opportunity presented in each repetition, their *sāadhanā* becomes a mindful and thus intentional practice of engaged shaping and learning.

In the context of Indian voice cultivation practice, repetition¹²¹ has as much to do with the purification and perfection of the *sSwara*—both note quality and artist qualities—as to the passing of lineage tradition in the form of ornament, approach, and application. The teacher passes to the student, and the student reproduces and practices the teachings as they were demonstrated and experienced. Teachings include the nuances of *Gamak*, the ornamental embellishments such as variations of pitch and oscillation of tone that are not merely ornamental but are often filled with *Rasa* and *Chalan* particular to

¹²¹ I have read several ethnomusicologists who view repetition in practice as redundancy. As a practicing musician, I do not share their view. I see opportunity in every breath and in every line to begin anew, and to refine one's voice. For the outside observer, vocalise repetition might sound redundant; however, if repetition is a focused and mindful event, say, an **active vocal meditation**, the astute observer would sense phenomena (occurrences) **beyond redundancy**. Additionally, if the observer were to observe from within their own personal active practice involving repetition, they would quickly realize that **no two breaths or vocal tones are the same**, no matter how often one tries to repeat the same line, *swara*, *alankar*, or exercise.

specific lineage. Rasa is the emotional essence or flavour held within the specific composition, also understood as the emotional feeling that the composition intends to convey through its combination of elements. Chalan, is the character of a work, the skillful disclosure of the basic grammar of a composition involving “the treatment and melodic content of each tone” (Bor, 1999, p. 2) within a melodic outline, which in itself is a composition and carrier of lineage tradition. The Chalan demonstrates the character and signature motifs of a composition or raga through a composed melodic synopsis in which the qualities and features that distinguish the raga or composition from all others are expressed.

The tradition of a musical lineage differs from family to family (Gharānā)¹²² and dates hundreds of years, passing the Gharānā’s traditional traits from teacher to student. In Indian music voice cultivation practices, each lineage tradition has its own unique signature ragas (melodic structures and composition), stylistic approach to voice and presentation, distinctive ornamentation, and developed musical ideology. A close study of a musical Gharānā (tradition), reveals “the product of a master; his creative thoughts, his perceptions, his aesthetic thinking, his nature and even his limitations”. Further study of the musical Gharānā (tradition), will reveal the voice culture within, for above all, “the voice culture maintains the highest importance in any gharana” (Gundecha, 2018, pp. 1-2).

¹²² Gharana~ in the 21st century, global culture, immigration, and subsequent changes to the Guru/Shishya parampara (paradigm, way of teaching from Guru to Disciple in close living environment), the emphasis on specific Gharana tradition is being lost. At one time, transmission of musical knowledge was tightly controlled, although to some degree teachings shared between Guru and student remain personal and secret, “a significant number fine musicians today learn from numerous sources... utilizing that diverse knowledge in the cultivation of their own styles” (Wade, 1997, p. 273).

Passing on the tradition in the form of musical characteristics and approach to practice and performance is part of the flow of an oral culture. The first impulse of the student may be to imitate¹²³ the teacher/guru; however, the uniqueness of each individual's voice and [thus] person, eventually transforms and personalizes the elements received. Thus, utilizing the nuances of the gharānā and growing their own natural traits of voice becomes the true representation of the tradition (Gundecha, 2016, pp.1-2). In this way, the Gharānā lineage tradition need not be not a fixed entity, rather it can be a mobile frame through which flows a stream of creative thought. The work of the teacher/guru and student, is to cultivate this beautiful practice of sharing and creating¹²⁴.

Vocal Culture of Khyāl and Dhrupad

North Indian Khyāl or *Khayāl*¹²⁵ is “a predominant vocal genre in the improvisatory system of North Indian music... in which flexibility and latitude for creative imagination are a prime element” (Wade, 1997, p. 2). As such, the Khyāl genre “allows its performers the greatest opportunity and also the greatest challenge to display the depth and breadth of their musical knowledge and skill”

¹²³ The process of learning in the early stages is a process of copying the teacher, note by note, phrase by phrase, until a composition or exercise is known. The teacher aids the process of ebullition, but the crucial issue is the temperature of the flame and the continuity and unremitting application of the heat (*Tapasyā*) that brings the liquid to boil. This has nothing to do with the teacher and everything to do with the student. (Menon, 1976, p. 51). *Tapasyā*-discipline: “the means through which we purify and transform” (Kraftsow, 2002, 21)

¹²⁴ I emphasize the opportunity for creativity with and within form and structure. The form offers both constraints and allowances ... flexibility and room for individuality if the student were to take up the challenge.

¹²⁵ Khyāl (Khayāl)-the classical singing of North India. Khayāl is an Arabic/ Persian word meaning “imagination”. It is thought to have developed out of Dhrupad and is a freer and more flexible form than Dhrupad, providing great scope for improvisation. Traditionally, in raga application, Khyāl is modal, with a single melodic line and no harmonic parts, thus emphasis on the primary singer's skill in translation.

(p. 11). Khyāl practice is not a study of repertoire, rather it is a study of the manner in which the artist utilizes the musical materials and characteristics, making choices with the tradition, how they summon their own creativity, and create a unique Khyāl at each performance (p. 11).

The Mewati Gharānā, from where I draw some of the foundational practices for my Sound sSādhanā palette, utilises the creative and improvisatory nature of Khyāl while placing emphasis on Bhajans (devotional songs), the quality of one's sSwara, and the practice, presentation and utilization of Sargam (Sa, Re, Ga, etc.) through *Alaṅkāra* (ornamental embellishment created from Sargam). However, first and foremost is a strong foundation in voice culture beginning with Shadaj—Sa, and Sargam (Sa re Ga...) in Sur (pitch). For “there is no point in a huge repertoire if one cannot sing one's sargam in sur (pitch)” (Prasad, personal communication). Thus, for all the possible compositional complexity and exploration of imagination through sound, one true honest well-pitched swara (note) is both the starting place and the goal.

Now this is where my own understanding, my practice, and my teaching add to the lineage that I am part of. From my experience in seeking the sacred through ornament, tone, colour, texture, sur, and raga, finding and securing the one true and honest note is a personal sSādhanā belonging to the student and not to the teacher or guru. When the student works with their sādhanā independent of the outer teacher/guru, they can begin to develop their own inner Guru.

The outer teachers and gurus awaken the inner Guru, igniting the inner flame for practice, and activating the inner spark of awareness. The outer gurus

plant the seeds of knowledge. The student's work is to continue to awaken and develop the voice of the inner Guru—to cultivate the seeds planted by the outer guru through practice and self-regulation. Now we are speaking about voice as a path of sSelf development and sSelf-access. The outer teacher / guru is secondary to the inner teacher Guru who discerns what is true and necessary for you on your path and in your own context. Which means that your inner teacher, your inner Guru, is your primary teacher and guide who is activated by the right combination of outer elements.

The work of sādhanā in sound is to listen to each successive breath and tone; reflect on its quality in the process of sounding; and make necessary corrections of support and pitch, tone and quality, ensuring unhindered development of technique. The inner teacher Self can see what needs to be done and can activate the sounder self towards the goal of refinement. The inner Guru (as a combination of Self, Witness, and discerning intellect), recognizes the energetic forces of both potential and obstruction, and calls attention to clarity over deception so that the sounder (student) can continually reset their path towards the goal of one true note and towards Yoga.

The development of the inner Guru and teacher comes through listening (aural) to the inner voice of knowing (oral teaching), that has been cultivated through a combination of direct experience in practice and Satsang with outer Saints, Sages, Gurus, Yogis, Sacred Texts and their commentaries. Foundational to the development of “one true and honest note” are the voice practices of Dhruvad Kharaj and Shadaj sSādhanā.

Strengthening the Foundation

When I was initiated into Kharaj *sSādhanā*, I was sitting on the floor at the feet of a Dhrupad master. He sang and I listened, and then I repeated back to him what I had heard. He listened to me and then sang again, giving me the opportunity to hear the lesson again, offering guidance through his example. I learned from the beauty and fullness of his vocal tone, the length of his breath, his attention to pitch, and from the deeply committed *sSādhanā* emanating from his presence. I had not read about the practice in a book or heard the sounds in a recording or a performance... especially not in performance.

The Kharaj practice is an early morning personal voice cultivation and sound meditation practice (*sSādhanā*¹²⁶) undertaken before sunrise at the beginning of each day. Kharaj is a foundational *sSādhanā* from the Dhrupad tradition, India's oldest classical music form. With roots in Nāda Yoga, Dhrupad is considered meditation in the form of sound. With roots in the Sama Veda, Dhrupad is considered sacred music. Dhrupad engages the Nāda yoga practices of deep listening, conscious absorption and attunement within the multiple dimensions of sound. The long-sustained sounded note favoured by Dhrupad is grounded in *Prānāyāma* (breath science of yoga) and is engaged for the purpose of mastery over ones vital energy and bodily system, including and especially

¹²⁶ I use both 's' and 'S', and sometimes 's' to reflect the depth of engagement. Here, the small 's' is the specific *sādhanā* practice. Large 'S' includes inquiry, reflection, and life transformation. The italicized 's', denotes movement from small individual practice into the greater scheme. In this sense, a small *sādhanā* practice can be *yYoga* the path and process. The one note practice is an example of a *sādhanā* becoming *Sādhanā*. Kharaj practice involves inner examination of swara (note) and voice through vocal exercises that ground, steady, and strengthen the musician, heart, mind, and soul. The voice is refined, artistry cultivated, and artist transformed. *sSādhanā* denotes the transformative movement of the single *sādhanā* practice into *Sādhanā* life Praxis.

the mind, towards the state of Yoga—full absorption. The combination of technique and sound in the Dhrupad Kharaj potentially leads the singer into absorption and higher levels of consciousness (Gundecha, 2018).¹²⁷ Thus, not a performance, but rather, a personal practice and path of sSelf cultivation and realization.

As a spiritual practice, “Dhrupad is about going deep into the essence of everything, including oneself. You can see yourself in Dhrupad” (Gundecha, 2018). To sing the Dhrupad form, you must have awareness of your sound production at all times. Indeed,

Awareness is the key to singing Dhrupad ... mind and body have to be harnessed through yoga techniques to be still and focused. You have to contemplate and find the answers to the questions : How do you recognize the perfect swara when it stands before you? How do you merge your voice into it? ...analyze what you hear and sharpen your awareness of ‘sur’. (Gundecha, Bhopal, 2009)

Awareness of sSelf¹²⁸ and sound is cultivated within the practice as you are sounding. Your sādhanā is to direct your own awareness to your sound production and sur alignment.

You have to be aware and ready to respond in the process of sur alignment—to align with sur (pitch) and to continually self-correct if you lose sur. Your work in this sādhanā is to catch yourself if your mind wanders out of the room away from your practice, and to return your attention to sound creation

¹²⁷ Gundecha, Vocal workshop, 2018

¹²⁸ Awareness of all you bring to the moment, including all dualities of being—dissonance and consonance, irresolution of past, and hope for the future. The Sādhaka’s work is to gather and direct their awareness through the “noise” to the production of sound and sur alignment in the present sādhanā.

and pursuit of sur. You are to notice if your voice wobbles and shakes, to ask yourself why this might be so, and then, based on your own observations and feedback, to stabilize and steady your voice into a smooth flow. If your breath loses strength or your body cannot sustain vitality in your practice, ask yourself why this is so and what you need to do to adjust, then make the adjustment and return to sounding. Singing Dhrupad voice cultivation practices requires alignment of body and mind, and the conscious activation of listening. This process of alignment *is* the sādhanā (practice) *and* the yoga (way, path).

Dhrupad is a form of sSādhanā and a way of yYoga¹²⁹. I chose the foundational voice cultivation practices of Dhrupad for the Sound sSādhanā palette, to introduce and explore singing practice as an intentional awareness cultivation practice. Dhrupad is a particular voice culture that connects the singer to a higher and more refined level of consciousness. Dhrupad is meditative sound and through the practice the whole body is attuned and aligned in vibration (Gundecha, 2020).

The foundational practice of Kharaj sSādhanā is used to develop the voice to hold a powerful concentration of mind and energy, and to develop focus, strength, and courage in the voice and in the one who sings. Pandit Uday Bhawalkar says, “only the singer knows what the practice of Kharaj brings” (2010). Meaning that you will only know the truth of this sādhanā through your own practice. You will come to know Sound sSādhanā as a time and place

¹²⁹ The performative textual gesture of yYoga denotes the action of a yogic form (sound yoga) leaning into Yoga the experience of immersion and unity consciousness. Kharaj, Shadaj, Om and AUM, and all long-tone long-breath sounded practices that align mind, emotion, energy, and body in the production process, can be practiced/experienced as yYoga.

wherein you meet, challenge, and transform yourself. Through daily practice and disciplined effort over time, “your practice will slowly lead you to a level where you and the sound become One. There will be whole involvement in the note. And that is the path” (Bhawalkar, interview, 2016).

Kharaj sSāadhanā is a foundational practice in this Sound sSāadhanā research, and is recommended as a foundational morning practice to build and strengthen the voice. Most participating Yogis have a noticeable waver and uncontrolled vibrato in their voice, thus the morning practice is an opportunity to strengthen your voice and your personal energy in practice. The longer you spend on Kharaj sSāadhanā, the more profound your vocal transformation. Dhrupad Kharaj sSāadhanā teaches the Sādhaka patience. If the Sādhaka is impatient, the deeper lessons cannot be accessed. Kharaj sSāadhanā in the morning will move the spiritual musician and Yogi Sādhaka from lethargy to clarity.

Sādhakas in Satsang

Yogi 2: I prefer an oral teaching of a subject of practice over just reading about a practice. In the one-on-one transmission, I get to listen and process my understanding in the moment. I receive the inspiration of the teacher, I experience their joy and excitement on the subject they are teaching. I can hear it in their breath and read it on their face. Also, I can hear their proficiency of practice in their voice, their confidence in their own knowing, which also shows how much time and thought and care they put into their research of the subject they are teaching. There is something very rewarding, heartwarming in a very

human connectedness way, to receive knowledge through the voice rather than through text. For me, this research is about connection and relationship. I receive that through presence and voice, through singing and sharing together and through discussion and listening to each other. So for me, oral transmission of knowledge is so much more of an experience than just information gathering or exchange.

Facilitator: We are connected through breath and sound, and through the shared intention to seek by listening deeply, watching closely, sensing into relationship and exchange, between the parts of body, between the bodies that we are, between breath and sound, flesh and mind, spirit and knowing.

Yogi 5: In one-on-one class I become very present. You have to be present and awake to catch the teaching. I love singing with the teacher and seeking through the voice alongside of the teacher / guru. I know they are in Sādhanā too and I can hear them seeking the perfection of tone and pitch. By the middle of the class the energy is meditative and the exchange just feels real and honest. If I am not feeling my best or struggling with the work, the teacher shifts the complexity of the practice, moving it back to simplicity before attempting the tricky material once more. In this way, the sādhanā is dynamic and flexible and responsive in the moment.

Yogi 1: Knowledge may be communicated effectively through the written word, but knowing can only come through oral transmission. This is because what is tacit knowledge is made explicit through verbal communication. This is particularly true when teaching about voice. I can write as much as I'd like about

how you can improve your voice and in written form tell you all the steps you need to take to sing a specific vowel sound, the sound of OM, or the sounds in a mantra. Yet, you will never be able to learn it nearly as effectively if I do not show you through the lived experience of practice and chanting when I sing a note out loud. Through your repetition of that OM sound or a specific mantra, I can give you the required feedback necessary to make changes, to improve tone, breath, rhythm, approach, shape, placement in the throat. Particularly for singing, oral transmission is an essential part of the learning process, without which, there would be no sound, just writing about sound; a silent epitaph.

Facilitator: There certainly is a difference between teaching voice and teaching about voice. Textual notes we can gather to be absorbed later or not at all. We can assume mastery upon receipt of a diploma on the subject of inquiry. But with voice, we can only truly learn by singing with our own voice. Resistance to beginning arrives if voice cultivation is not a regular practice, then the singer sounder is going to be surprised by their own sound and by their lack of mastery over their own voice. To begin at the beginning again and again is challenging, evoking fear of failure, especially for those who have paid little attention to voice for 30 or more years of their lives. One student said to me that voice was for them, their last frontier to self-mastery and their last point of vulnerability. They were resistant to beginning because they felt like they were in kindergarten. I responded with, “then allow yourself to be there, and enjoy the new beginning.”

Yogi 3: In-person learning is always ideal for me, especially for voice, because I can absorb so much more. For example, I can see the way you breathe, watch your body language, hear your voice tone clearly, so I learn from that. With in-

person learning I become present almost instantaneously. I take in the energy of the space and ride off the energy of the teacher.

Facilitator: I can honestly say that the energy goes both ways. The energetic charge is circular. Especially if a student is fully present and open to learning. Also, if the content of the voice work is *sSādhanā* then the class becomes Satsang *Sādhanā* and both student and teacher benefit from the energy cultivated in the exchange.

Yogi 6: For me what I experience in this personal way of teaching is the immediacy of response from you, and the encouragement and tactility of knowing that I am not alone in this work. I find the experience empowering when I build on a vocal base that you are demonstrating, and this experience goes beyond the technical into more of an inspiration and “permission” to express myself, and to have my own voice emerge from that. The tea and ambience of the space is also a factor for me as it makes me feel comfortable.

Facilitator: You are not alone in this work of Sound *sSādhanā*, as this is my *sSādhanā* too. My work with you is my *sSādhanā*. My work as a teacher of *sSādhanā* is my *sSādhanā*—my spiritual practice and my life Praxis. You are benefitting from my personal work that I am offering as a light to ignite your personal practice. As for “permission”, I return that task to you with my full support. The morning *sādhanās* are for your daily attunement. Experiment with rising before the sun and experience directly what happens to your *sSādhanā*.

Yogi 5: I appreciate a morning practice intended to bring strength and steadiness. I am not steady in the morning. I am usually weak and so my voice is weak. Also

in the morning, I have very little control over my voice. I listen to myself and can see how I am each day. Sometimes I am strong but most of the time I am weak, as if robust health is elusive. I like to think that Kharaj actually means Courage, because that is what the practice gives me, courage. I feel stronger and steadier after my practice. My voice has dropped too. I used to have trouble accessing my lower notes but now I seem to be dropping into them no problem. Also, my voice has widened. It has gained a dimension or two that I did not know were there. My training in Western classical only trained a part of my potential, the high clear part, not the low rich fat tones. Aside from voice development, I have noticed that I am calmer, less anxious, and I have a stronger witness-self. I carry this calm outside the studio into the world as a steady meditative feeling. I am meditative and grounded for the most part. I consider this morning practice a life practice. It is necessary for me.

Facilitator: The foundational morning practices are there to stabilize, ground and strengthen mind and body, heart, breath and voice, and yes, to cultivate courage. The Dhrupad master said these practices are for a lifetime. Which means, not only until you feel better, but for an entire lifetime. Kharaj is a morning practice to ground and strengthen every singer. And every singer wakes with cobwebs and tiredness, with weakness or imbalance, and many begin the day with questions, with anxiety or doubt.

The morning sādhanās are for your daily attunement. They are for you to tune and stabilize your voice, and at the same time to witness all within you that your voice lays bare. The practice is then to recognize, correct, counter and master your own inconsistencies whatever they might be. In this way, your

practice is a personal and subjective inquiry into your whole sSelf and how your energy, mind, heart and body health are reflected in your voice. If you approach your practice this way, your practice (sādhanā) becomes your personal sSādhanā—a spiritual journey that moves beyond the singular practice (sādhanā). This is how the morning practices become Yoga. Once you have strengthened and steadied yourself and your voice, you can begin to move into other voice practices that develop flexibility of voice, throat, body and person.

Yogi 3: I am building my voice inside of this practice that grounds and centres me. I am learning that the best place to start is from the ground up. My vocal range continues to expand, moving down through the lowest octave where I have never gone before to the upper register and higher to sing notes I used to strain for.

Yogi 1: Working my voice in morning practice allows me to refine my voice, extend my range to deeper and lower rich tones, and creates entry points for meditation.

Yogi 6: This practice allows me to start my day grounded yet light and clear, with direct access to myself.

Facilitator: A regular morning practice is meant to ground you in your body, clear and focus your mind, bring depth and clarity to your voice, attention to what sits in your heart and head, and awareness of what rides upon your tongue.

Yogi 2: I love the slow progression from Sa to low Pa, and down lower, eventually able to consistently reach low Ga and sometimes low Re and Sa. And I

love the sustaining of each note and how each note is different from the one before and how each changes over the course of practice. I feel most aligned with the Dhruvad Shadaj and Kharaj practices. I love the slow practice and the sense of diving into sound and the physical embodiment of each note, and then watching this effect on my consciousness and state of mind – usually a movement into clarity, resonance and a sense of freedom both physically and mentally.

Facilitator: Sounds delicious. Sensual, peaceful, and nourishing in its unfolding.

Practice (sādhanā)

*Kharaj Sādhanā and Practice*¹³⁰

Wake before the sun each morning

Cleanse and come to sit in meditation

Attune yourself ... Mind ... Emotion ... Body... Energy... Breathe...

Activate your Tānpūra

Listen and tune your instrument ...

Tune into your body and breath

Hum the Shadaj-Sa on Mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm

¹³⁰ To the reader: This profound practice requires in-person transmission. To write the experience is but a meager attempt to invoke a sense of the practice.

Continue until steady then open to Ā—————

Sound Shadaj for ten minutes until your voice is steady and in sur ... then

Begin your descent

Slide downwards into your lower octave

Resting on each noted swara for a full five to ten minutes

Slide downwards ... deeper and lower ...

Bring life energy (*prāṇa*) to each swara you sound

Move to the next swara only after you have enlivened the one before

Slide smoothly from note to note continuing your descent into the lowest part of your voice ... then stay there for a long time ... ten minutes ... twenty minutes ... or more

Sustain long tones with long steady breaths ... build a smooth full voice

Listen ... Tune ... Attune ...

Direct your attention continually to seeking, finding and sustaining Sur

When your voice has turned silvery in tone and you can hear the beginnings of overtones, begin your ascent ...

Slowly... smoothly ... slide upwards through each note toward Shadaj, dwelling for a time on each ascending note where sur and dimension can be cultivated.

Your task is to sustain long tones on long breaths, using the breath practices of Prāṇāyāma to lengthen and strengthen each inhalation and exhalation. Remaining on Shadaj—Sa— for a long time before proceeding down the lower octave. Reaching as low as possible into the lower octave below your foundational Shadaj. Let your voice relax into the lower notes effortlessly and with ease, without exerting undue pressure on the voice. There is no particular Raga (melodic combination or composition) to sing in Kharaj practice, just steady smooth flowing movement down into the lower octave the octave below your tonic Sa—Sa Ni Dha Pa Ma Ga— in Ākār (Aakaar), with clear enunciation of the syllable 'Ā', freeing the throat from all tension, allowing the voice's natural harmonics to float. You need to pay attention to stability in the breath, singing the syllable or vowel without wavering or quivering. Holding the tone steady without vibrato for as long as possible. Breath power and endurance is important. Clarity and openness are difficult to hold, thus breath needs to be strong and steady.

Kharaj Sādhanā is a foundational practice in this Sound sSādhanā research, and will strengthen your voice and personal energy. The longer you spend on Kharaj Sādhanā, the more profound your vocal transformation.

Praṇām

Now we bring this Satsang to a close with OM and Praṇām

Inhale deeply ... and exhale completely on Om

O—————MMMmmmm

Inhale deeply ...

Exhale completely into OM

O—————MMMmmmm

Inhale deeply ... and exhale the fruits of your practice into Om

O—————MMMmmmm

Remain silent in the reverberation of your practice for 3 minutes.

Open your eyes and bring your awareness into the room to here and now in time and place

Bring your hands into prayer mūdra ... and bow

Praṇām to the teachers and Gurus including your inner Guru—all who have influenced your presence today, human and non-human, present and not present, living and no longer living

Praṇām to the Tāmpūra—the ground and cradle of support during your voice sādhanā

Praṇām to the sādhanās—the multitude of practices cultivating sSelf, sSwara, Art and Artist

Praṇām to the Sādhakas—on the journey of sSādhanā

Praṇām to sSelf—to the Wholeness of you, your presence and your journey of awakening

AUM Śānti Śānti Śāntiḥ AUM



Voice is a fractal of your entirety....
a reflection of both your embodied soul and of the nature of your embodiment.

Satsang~ Voice as Mirror, Portal, and Path

Om

Praṇām Yogis

I welcome you into presence ... to here and now,

and invite you in this moment to bring yourself to stillness ... to silence

Close your eyes and follow your breath inwards ...

From inside of you, scan your body, your emotions, your mind ...

Observe where you are and how you are in this moment ...

Inhale deeply ... and exhale all that is in the way of you being fully present

Breathe in...energize your mind, your heart, your ears, nose, mouth and throat
... and exhale ... release circular thought, irresolution, stagnant emotion...

Inhale ... and continue to clear a path inward ... make yourself spacious ...
receptive to life and mystery, new ideas, new perspectives and possibilities ...
and exhale low energy and resistance ...

Prepare to dive deep into OM, into the very substance of the universe ...

As you tone, imagine the vibration of OM creating, sustaining, dissolving and re-
creating you again and again, wave after wave of vibration eternal ...

Breathe and ...

O—————MMMmmmm

O—————MMMmmmm

O—————MMMmmmm

Silence —————listening for the length of three Om's

Allow yourself to experience Omkar's reverberation and the communion of group sounding ...

Allow yourself to be still and spacious ... clear ... aware ... bright and curious

Open your eyes and bring your awareness into the room to here and now.

Om and Welcome to this Satsang on Voice in Sādhanā

To introduce the voice as a reflective mirror, as a portal inwards to Self, and as your medium for Sound sSādhanā research, I begin this Satsang with a story that my teacher told me. The story is from the tenth book of the Śrīmad Bhāgavata Purana, which is an ancient book of lore and principle textual source dedicated to the Vedic deity Vishnu and his incarnations, particularly the incarnation and activities of Krishna (Bryant, 2007, p. 11). The devotional stories from the Puranic texts are "vast repositories" of social, cultural, religious and philosophical information (p. 11). I invite you to explore the philosophical threads woven throughout the story, philosophical ideas that transcend time and culture with the understanding that as we sound our individual natures, we

are also sounding our sSource¹³¹. For the purpose of this Sound sSādhana research, I want to direct your attention specifically to the philosophical themes of Advaita (nondual) and the Dvaita (dual) within the narrative. Themes of ‘cosmic wholeness’ and ‘arising individuation’ permeate creation stories in Vedic literature and oral lore of the Yoga traditions. In yogic practice, transcending individuation to experience immersion in Wholeness, is often the goal. To explore individuation from the location of Wholeness, is the proposition of this Sound sSādhana as we cultivate knowledge of sSelf through sSwara (musical note/Source).

Here then is a story of Krishna when he was just a small child.

Looking into Krishna’s Mouth

One day, when Krishna was playing with his friends, he took a handful of earth and put it in his mouth. His friends told his mother who then chastised Krishna for eating dirt. Krishna in turn lied to his mother Yaśodā who then ordered Krishna to open his mouth so that she could see for herself the truth of the matter. When Krishna opened his mouth wide, his mother saw within his mouth all moving and non-moving entities, outer space, and all directions, along with mountains, islands, oceans, the surface of the earth, the blowing wind, fire, the moon and the stars. She saw the planetary systems, water, light, air, sky, and

¹³¹ Meaning that our source could be our bodily systems and bodily process, our Sādhana practice, or our identity, or it could be our country, culture, lineage, or gender. Or, if we bypass differentiation—that which makes us unique and different from each other—Source could also mean the Source of the gunas—the elements and forces of creation—and the formlessness between and throughout all things, and out of which we emerged. Note here both source and Source, meaning the contextual source, and the Source of All. This understanding is written here as sSource.

creation by transformation of *Ahañkāra*¹³² [individuation]. She also saw the senses, the mind, sense perception, and the three qualities goodness, passion and ignorance. She saw the time allotted for the living entities, she saw natural instinct and the reactions of *Karma*¹³³ and she saw desires and different varieties of bodies, moving and non-moving. She saw all these aspects of the cosmic manifestation, along with herself... (Prabhupada, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.8.32-45).

Within Krishna's mouth was revealed all the cosmic manifestations, from the gross to the subtle levels of existence, as well as the means of their agitation, the Gunas¹³⁵, the qualities and forces, and the circular movement of creation, maintenance, and dissolution. Looking into Krishna's mouth his mother saw the universe of moving and non-moving things; space; the cardinal directions; the sphere of the earth with its oceans, islands, and mountains; air and fire; the moon and the stars. She saw the circle of the constellations, water, light, the wind, the sky, the evolved senses, as well as the mind, intelligence, and ego, and the elements of matter as earth, water, fire, air, and ether, all evolving from the churning of the three gunas. She saw this universe, with all of its variety, differentiated into bodies, which are the repositories of souls. She saw time,

¹³² Ahañkāra: the principle of individuation in Hinduism and Jainism. Specifically, the activity of attributing objective existence to the ego on the basis of subjective consciousness. Merriam.

¹³³ Karma: the force generated by a person's actions held in Hinduism and Buddhism to perpetuate transmigration and in its ethical consequences to determine the nature of the person's next existence (Merriam Webster Online). "Cause, effect, memory" (Satsang with Sadhguru). We recreate ourselves through memory until we awaken to change the outcome. Karma then, can be dissolved in the light of awareness—awakening: becoming conscious of the repetition, habits, constructs of the conditioned self. To be no longer a 'creature' of habit, transcending the original.

¹³⁴ Notes from A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Canto 10, Chapter 8, Text 32-45

¹³⁵ Gunas: the three primal qualities or elements of matter according to Sankhya philosophy (Merriam): Sattva, Rajas, Tamas.

Nature, and Karma. (Bryant, 2007, pp 123-135). Krishna's mother saw the entire universe and herself as part of that vision, and in that one moment she is enlightened as to the true nature of Krishna (as embodied consciousness) and thus realizes the true nature of herself as part of that revelation.

If you were to contemplate this story, you might experience or at least momentarily glimpse the possibility of the expanded reality of Self. For what lies within Krishna as his divine inner nature and true universal form, is also what lies within each of us. What resounds for me here in this story, is that our true nature, whether you name it as divine, cosmic, biological, energetic, vibratory, interdimensional, or all of the above, is revealed within the mouth, by opening the mouth, and by looking into the mouth. Even if Krishna closed his mouth, the cosmic revelation would still exist hidden within his form and yet, within this one story, the cosmic truth of being is revealed and is seen, experienced, and realized, upon opening the mouth. In this story, Krishna revealed our inner nature, our true cosmic nature. Krishna revealed the entire Cosmos and the elements, forces, and qualities of manifestation within each of us, that also includes us, as a great primordial Source of everything.

We, the incarnate, the differentiated embodied repositories of our souls¹³⁶, create from out of this great Source full of elements and forces. However, first we have to make our way to this Source of everything and no thing. Considering that our true and divine nature is already us (as Self), and also lies within each of

¹³⁶ Body as repository of soul is but one view. Body as existing within soul is another. Body and soul as one and as process, another. In this dissertation, I am not taking one view, as I have no certainty, I am simply provoking inquiry.

us (as Self), on the path of sSelf-realization through sSādhanā, we also have to consider what might be obscuring the realization, and act to clear the path. How might we travel inwards to inquire within our own true nature¹³⁷?

In Sound sSādhanā, the path to sSelf-knowledge and sSelf-revelation is through the voice— voice cultivation and awareness practices. Revelation does not come solely through the word or through the content of a verse or subject of a composition. Remove the words and contents, remove subject and object, strip away meaning from utterance, and the voice remains still impregnated with a wealth of information waiting to be discovered. What lies within the voice is the mystery of life. (Khan, 1995)

Approached as sSādhanā, voice can be a provocative invitation and portal inwards to sSelf-knowing, reflecting both the soul’s journey and the composition of one’s character. Sufi philosopher musician Hazrat Inayat Khan (1995) says, “Voice has great mystery. The voice of an individual is suggestive of something, not only of [their] thought, feeling, and action, but of [their] grade of evolution, of [their] past, present, and future” (p. 90). Voice is a fractal of our entirety.... a reflection of both our embodied soul and of the nature of our embodiment.

Voice is more than the throat

In a vocal culture workshop¹³⁸ in Hyderabad, India, (2018), Carnatic singer Guru Vidwan Vijay, shared his observations on the human voice. He began with

¹³⁷ To ask who are we and what are we made of? How did we come to be and for what purpose?

¹³⁸ Workshop presented on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GLP4KZufZ4>

the exclamation: “The voice is not the throat!” Then proceeded to explain that the voice is body-based and body-dependent, and as such is connected to one’s health—all kinds of bodily health—physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and psychological health. All these bodily systems affect the health of the throat and are reflected as the qualities of the voice. To gain control over the voice, a singer needs to gain control over the entirety of their bodily process.

Beginning with the physical body, the singer needs to be physically well on top of being physically fit, for any ailment, ache and pain, weakness of muscle, or frailty, will have an influence over the voice. Whether blood pressure, heart health, glucose levels, muscle tension, strain, or structural problems in the body—stiff back or neck, locked hips, pain or discomfort in the legs—all need to be acknowledged, attended to, brought under control and or managed so that the physical body can support the singer’s voice. Which does not mean ignoring pain or discomfort. Not at all. If the body exclaims in pain, then the singer must respond and act to properly care and prepare their body for long periods of singing and sitting in *sādhana*. If the physical body is strong, flexible, energized and steady, then the singer can move forward with their vocal exploration without hindrance.

Guru Vidwan Vijay (2018) acknowledged Yoga as a complete system integral and foundational to healthy singing, and recommended Yoga asana and *Prāṇāyāma* as the physical postures and breathing exercises to take care of the physical body. *Prāṇāyāma* practices increase the power and control of the bodily breath and strengthen the supporting muscles. In addition to physical strength, *Prāṇāyāma* assists with strengthening the singer’s powers of attention and

concentration. Long-tone singing practices such as the Dhrupad Kharaj and Shadaj, require both breath strength and concentration of attention. Breath strength and endurance serve to sustain the form, pitch, and beauty of the long-held tone, while a steady and powerful concentration of attention seeks and explores the perfection of sSwara—filling out the full dimensions of each tone.

Just as the state of one's physical body is reflected in the voice, so too is one's mental health. If there is imbalance, disturbance, anxiety, distress, or rigidity of the mind, such forces will have a strong effect upon the voice. Guru Vijay explained that, as beings of nature, all of us are controlled by the elements of nature—the change in seasons, the winds, moon cycles, tides, magnetics of the Earth, the radiation of the Sun, and the alignment of planets in the solar system. As beings of nature, the forces of nature affect our health and our emotions, and thus we need spiritual practices to harness, control, and calm our nature.

Practices of Meditation, Satsang, yoga āsana and prāṇāyāma, and sacred music practices, work to keep our sanity in check, according to the Guru. Emotional health is important for a stable voice, for with an unsteady mind there will be an unsteady voice, so our work is to “bring the mind to steadiness through spiritual practices” (Vijay, Satsang, 2018). The singer's voice is meant to flow... so it is important to recognise within yourself what obstructs your voice, and to then take action to address, balance, sublimate, or remove the obstruction. This observation, recognition, and self-correction, is the work of Svādhyāya (Self-study), which is integral to the sSādhanā process.

sSādhanā is participatory evolutionary action. Not something done to you through spiritual transmission or initiation, or for you by another Yogi or an outer Guru, rather sSādhanā is a way of practice in which you are awake and active in the process of self-knowing and self-evolution as artist, person, and soul. You are participating in a refinement process, cultivating self and artistry.

In the words of Vedic scholar David Frawley (2014), Yoga Sādhanā requires us to harness our individual nature, to cultivate the possibilities and various unique aspects found within, and to redirect our natural tendencies to the purpose of our individual evolution. He explains,

... the true practice of Yoga consists of moving from nature to nature, going from our outer nature as a physical being to our inner nature as conscious awareness. ...Each aspect of our nature exists like a step for us to rise in consciousness. (p. 73)

Thus, we work with who we are and how we are in each moment of our sSādhanā. And, as Guru Vijay (2018) explained to the singers in the Satsang, we can begin with the most obvious layer of our being, the physical body, and move in from there. Whatever in you that is not in alignment with your highest nature (Self) will eventually come forward through sSādhanā to be noticed and worked with.

Shadaj Sādhanā: The Sounding of SĀ

For the sound Yogi and spiritual musician, a long-form tonal practice is a good place to explore these theories of embodiment and consciousness. To take up a toning practice as a personal spiritual inquiry, is to seek through one's own experience rather than through the reports of experience from another. The long-

form toning practice offers time, space, and a transparent medium for self-observation, contemplation and exploration of and through your own instrument. You will observe the changeable qualities of voice and the underlying causes of the instability—fluctuation of energies and forces of the body and the distractions of the mind—and then you can work to harness and focus the nature of you towards the creation of sounding. A foundational voice practice from Indian music voice culture, is Shadaj, the tuning and stabilizing of voice and singer through sounding the tonic—Sa.

Singer, author and historian of the Indore Gharana Bindu Chawla (2006, p. 51), says that the practice of Shadaj—the long-form toning of Saa— “is the most profound starting practice in the learning of Hindustani music” The sargam (note) “Sa” or “Saa” as it is sung, is the short form of the Sanskrit *Shataj* (or the more colloquial Shadaj, that arises from ‘shat’ meaning six, and ‘aj’ meaning ‘born of’. Thus, from Sa are born the six other notes which complete the scale—Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni (Chawla, 2006). In the training of a singer, Saa is the foundational practice to be sung continuously for hours each day as a way of potentiating the voice and the notes (swaras) of the melodic composition (raga) yet to be sung.

Chawla explains that, “absorption of the mind into Saa during vocal practice becomes simultaneously an absorption of the mind into the rest of the six notes in their dormant state, indirectly potentiating them for future singing” (2006, p.52). Precisely because of this phenomenon, the long-chant of Saa is a practice that is considered “one of the most hypnotic experiences for any musician” (Chawla, 2006, p. 52). For in terms of pure sound, Saa, represents the

cosmos in micro form, and the singing of Saa “gradually aligns the musician with the cosmic energy field, a process of uniting that is endless” and potentially blissful (p. 52). In this way, Saa is similar to the continuous chant of Om.

During my own initial experience of sounding the long-form Saa, I did not experience bliss at all, only distress. Partially because of my difficulty in mastering what I perceived as a simple practice, and partially because of all that I brought with me on my journey. I was busy filtering the new experience through old knowledge, and that old knowledge did not serve me well. However, I was to practice the Shadaj Sādhanā daily for as many weeks as required for my voice to change, and within and through my daily sādhanā I realized the profundity of the Shadaj Sādhanā.

Sitting with myself and my voice for hour-long practices, I began to notice what I was bringing to each practice session—my impatience, my criticality, my disappointment, my desire for mastery, a hyper active yet exhausted nervous system, and a stressed physical body. It was no wonder that I could not support the Saa in my first class. As I continued my Shadaj Sādhanā, slowly, gradually, and with a great deal of determination, repetition, self-reflection, patience and self-compassion, I began to transform.

Chawla (2006) tells of a time long ago, when there were no *Tānpūras*, no supporting drone instruments other than the voice. Even then, the ragas were still sung. The disciples would sit around the performer and chant Saa in long continuous tones to “charge the air around with the vibrations of the basic pitch against which the musician would sing” (p.51). For their own training, the

disciples would sing the Saa for years before proceeding with the full scale, and years before singing a raga. They did not protest because they knew they were transforming as singers.

Slowly and gradually after many years of practice, their voices developed resonance and inner character. Finding their voice was a journey taken, not just a journey of acquiring character, tone, timbre and resonance, but also “also a matter of undoing years and years—perhaps even several births—of negative psychological conditioning” to uncover the pure voice (Chawla, 2006, p. 53). As the master teacher Guru Vijay (2018) says, the voice is not the throat alone, it is the entirety of the sounder in the moment of sounding.

To improve the voice, the singer must seek to know and master the self, all of the self. Shadaj Sādhanā will bring you to steadiness before you continue onwards to sādhanās in sargam and melodic composition. Find yourself in Shadaj first, then find, align, and maintain your sur (pitch) in Shadaj before seeking the other notes of the scale. All other notes will appear to you if you develop yourself in Shadaj first. Shadaj must always be in tune, correctly pitched. Knowing this one rule, the Shadaj will anchor your practice, and free you to explore the depth of yourself in presence through sSādhanā ... Om

Sādhakas in Satsang

Yogi 2: This morning in Sādhanā as I was sounding Sa, I was thinking/holding the thought of singing the "truth" of Sa, letting myself open my awareness to this sound holding and energizing all the other notes ... this led me to hold the "beauty" of Sa as I explored it. It was interesting to feel and to be aware of the

subtle differences this created. The "truth" of Sa seemed to create a more focused, laser beam-ish sound that felt like it could travel far. When I held the thought of the "beauty" of Sa, the sound seemed more resonant and embodied, more rounded in the breath in my mouth. I will pay attention to truth and beauty today - are they equivalents, as Keats said "Beauty is truth, truth is beauty – that is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know"? – and hold them as possibilities of each moment in looking and observing, speaking and listening, and see what happens.

Facilitator: Dhruvad Master Pandit Ramakant Gundecha (2020) explains the Shadaj as meditation in the form of sound. The beauty of Shadaj Sādhanā as the one who gives birth to all the other notes of the raga, begins to emerge as you remain on Sa. Time and attention opens all the dimensions of the one note that is Shadaj. These dimensions are the forms of harmonics in music. If you focus on Sa for a long time, you can open all the harmonics like a lotus blossom. That is Shadaj. From this one note comes all the others. Shadaj is Nāda Brahma. And the more you go into the depth of Shadaj, the more you go into Nāda Brahma.

Yogi 3: What if the only thing that matters is getting that note clear? What if all that matters is finding SA, and finding the right note, and getting the perfect tone?... that is the only thing that matters.

Facilitator: For you at this time in your sSādhanā, finding a perfect and clear SA is the only thing that matters. The single note practice challenges the Sounder to steady and focus the self. Sustaining one tone requires a single-minded attentiveness within a length of time greater than one breath. Ten minutes,

twenty minutes, an hour or more. The task is to create and sustain one tone pitched correctly in alignment with the drone of the Tānpūra. To remain with that one task without embellishment. Without vibrato. Just SA. To “have the courage to stand before the Sur, to accept its intensely beautiful bareness...” (Gundecha). Any difficulty with focusing could be perceived as a challenge for you to strengthen your attention, or alternatively, as an invitation for investigation, for sSelf-study (Svādhyāya) and sSelf-inquiry (Atma-Vichara). Once through the obstruction, (which could be a manifestation of resistance or self-confrontation), the sounder might come to realize that within the one long sounded tone, the self can be witnessed, challenged, transformed, and or transcended. The Gundecha Pandits tell us that “in the general playfulness of nature, every pure note that comes into being also creates a field of Maya around it”, meaning that the pure note (Swara) will come, but so too will all that obscures and distracts you from that pure note (Swara). Everything that you are is present in that timeless moment and within that one note. To stand strong in Sur (pitch) is the real Sādhanā. The rest you can reflect upon after sounding.

Yogi 2: I find it interesting how embodied this entire practice is for me. I feel a difference in my throat. The practice really *feels* very embodied, we are embodied consciousness, so that to me is a very active principle of what this Sādhanā is about. My experience of sound and breath is one of being in relationship. Being here in this space, with my thoughts, with my voice, with the air around me. I am noticing my embodiment. Noticing what happens physically while I am sounding. And one thing that has happened is my vocal cords are getting stronger. I have a thyroid nodule and my hearing is not so good on the right side,

but, there is change going on as the vocal cords are getting stronger. I can literally *feel* my vocal chords working differently. Physically embodied. I am noticing a change in how I am producing the note. The heart sits in and is supported and contained inside the pericardium. A fibrous container that exerts a certain pressure on the heart. The pericardium is attached to the diaphragm by tendons, and it also has attachments to the throat and the base of the skull. The heart gets massaged during breathing. We are engaging systems. Everything is connected. The heart and the diaphragm and the breath connected. And with the singing you are just moving all of it. You are not just working the heart and diaphragm but also you are working all the connections to the throat and the occipital at the back of your head. When you're singing you're not just massaging the heart but you are also creating spinal health. You are stimulating all your nerves. And then you add Sanskrit to the mix and you are stimulating everything that is creating this development of who we are, not just the voice, but of who we are. Because everything is connected. The diaphragm connects to the pelvic floor and the diaphragm connects to the spine and that carries the nerves and connects the skull and to the brain, so everything is connected.

Facilitator: Yes, and if we explore our embodiment from a Yogic perspective, we include the subtle body: the energetic anatomy of *Cakras* (Chakras)—the energy systems of transformation; the *Nāḍī*—the 72,000 energy channels through which life force and all its ingredients flow (Haṭha Pradīpikā); and the five *Kośa* (Kosha)—five distinct yet interpenetrating bodily sheaths, from gross to fine: food, energy, mind, discernment, and bliss sheaths, all of which are invisible to the physical eye, each filtering consciousness through their own substance and each

depending upon the other for nourishment (Haas, 2012, p. 154). The five sheaths form three bodies—Physical, Subtle, and Causal, operating in the three states of waking, dream, and deep sleep through which our consciousness undergoes its daily transformation. The Vedic integral model of the human being is a much vaster model than the modern medical model of chemistry, anatomy, and physiology, and shows how human life and consciousness is integrated with the entire universe (Frawley, 2019). For a Yogi, the Vedic view of the nature of reality underscores perception.

Yogi and teacher of the subtle anatomy Tias Little (2016) explains:

... in the eyes of the ancient seers of India, ... the body is a microcosmos where energies get played out. In it, sunlight is reflected, wind roams, rivers flow, and flowers bloom. It is where lotuses, turtles, serpents, and dragons dwell. In this sense, the body is not to be taken literally but figuratively. Thus, in the history of Yogic thought and practice, the subtle body not only involves complex and compelling biological rhythms but is the home of a multitude of archetypal forces. (2016, p. 2).

Viewing the body as a Yogi is to gaze into Krishna's mouth and to be amazed by the many dimensions of embodiment yet to experience and explore. The body, our living experiencing body, is a continuum of interrelated structures, energies and forces extending outwards to the entirety of the universe. Our material self is a starting point for our Sound sSādhanā, and through our personal daily sādhanās we come to recognize that our physical body is not a stable or static entity, that we are in constant flux, in continuous transformation alongside of the rest of the physical world.

If we were to look at the body from the yogic perspective we might realize that we are a location of processes ... a network of intersecting, interconnecting bodily systems in which we are located. Vedic scholar Frawley explains that,

The yogic science of Ayurveda views the human body in terms of consciousness, intelligence, information and energy as held in a physical field of organs, tissues and channels. As such the body is not simply physical but is merely a physical point of focus for forces that extend to the entire universe. Though the physical body itself is mortal, it is connected to wider energies and powers of immortality and eternity. Though limited in size, the body's connections extend out into the infinite. (Frawley, 2019)

Yogi 3: This practice is so profound because I realize that when I get the note, when I get it right, then I know I am in balance. For me, when I start singing, my voice is a perfect indicator of where I am at. If my voice is shaky, or physically tired or affected by my hormones, or if I think about something that irritates me my voice starts to waver. So, I think, if I can just get the note straight then I can get grounded.

Facilitator: The Shadaj practice is an opportunity for the singer/sounder to sit inside the note and to listen deeply into the sound while at the same time supporting the developing fullness of the tone. Holding the voice steady occupies the entire bodily system, reducing the mind's autonomous chattering by connecting awareness to the action of sounding. Shadaj as SĀ, does not lead to a mantra or to any other meaning beyond itself. It simply leads back to the sounder, to you. SĀ is one open tone to be filled out and given a body from out of your own body, breath, and voice. If the sound is attached to names, words and meanings, attention to distraction will take the sounder away from the deeper introspection and exploration of dimensions beyond word and meaning.

Names, words, and meanings provoke us to consider how we are in the world, how we affect the systems of our world, “my” career, “my” life, “my” past, “my” relationships. We are drawn into reconsideration of our past and to the possible manifestations of our future. To ask, “How do I resolve that? How do I fix or reconcile? How do I get what I want? How do I make my way through life to the future I want?”

The forms and ideas to which names and words belong, take us away from the present and from embodied presence. This is what language does. Naming phenomena bestows identity and limitation, reducing everything to identification with the contingent self. Language directs us to belief constructs to make meaning out of experience, and encourages the desire to affect our own world, to make and remake a perceived reality. Language potentially takes us out of the room.

But in the timeless moment of that one note alignment all can be let go. There is this perfect timeless moment of just being. And after that moment, you can reflect on that experience. And when you are reflecting on your experience you can begin to see what came before that time of experience too. You can see your resistance, you can see your life a little clearer because now you can view from a distance. And with that distancing, you will be able to not be so emotionally bound by all the named things you have going on in your life and all the named things you want. Sound sSādhanā works through sound practice to gain clarity of mind while at the same time setting the busy mind aside for a continuum of moments.

Yogi 1: My voice is deep and calm. My listening is intensified and deeper more resonant just like my voice.

Facilitator: Your speaking voice is rich, smooth, and resonant. Your presence is calm and attentive. Your practice is being reflected in your voice and you are recognizing that. Nicely realized.

Yogi 5: Thinking of voice this way is really different from anything I have experienced or practiced in the past. I have always practiced voice with a set goal in mind, memorizing a new song, working on a particular style, or adding compositions to my repertoire. The motivation has always been an eventual performance, a gig, or preparation of my voice for a theatre stage where I would perform for an audience who would look at me and listen to me as I entertained them. So, even in my practice I would imagine an audience, their appreciation or disapproval, and would project my voice and personality outwards.

This practice is different because I am sensing into my voice and into my body. I am listening and tuning my voice, and am observing my mindscape. There is no space in my attention for worrying about performance, so my attention now is inwards. I am not performing for another. I am not building a character mask or presentation style to tell a story or to translate someone else's composition. I am looking directly at myself.

This is very revealing, and not easy to do. But no one can see me or hear me because this practice of sound *sādhana* is not a performance. This practice is more of a spiritual investigation that I do for myself each morning before even saying hello to anyone else.

I now notice when my mind is disturbed by a thought or feeling. I also see that my voice is not as strong as I would like it to be, and my breath is not steady or consistent. Also, I have a very loud critic from within as my sole audience who seems to catch and comment on every crack and weakness. I am affected by my critic, but not silenced.

Sounding as a meditation allows me to choose what I listen to, what I pursue and craft, or what I ignore. I think performing for an audience builds up a performance mask, and a strong ego. I believe one needs that to perform on stage. But here, thinking of my voice as nature or as a way to look and experience my own nature, frees me to explore my nature, my sound, and my presence without having to prepare myself and my voice for another purpose or another person.

Facilitator: Remember the vision that Krishna's mother saw inside of her son Krishna's mouth. She saw all the aspects of cosmic manifestation, including herself. She saw the transformation of this great Source in the creation of individuation. The reality as revealed in Krishna's mouth, was that all creative manifestations are created from Source, and are also Source, not separate (only seemingly so). There is an important invocatory verse, a Shanti Mantra from the Ishavasyopanishad, Yajurveda, that further elucidates this perspective of reality, acknowledging both dualist and nondualist perspective.

Om

Poornamadah Poornamidam Poornaat Poornamudachyate

Poornasya poornamaadaaya poornamevaavashishyate

Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih

Om.

'That' is Whole; 'this' is whole; From 'that' whole 'this' whole came;
From 'that' whole 'this' whole removed;
What remains is wholeness.
Peace, Peace, Peace.

The mantra means that the individuated being is a projection and manifestation of the Universal Cosmic being, thus both beings are identical, complete in themselves, and infinite (Saraswati, 2014, p.40). Shānti chanted three times, is speaking to the dimensions of Wholeness, sending peace to every level of being. This Sound sSādhanā Satsang moves within and towards Wholeness, while recognizing and working with the multiple manifestations of us within Wholeness.

On the subject of multiple creative manifestations of Source, consider the creation of mask, whether performance or character mask, as an exploration of the multifaceted self. For the theatrical stage of the Cirque du Soleil, a stage character or embodied character creation is called a *personage*. The personage is a specifically designed and constructed theatrical personality for performance and outward projection of a persona to be adapted by an artist for a specific context. Thus, the mask and personage combination is developed and applied consciously within a specific environment to specific purpose and effect.

If we seek the ancient roots of the language we are using, we find that the word "person" is derived from the Latin *personare*, a combination of two word stems: the prefix *per*, meaning "through," and the verb *sonare*, "to sound." Together, *personare* means "to sound through". In ancient Roman theatre,

personare meant both the mask worn by an actor and the character they were playing (Kelly, 2002). A *personare* was the mask of a character that an actor placed on their face to sound through. To change characters required a change of mask. The character masks were meant to be seen from the back of a crowded room, and sometimes contained vocal resonators so the actor could project their character's voice to the audience. Meaning that the actor would sound the voice of the character whose face they were wearing on top of their own.

There are other more subtler forms of masking to explore. Specifically, vocal masks. Your voice reflects the characters of you that are being played. The character masks are there, but in a different way. Not so easy to peel off or to peer behind. On stage or off, it is interesting to consider the composition of your own person and the many voices that you project in your sounding. To seek your original voice before the personage creation, and to wonder who is the mask and who is sounding through the mask, leads us to the practice of *Ātma-Vichāra*—Self-inquiry—which in turn leads us back to the expanded vision of reality as revealed in Krishna's open mouth.

Yogi 5: I think that perhaps the mask I was working so hard to create was not really an honest part of me but a projected ideal, a fantasy that I thought at one time I needed to be, or perhaps wanted to be. Now I see I have outgrown the mask that I continue to recreate. How interesting to consider the mask as an artifact, something to put on my face, to disguise a particular reality of me. I did not see it as false or dishonest ... or maybe I did. It was fun at times, a bit of a play really. But now I think of it, it was confusing and hard work holding it on. Maybe the mask was partly me, but mostly I think I needed the mask for courage

and to cover me. What is interesting here is that through my repetition of a word we moved me to this place of insight. Om.

Facilitator: Sound sSāadhanā is not for entertainment or for the pleasure of others. It is taken up as a preparation of artist and their artistry. Traditionally, for the sacred musician, Sound Sāadhanā is a life practice. Short term performance goals can be made, but the greater goal is always kept in mind. The goal is to please God (Self, Ishwara, Brahman). In this Sound sSāadhanā research project, the way we are pursuing sSwara with our practices of Svādhyāya and Ātma-Vichāra, it is clear that we are practicing a form of spiritual inquiry. We are also creating and developing our voices in a way that is a sacred act, we are making sacred sound, for the true original “unmasked” voice comes from the deepest nature of us. When creating sacred sound your audience is the inner Self, and pleasing the inner Self is the process by which you establish your ‘self’ in “Self” or conversely, the ‘Self in your ‘self’. Thus moving your consciousness into fullness ... Wholeness. Which is beyond entertainment and reward.

Yogi 2: It is interesting to hear you speak about needing to project a mask of confidence and courage to perform as a singer. I don’t consider myself a singer though I love to sing. My audience is myself and I am a harsh critic of my voice. I do not believe I am a singer or that I have hidden natural talent. Though what I am understanding here is that this work is not about that. Not about performing as a singer for an audience. Not about a beautiful voice. Though there have been times when I am surprised at my sound because it sounds right. In pitch. And yes, beautiful.

Yogi 4: My experiences in Sound Sādhanā enliven my commitment to pursue sound as a gateway to pure consciousness—the causeless source of manifestation.

Facilitator: The idea that sound is “a gateway to pure consciousness” is why Sound Sādhanā is pursued by master vocal artists and devotional musicians alike. The voice can be a vehicle that transports the Sādhaka directly to source, which is a beautiful experience for the Bhakta, the devotional singer. Acknowledging that we are also Source and not separate from it, one could choose to remain embodied throughout the act of sounding, and consciously participate in cultivating technique and mastery in the physical realm.

In other words, keeping your body with you throughout sādhanā and maintaining awareness of time and space, while also realizing the state of no-time permeating the practice. A kind of immersed emergence or meta conscious state that involves the body, not relinquishes it. Many Bhaktas sing their sādhanā and forget their bodies as they enter bliss state. Often this is an intentional act of surrender of self to bliss, to Guru or Ishwara (God, Swara). For such bhaktas, the focus is on sound as the gateway or portal to transcendent bliss and not on sound as a reflection of or as way into the micro cosmos that is the blissfully embodied being.

That said, the voice of the embodied singer *can be* a portal to the exploration of consciousness and to the source of sound if the singer is activated with that directive. Activated towards refinement of perception, of artistry,

awareness of Being (being alive, present and fully embodied), thus also activating consciousness of their infinite potential as singer, artist, and person.

In Sound sSādhana, refinement happens not by leaving the room, but through staying to task. Dhruvad master, Pandit Uday Bhawalkar once told me, that as a musician, one has to remain straddled between the worlds of here in the room and somewhere else blissfully transcended. Training the voice as an artist requires that we do not lose connection with the Tānpūra, with the Sur (pitch), with the raga, swara, or with the teacher/guru, or with the moment of creation.

From a spiritual artist's perspective, Pandit Rattan Mohan Sharma, noted that there are many people who chant Sanskrit mantra who have not studied singing and have not cultivated themselves as singers. Similarly, there are many singers who chant Mantra and Sanskrit who have not studied mantra or Sanskrit and do not engage in Sound Sādhana. Consequently, there are few refined singing artists who can chant Sanskrit Mantra properly—correctly, spiritually and with knowledge and sense of artistry, aesthetics, and musicianship. Meaning that the fine art of cultivated singing in combination with Mantra Sādhana, including Kīrtana, is a rarity. Herein lies the opportunity for cultivating both artistry and sacred musicianship. Both require an embodied presence in the room and full participation in refinement of self and artistry.

Yogi 1: This morning I noticed a smooth and round groundedness in my voice that was unexpected and I felt like I had become the sound itself. I moved in and out of the sound as I was both sound and observer of the sound.

Facilitator: Your sādhanā sounds as deep as your voice which sounds like the very flesh and bones and Earth and Soul of you. Awareness was kept throughout the various levels of immersion. Your words express an in and out, a movement between immersion and emergence, between sounder and observer. There may be finer increments yet to be perceived and experienced. Which would be worthwhile exploring. Your voice held you steady as you journeyed between states. Dhruvad master Uday Bhawalkar often speaks about seeking immersion with the swara, and says that becoming one with the note is becoming one with the creator, with Nāda Brahman (Cosmic vibration), which is the goal of Yoga sādhanā.

Yogi 3: I had this thought that we need to be like gardeners of the soul, always digging deeper and trying to get to the root of things. I started pondering how to get to the root of all of my negative thoughts about myself, my abilities and life in general and wondering where they all came from. Were they even from me or from someone else down my genetic line? Generations of pain and confusion and self-doubt all trapped inside and wanting to break free. So, I used the sound and imagined I was directing it to break up all of that old energy. Using the sound like a laser.

Facilitator: You focused sound, breath, and intention together to shift energy that you discerned as needing transformation. You created a powerful sādhanā for you in that moment of discernment.

In the book *Finding Your Voice: A Practical and Spiritual Approach to Singing and Living*, (1999) author, singer, educator, composer Carolyn Sloan claims that,

“Along with courage and an ability to question, experiment, and observe, a singer also must have an unfailing persistence and desire to solve what may seem to be unsolvable mysteries” (p. 5). These mysteries of self are reflected in the voice. In Sound sSādhanā, you are cultivating awareness of sSelf and voice. In this project, I am inviting you to inquire and to experiment on your voice and through your voice ... to be a detective, an explorer and a scientist within your own sSādhanā process. To this effect, “... a singer must become his or her own ally, searching for clues and solving these mysteries for him or herself. A singer needs to become a detective ... [and] a spiritual master” (Sloan, 1999, p. 5). The work you are doing on yourself and your voice is awakening the Guru within—your inner teacher and inner voice who knows you intimately, who can guide you once you are ready to listen, and who will catch you if you pretend not to hear. sSelf-investigation through the voice will reveal much, some of which you are probably aware of and some of which may have gone unnoticed for years.

As sounded vibration, singing and toning can act much like an ultra sound instrument. Sonic beams penetrate beyond the surface of the body into the layered depths of a person. The feeling of the vibration can re-awaken and bring to the light of consciousness all your/our hidden away memories, dreams, tensions, conflicts, confidences and insecurities. “These feelings can conjure mental pictures, reveal past events and sometimes teach us things about ourselves we were previously unwilling to accept ...” (Sloan, 1999, p. 8). Which can happen in a sound sādhanā where you experience your own sound and reflect upon its composition in that same moment of creation. To avoid falling into the narrative and accompanying feelings of past events, you, the singer

sounder, need to develop the observer¹³⁹ self, especially when making adjustments and corrections to your voice while singing.

Removing obstruction from your voice is in actuality removing obstructions from your person ... but then, what is a person? What makes us? And of what are we composed? Since it would be very difficult to separate body from mind, and spirit from mind and body, we will need to view ourselves holistically, as a layered process of all levels and dimensions of vibratory matter. Dr. David Frawley (2014) explains how as beings of nature, each of us contains multiple potentials,

of which our actual current given nature is only one possibility—and generally not the highest. Hidden in nature is an evolutionary power that compels creatures to go beyond their evolutionary programming and strive for higher levels of action, expression, and self-realization. Yoga requires harnessing nature's evolutionary power and secret intelligence, which means going beyond our past to the higher future hidden within us. (Frawley, 2014, p. 73)

Which is a great explanation and justification for sSādhanā. To move beyond your discomfort and distraction, you are tapping into your own evolutionary power. In your Sound sSādhanā you are experiencing the disruption of your own nature by various elements, and at the same time you are attempting to harness

¹³⁹ While discussions and debates about an observer Self have existed in Western thinking for centuries, the notions of an observer-self common to oral yogic traditions are an accepted perceptual reality. The observer and the observed are the subtle and gross forms of one and the same reality. (Ranganathananda, 1991, p. 86). The observer Self is also known as the pure awareness and as the witness self that sees everything including thought, habit, and tendencies, and yet remains unattached, at a distance. Knowing the sSelf to be both self and Self, the self has access to the view of the observer, and can act upon the knowledge found there. Very simply, the Observer is a location, a perspective of viewing. In nondual Vedānta one can transcend even this understanding by relinquishing the 'I' and the subject/ object positioning to become awareness itself.

your own nature by working to “get that note, and to get it right”. Stay with your sSādhanā.

O—————MMMMmmmm

Let’s all come together now in practice of Shadaj.

Practice (sādhanā)

Shadaj Sādhanā

Close your eyes and gently place your awareness on your breath ...

Observe your inhalation and exhalation ...

Observe the silence that is full and not silent at all.

Calm your body yet remain energized ... aware ... listening ... ready ...

Begin the Tānpūra and listen to the sounds emerging from out of silence.

Listen to the strings ... Listen to the primary tones ... Listen closer to hear the overtones ... the harmonics and shrutis ... the micro tones emerging in the reverberations of the dominant strings as they come together in a drone

Seek and find the tonic, the dominant foundational tone inside the drone ...

Listen to the Tonic as it sounds again and again ...

That tonic tone is your SĀ. The Shadaj.

The foundational swara of your practice, and your starting swara.

Breathe deeply through your nose ...

Exhale a long-tone of SĀ—————

Listen as you sound ... Find Sur

Make adjustments as you sound ... Breath, body, pitch, tone, dimension.

Tone for a good length of time until your breath is steady and your tone is in sur—tuned beautifully to the tonic. Settle into your practice of SĀ.

Breath long and steady. Again and again return to the beginning.

Watch your voice as you sound.

Produce a tone with unwavering focus.

Each repetition, a new birth, a new beginning,

a new creation of breath, body, sound, and consciousness.

Each long tone an opportunity to listen into the origin of sound and sounder.

Work to fill the dimensions of tone within this one note.

Focus purely on breath, tone, colour, beauty, pitch, strength, endurance, vitality.

Breathe in through your nose...purifying your breath ...

SĀ—————hold steady

Inhale deeply

SĀ—————hold steady

Inhale deeply

SĀ—————hold steady

Inhale deep and silent

SĀ—————hold steady

Inhale deeply, naturally

SĀ—————hold steady

Inhale deeply smoothly

SĀ—————hold steady

Inhale silently, deeply

SĀ—————hold steady

10 minutes to 1 hour every day.

Over time and practice get to know your voice.

Notice the transformation of your vocal tone.

The strengthening of your breath and body ...

The stillness of your mind.

Follow your final SĀ—————into silence.

Sit in reverberation ... in meditation ...

Then Reflect ... Notate ... document your experience ...

Next ...

For the Yogi who is ready and steady with the foundational Shadaj ... continue exploring ...

Begin to add pulse and repetition while maintaining pitch and focus:

Sa—Sa—Sa—Sa—Sa—Sa—Sa—Sa—Sa—Sa—Sa—Sa—Sa—Sa—Sa—Sa—Sa—

SaSa, SaSa, SaSa, SaSa, SaSa, SaSa, SaSa, SaSa, SaSa, SaSa, SaSa, SaSa, SaSa, SaSa, SaSa,

SaSaSa, SaSaSa, SaSaSa, SaSaSa, SaSaSa, SaSaSa, SaSaSa, SaSaSa, SaSaSa, SaSaSa,

SaSaSaSa, SaSaSaSa, SaSaSaSa, SaSaSaSa, SaSaSaSa, SaSaSaSa, SaSaSaSa,

Build on stillness, accuracy, pitch, rhythm and speed, add increasingly difficult combinations of rhythms. For example, try: 12312312, 12312312, 12312312 ...

Repeat each line 8x.

Every second repetition exchange the SĀ with Ā (Ākār).

Pulse each SĀ in the Ākār as demonstrated in class.

Build a smooth wave of sound.

Long controlled breaths...

Watch your Sur.

Now add to the intensity of your sādhanā

Begin at first speed—slow and steady.

Increase to medium speed.

Finish on third speed¹⁴⁰—as fast as you can. Challenge yourself then return to slow and steady. Accuracy is key.

Always return to the single tone

SĀ—————

Sit and reflect on your practice for a few minutes ...

What qualities of voice have you awakened?

How does your voice feel and sound after one week, two, three weeks of daily Shadaj Sādhanā?

Write on your experiments and experiences, vocal challenges and changes ...

Know that Shadaj Sādhanā is a daily sādhanā that can be used on its own to develop the dimensions of your voice and tone; or can be used as a preparatory sādhanā to steady your body, breath, tone and pitch for further singing.

Prepare to end your sādhanā ...

Bring your practice to a close with three OMs

Inhale deeply ... Exhale completely

¹⁴⁰ fast speed (the speed just at the edge of the yogi's proficiency) thus, always challenging the yogi in their sādhanā

O—————MMMmmmm

Inhale deeply ... Exhale completely

O—————MMMmmmm

Inhale deeply ... Exhale completely

O—————MMMmmmm

Silence, listen into Om reverberation for the length of three Oms

Place your hands in prayer mudrā at your heart centre to ritualize your completion

Breathe into each Praṇām¹⁴¹ gesture

Praṇām

Praṇām to the teachers and Gurus, including your inner Guru—all who have influenced your presence today, human and non-human, present and not present, living and no longer living

Praṇām to the Tānpūra—the ground and support during your voice sādhanā

Praṇām to the sādhanās—the multitude of practices cultivating sSelf, sSwara, Art

¹⁴¹ Praṇām from *pra*, “complete,” and *nam*, “salutation.” This salutation, with the hands together in the position of prayer, is an expression of reverence to God or to the one in whom the Divine is manifested.... This joining of hands symbolizes the meeting of souls. Adding a bow to the salutation is showing humility to higher Self and True knowledge (Sat). As an āsana (a yogic posture) one brings the whole of oneself to the moment of meeting. Hands joined in prayer bring together the left and right sides of the body. Bending in a bow locks the chin into the throat bringing attention to the breath as that which carries prana (universal light and life force), and stretches the spine at the back of the neck. If one also closes the eyes for a moment in the salutation one will become present in the movement and constellation of energy, and in the paradox of otherness and oneness.

and Artist

Praṇām to the Sādhakas—those who accompany, support, and reflect the
sSādhanā journey

Praṇām to sSelf —to the Wholeness of you, your presence and your journey of
awakening

OM Śānti Śānti Śāntiḥ OM



*"...practicing is a story you tell yourself, a bildungsroman,
a tale of education and self-realization" (Glenn Kurtz 2007, pp 18-18).*

Satsang~ Sāadhanā as Practice

Om Yogis

Praṇām Sādhakas. Welcome to Satsang on Sāadhanā as Practice.

To ground our presence in Satsang, we will begin with three long-breath cycles followed by three Om followed by Silence. When we reach Silence, consider Silence as your teacher. Listen in closely for insight specific to you. Consider this slow breath and sound practice as preparation, as an opportunity to clear and create space within you so that you can be receptive to new teachings, new ideas and understandings offered in Satsang. Set your intention with each breath. With each inhalation make yourself spacious. With each exhalation release any resistance to full presence. Consider a spacious presence of sSelf as the goal.

Let us begin. (Readers ... read along while engaging practice)

Inhale ... slowly ... deeply ... clear a path inwards with your breath ...

Exhale ... release slow and steady a flow of all that you no longer need ...

Inhale ... lengthen and strengthen your breath ... clear the path inwards ...

Exhale ... release and empty completely ...

Inhale ... open a receptive space within ...

Exhale a steady intentional stream of breath expressing the wholeness of you ...

Inhale ... sense OM arising within you ... and exhale on Om

O—————MMMmmmm

O—————MMMmmmm

O—————MMMmmmm

Silence —————listen into OM reverberation

Listen deeply into the resonance of your sounding ...

Now we come to Satsang on Sādhanā as Practice.

As we discussed in the first Satsang on Yoga Sādhanā, the Sanskrit term ‘Sādhanā’ has many meanings. Or rather, the meaning of Sādhanā changes depending upon its usage—who uses it, how one names their process and practice or way of practice. For example, sādhanā can be *a practice* that you do at a certain time of day, or *a set of practices* (sādhanās) that together make up your sādhanā each day. These types of sādhanās can be given to you by a Guru or school of yoga; or chosen by you from the palette of practices gathered from Yoga schools, Gurus, and your own direct experience.

Master musicians, Pandits and Gurus can be inspirational teachers and guides on the Sādhanā path, but unless you live with your teacher in the way of the Guru/ disciple relationship, we only get to visit with these masters a few times a year. Our Sādhanā is inspired and emboldened by the Gurus and Pandits, and we hold their lessons close as we proceed with our daily sādhanā. However, there is only so much your guru/ pandit can do for you.

To make a point and to draw the student's attention to a primary teaching, Swami Chinmayananda asks the rhetorical question, "should the teacher carry you to heaven?" He did not say "could", he said "should", which brings up the point that the student often relies heavily on the presence, transmission, guidance and direction from the teacher while foregoing a personal sādhanā of direct experience and rigorous introspection. Swami gave the answer sourced from verse 5 chapter 6 in the Bhagavad Gītā. He said, "No. You must engage your own self in an evolutionary process. You lift yourself by yourself. It is your own work to preciously maintain the improvement you are gaining" (Satsang, 1976).

With introspection and discernment, the sādhanaka, student, yogi in sādhanā, might realize that the sādhanā they are engaged in is offering up answers, insights, and guidance unique only to them. Like the singing teacher who says to the student, "only you can feel where the sound is sitting in your own body. Only you have that knowledge and perspective of your practice", to which Chinmayananda would add, "Think ... and think hard. Practice introspection rigorously. Then visit the Guru with your questions that come from direct experience, your own sādhanā".

Sādhanā can also be *a way* of practicing, in this case, your music practice can become a spiritual practice—a way to know self and soul (Self). Or Sādhanā can be a spiritual path where everything, every meeting and every event on your path, including music practice, is an opportunity for spiritual inquiry and self-discovery. Another example could be where a difficult journey home to stay with family for Christmas is undertaken as sSādhanā—as a spiritual journey that

refines self and cultivates Self. Similarly, Yoga Sādhanā can be a philosophical outlook where the awakened Sādhaka sees the worlds of creation through the lens of knowledge that has been realized through their own direct experience¹⁴². Yoga Sādhanā can also be a Praxis. Here the Sādhaka chooses to live life and to work in the world as sSādhanā. Meaning that the Sādhaka embodies sSādhanā, enacting sSādhanā in every engagement, applying sSādhanā in all areas of their life towards the evolution of self and community.

Each description of Sādhanā may overlap into the other, and all are defined by the intention of the Sādhaka. Some seekers want a timed sādhanā that can be an addition to their day, a set of practices(sādhanās) that can be completed then put aside so as to return to everyday life and business as usual. Other Sādhakas know well that the results of each sādhanā are directly proportionate to the amount of energy and attention given. Thus, this Satsang, is on sSādhanā as practice. Meaning, that the approach to practice begins with a different motivation than that of practice for the sake of practice; and the results of a practice that is sSādhanā will differ significantly from a practice that indulges mindless repetition—repetition without awareness and without inquiry.

A Yoga Sādhanā is a spiritual practice because the Sādhaka seeks to awaken. In *Light on Yoga: The Definitive Guide to Yoga Practice* (2001) B.K.S. Iyengar calls Sādhanā “A Key to Freedom” and reminds us that all the important texts on Yoga lay great emphasis on Sādhanā—constant practice. He adds, “the

¹⁴² and verified by countless Saints, Sages, and perfected Yogin in the sacred texts and their commentaries. *Yoga Sūtras* of Patanjali and *Bhagavad Gītā*, are two such texts.

Sādhaka must by constant practice light the divine flame within himself” (p. 11). “Constant practice” according to Swami Satchidananda (2008) means, “a continuous practice...without break...attended to in all earnestness” (p. 20). When asked by his disciples how long a practice should be and what constitutes a length of practice, Satchidananda replied, “The first qualification for practice is that it should be done for a long time...Even Patanjali says, for a long time¹⁴³... He does not say how long” (p. 20).

If we are to “light the divine flame within” (Iyengar, 2001, p. 11) for ourselves, then we need to take the question asked of the outer Guru and ask of ourselves. Ask, “How long should my practice be?” The answer will depend upon your intention and how you are approaching your Sādhanā as practice. If you desire transformation and desire to ground whatever gains you make through your practice, then you will need to prioritize time in your day each day for your Sādhanā practice. Results of practice can only be had through practice. We cannot know the results before the experience.

In his commentary on The Hatha Pradipika (1998) chapter 1 verse 65, Swami Muktibodhananda says,

you may read as many principles [on the results of practice] as you can absorb intellectually, but until they are put into practice there is no experience of their reality nor manifestation of their inherent potential. (p. 143).

Which is not to say that theoretical readings are not important. Wise teachers and Guru’s may base their teachings on their own direct experience and realization

¹⁴³ “Dīrgha Kāla” a long time (Patanjali Sutras Chapt.1. Verse. 14)

while also referencing Vedic texts, Upanishadic stories, sutras and their various translations and commentaries, within which can be found the same teachings realized through direct experience. Exploration and seeking through scripture, philosophical text and their commentaries, are part of the journey of the Yogi who seeks knowledge beyond the physical practices of yoga.

Adding comment on the same set of verses, B.K.S. Iyengar (2001) says, “success is not obtained by wearing the dress of a yogi ... nor by talking about it. Constant practice alone is the secret of success” (Chapter 1, verses 64-6). Swami Muktibodhananda (1998) elucidates further, adding:

... one cannot become a yogi just by assuming the external appearance, nor can one fool others into believing it; the lack of inner strength and understanding will expose anyone who is a fraud. One may delude oneself by looking like a yogi or ascetic but the ātman cannot be deluded, nor can the cloth give power and knowledge. It can only come by training the body and refining the gross consciousness. (p. 144)

Translating this comment to apply to the Yogic musician, I would say that there is no way one can hide their lack of practice. No mask or ornament, spiritual name or dress, and no lengthy commentary on the theory of practice or Sādhanā will assist the one who has no self-created substance through first person experience. Knowing this can be impetus to honour one’s Sādhanā for the depth of understanding and the ground of self-knowing that can be established by one’s own effort and honesty.

From my own experience at the beginning of my journey in Sound Sādhanā, and at the end of my first lesson with a Carnatic master on Shadaj, the Guru said to me,

This is where we will begin. Now your sādhanā for the next week or so is to practice singing one note to the Tanpura drone. A minimum of one hour per day is the required commitment, but most advanced and serious singers practice four hours a day. To be a successful singer, your sādhanā needs to be extreme and committed. You cannot have the voice nor the style, nor the knowledge without diligent practice and devotion to purpose. (Sagar, 2004)¹⁴⁴

However, years of practice has revealed that there is more to a full and beautiful voice than repetitive exercises. The quality and depth of practice has to be attended to. In *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* (1993), B.K.S. Iyengar explains what is meant by the term 'practice' if it is to cultivate consciousness. He says,

Practice implies a certain methodology, involving effort. It has to be followed uninterruptedly for a long time, with firm resolve, application, attention and devotion, to create a stable foundation for training the mind, intelligence, ego and consciousness. (p. 16)

If practice is undertaken as a Yogic endeavor, it becomes an intentional discipline towards the cultivation and refinement of consciousness. Thus, the intensity of practice and to what end the practice is applied is what makes sādhanā practice a journey of self-education and self-actualization. (Darshan, 2012).

Sādhakas in Satsang

Yogi 2: Daily practice. Discipline is an interesting word. It has negative connotations evoking punishment. So ... it is not a good or helpful word to put together with an art practice or a sound practice or even an awareness practice. We have to think of another word besides discipline. When I go to do my sound

¹⁴⁴ Personal singing class in 2004.

practice I don't want to think of it as a discipline. I don't want to think I am being punished by having to do a daily practice. Commitment is a good word.

Yogi 1: I think that is it for me as well. It is different than discipline. I have a different relationship with that. It is a different discipline with Sādhanā that I have with playing the piano. For example, my piano practice, in which I feel compelled to keep up my performative practice on the piano, which I fail at persistently, and which is a constant struggle in my life. I don't feel that way with Sound Sādhanā. I feel that there is a natural flow with my impulses. Like when I wake up, my impulse is towards asana. It is not like "Oh, I had better do asana" Or "Oh, I have to do asana now" or, "I better stay in practice", there is just a natural flow to doing that as my first thing, my first love is to do that.

Yogi 6: I am most aligned with a disciplined practice that yields practical results towards self-improvement. That being, a wider self-knowledge of self by helping organize thoughts, how to better deal with insecurities by seeing them through a third person perspective, how to control emotions, set goals and follow a constantly refined dharma.

Facilitator: Sometimes when you begin to sing and sound in the morning, and you listen deeply into your sound, you can hear the energy of your body. You can discern precisely your lack of sleep or your feelings of unwellness, or feelings of uncertainty. You can hear your blood, and your heart, and your nervous system inside your sound. You might look at and listen to that sound critically and say to yourself, "I'm not well enough to sing today. I'm not into this right now because the sound is not what I want it to be. My voice is not what I think it

should be. It's not beautiful. My sound is full of aches and pains and cobwebs and uncertainty and body. I think I'll make myself a cup of tea. I think I'll go back to bed. Or perhaps I'll have a nice bath. Perhaps I'll leave my Sadhana for now and come back tomorrow when I am feeling better." As you progress on the Yogic path, you might see all options as distractions and or as obstacles to your practice.

At this point, it is valuable to remember that the higher purpose of the Yogic path is spiritual and psychological transformation. We should expect to face some obstacles on our path as part of the Sādhanā process. Yogi Hillman wrote:

If we don't understand these difficulties as part of a bigger picture, it may cause us to question the validity of our practice Obstacles that are placed in front of us serve a purpose: They are a catalyst for transformation, which can result in our liberation. (2018, p. 1)

You could view your discomfort as a distraction that is pushing or pulling you off your path, out of Sādhanā. You could also see your discomfort as an opportunity—to sit deeply in your sound, to continue your practice regardless of your discomfort and your desire to stop. And you could come to know that as you move through all that heaviness, resistance, and lack of clarity, that you will eventually come clear. If you stayed on your sSādhanā, and pursued and shaped yourself out of Tamas, out of the heaviness and dullness of your experience, you would have mastered yourself in that moment. You would have brought your wild nature into alignment, and into wholeness through your sSādhanā.

On the obstacle of unwellness and dis-ease, Satchidananda (2008) explains how physical disease affects the mind, and then the mind in turn affects the action taken. He says,

... physical disease makes the energy and mind dull, and a dull mind will doubt everything because it doesn't want to penetrate into a thing to understand it. And, when doubt is there, there is a carelessness, a sort of lethargic attitude or laziness. And when the mind loses interest and alertness towards a higher goal, it has to do something else so it will slowly descend into sensual enjoyments. These things can be summed up as the qualities of Tamas, or inertia, dullness. (p. 50)

The quality of dullness is pervasive and without focus. Because dullness has no focus, the quality of dullness is difficult to shift, and can sit heavy upon the mind. The quality of doubt is corruptive, it can undermine all good intention, thus by indulging doubt, care is lost. The Sādhaka become careless in their purpose and intention. Then, "the mind loses interest and alertness". Losing interest, losing curiosity and wonderment in one's practice, amounts to a withdrawal from the developing refinement of perception. Without alertness there is no poise, no readiness or receptivity to arising potential. When the practitioner is overcome willingly or unwittingly, the quality of practice is reduced and there is a sense of losing ground, or losing forward momentum in sādhanā. Satchidananda (2008) reminds us that in Yoga practice, obstructions are purposeful to our development. Thus,

... they are put on the way for us to pass through. They are there to make us understand and make us express our own capacities We need to be challenged and tested in order to understand our own capacities. (p. 51)

Yogi 6: Making a new habit, even one that is beneficial to one's self, can be challenging. The mind is set on its rituals, its comfort, its sculptured rigidity. The mind seeks constant gratification, especially the short-term kind, the immediate and consumable. Which is why Sound sSāadhanā has been such a tremendous surprise and a practice that I never thought would so pragmatically fit and improve my day to day life. From the first days of practice, the voice meditation has dissolved my brain's morning chatter, and, by starting the day clear, lighter, grounded, gratified and curious, I now have a more direct access to myself.

Yogi 2: I am noticing an improvement regarding my resistance to being organized. It feels cognitive, like my brain has a newly focused set of executive functions. So, there is for me an improvement in an organizational sense, and also an improvement regarding resistance to organization. I think that if you can put aside resistance itself, then maybe that already improves the skills or whatever you want to work on. Put it aside and just move through.

Facilitator: Resistance is one of the major blocks for a Sādhaka. We can find every possible diversion and excuse just to resist doing sādhanā. Though rarely do I hear the Sādhaka calling resistance by its name ... Resistance. So, we could look at resistance, examine it ... or alternatively, not look at it and just continue through and resist the resistance. At the beginning of the Sādhanā Pada in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali is written the obstacles to wellness and self-realization.

These are:

... disease, indolence of body or mind, doubt or skepticism, carelessness, laziness, failing to avoid desires and their gratification, delusion and missing the point, not being able to concentrate on what is undertaken and to gain ground, and inability to maintain

concentration and steadiness in practice once ground is attained. These obstacles are further aggravated through sorrows, anxiety or frustration, unsteadiness of the body, and laboured or irregular breathing. (Iyengar, 1993, p. 21)

Each one of us can find ourselves and our symptoms of resistance in this list.

Once conscious, we can call ourselves out. We can call our distractions forward to be investigated. We can see what needs attending to and take action. Most of these obstacles can be overcome or worked with depending upon the strength of intention. Or not.

Yogi 2: You don't have to spend too much time thinking about resistance you just go and do your sādhanā anyway. You say, "Oh there it is again. Resistance"

Yogi 5: You just do it any way. Yes, feeling resistant. Everything makes me not want to do this, but I'm going to do it anyway. I think that's a really amazing place to be. I think there is some kind of retraining that is happening.

Yogi 2: I think so too. It is really interesting because this Sound sādhanā process is showing the value of the ongoing stepping into commitment to practice. And then you are always happy that you do.

Yogi 5: Yes, absolutely. I am drawn to practice because of the benefits and progress I make in each session. Admittedly not all practice sessions are the same quality. It depends on what I am working through, though I do usually get to a good place by the end. I have a daily practice because of discipline. I have to have discipline and structure to start me off in my practice, otherwise I find it is easy to sense into myself, my body and thoughts, get caught in analysis or emotional sludge, and leave my formal sādhanā incomplete for the day. If I

know that my plan is 108 Oms or one hour of Kharaj, I will surely complete it. If I skip a day, one day leads to another, until I have to acknowledge that I have fallen away from sSādhanā and have moved into the world and into the waves of samskara where it is easy to get tossed around like a wave on the ocean or a leaf in the wind. I lose my equanimity, my foundation, and my spiritual purpose. That is what it feels like if I do not do a daily practice.

Facilitator: In Sound sSādhanā practice is important, whether you name it discipline or commitment, as essential, formal, or intentional. Only by practice will you get to where you want to go. If you would like to have gorgeous Sur—a beautiful sonorous voice shimmering and full of the sun—this can only happen through practice. Practice develops: speed, pitch, flexibility, steadiness, strength, endurance, tone, timbre, and memory to hold all the notes of the raga (scale) together in relation to each other so one can improvise without getting lost. All of these qualities can be cultivated through practice. Through practice we are not just exercising the voice or honing musicianship. For whether singer or guitarist or drummer,

... every time you sit down, you give an account of your practicing, revealing yourself and the composition of your character.... Practicing is training; practicing is meditation and therapy. But before any of these, practicing is a story you tell yourself, a *bildungsroman*, a tale of education and self-realization. For [the voice] as for the mind, practicing is an imaginative, imaginary arc, a journey, a voyage. (Kurtz, 2007, p. 18)

Bildungsroman is a German word and literary term meaning character development and maturation over time. This kind of maturation usually happens over the duration of a literary story, but in our context of sSādhanā,

each time we sit down to intentional practice or to reflect on our practice we will be directly engaging in our own story arc. I like to think of practice as participatory evolution.

Yogi 1: I think there are a lot of theoretical yogis out there gathering information on practice. In the process that was facilitated for us, it wasn't just about us doing a sound sādhanā practice and our experience of the practice, it was also about you giving us tools. You offer us tools, and yet, each yogi comes with a variety of knowledge to the process.

Yogi 1: I think we need to acknowledge the difference between knowledge and knowing. You can have as much knowledge, in the way of accumulated ideas, experiences and stories of those experiences, of practicing mantras, of guru, of sound sādhanās, you can have all of those, and they all enrich your presence and your present state potentially; however, and this is key with any meditation practice, if you are going to engage in a meditation practice you need to clean slate your mind and you need to approach anything new with an openness to being and doing. A more experienced yogi knows that that is the way. The only way through is through shedding the identified self, and remember the identified self is also the past, the knowledge gathered and identified with, and all the systems that one is hooked into. The only way is to be in the moment of knowing, in the doing of, in the knowing of, in the being of, in the mantra of, in the sounding of, and in the breathing of. How to get there is tricky for each individual. We need to be in the knowing space during Satsang. I don't think that the knowing presence can be facilitated in another individual. For each of us has to have an openness. We have to come to the Satsang and to the practice of

each sādhanā and Sādhanā in general with that openness, with a deep receptivity, and what that is, is a quality of openness to letting go of all that we know, all that we've been told, all the teachings that we have had before. And that is really hard. I don't think that is an easy thing to do.

Facilitator: In Sound sSādhanā, the idea is to listen closely into your own process and evolutionary progress through the medium of sound, specifically, through the sound of your own breath and voice. To enter into this research process, requires a “beginners mind”—a receptive curiosity and willingness to suspend for a time all knowledge and preconceived ideas of what music, mantra, and voice work, was, is, or could be. All of you are encouraged to explore something new about yourselves each day through your own sounding, something not yet known through theory or through personal history. Thus, to explore deeper and further beyond what has been learned, to return to the beginning space of potential before the accumulation of present knowledge, and to become as an empty vessel for new experiences and understandings yet to be.

As the researcher and facilitator of this project, I am beginning to recognize the different kinds of seeker and practitioner. Not all of us learn in the same way and not all of us approach learning and experience in the same way. Some of us are very particular and go through many stages of resistance when learning. Asking a Yogi to surrender to their own practice and to trust in the process, is asking a lot, especially if the Yogi is used to a particular way of learning and will surrender only to an outer guru who will guide the process for them. Thus, not all Yogis are willing to attend to sSādhanā in the way that I am presenting it. Some would prefer to use this research time as a platform from

which to teach and impress others, and as a battle ground from which to resist new teaching, specifically self-teaching through self-practice.

Sufi musician philosopher Hazrat Inayat Khan¹⁴⁵ (1960) explains, how “the difficulty in the spiritual path is always what comes from ourselves. Man does not like to be a pupil, he likes to be a teacher” (p. 150). I remember hearing this from my own teacher Yogi Hari as he prepared the Sādhakas for the long yogic training program at the Ashram in 2006. At that time, most of us were ready to surrender to the full experience being offered by the Guru, but there were a couple of Sādhakas who wanted only to teach other Sādhakas. By offering workshops on the side and actively seeking to recruit students, they determinedly resisted relinquishing the role of teacher for the duration of the teacher training.

Hazrat Inayat Khan (1960) says:

... the first thing to be learned is how to become a pupil. One may think that in this way one loses one’s individuality; but what is individuality? Is it not what is collected? What are one’s ideas and opinions? They are just collected knowledge, and this knowledge should be unlearned. (p. 150)

Which are sentiments that Yogi 1 also expressed. Individuality, identification and attachment can be hindrances, obstacles to opening to sSādhanā, to deepening one’s sādhanā, and sSelf-education. A Yogi may initially agree and commit to exploring practice-based spiritual inquiry through sound, but may refuse to be a student. Thus potential for learning is affected.

¹⁴⁵ Khan, H. I. (1960). *The Sufi Message*, vol. II. London: *Barrie and Rockliff*.

Yogi 3: Well, we can talk about it forever, but ultimately it comes down to practice. It is from our own practice that we get true knowledge.

Facilitator: Krishnamurthi (2010) talks about the learning process as a process of unknowing the known. Such a process is an individual learning process and remains a process—a living unfolding event, never to become a static body of knowledge, level to attain, or form to hold. Rather than being a receptacle into which knowledge already known is poured, we participate in our learning by investigating ourselves, asking how we came to know what we know, whose knowledge is it that we hold onto and identify with, and who is asking the questions? Krishnamurthi (2010) invites us:

... to investigate ourselves together—not one person explaining while you read, agreeing or disagreeing with him [or her] as you follow the words on the page, but taking a journey together, a journey of discovery into the most secret corners of our minds. And to take such a journey we must travel light; we cannot be burdened with opinions, prejudices and conclusions—all that old furniture we have collected for the last two thousand years and more. Forget all you know about yourself; forget all you have ever thought about yourself; we are going to start as if we knew nothing. (p. 13)

Learn each day as if we know nothing and are starting anew. Which we are. Each day we are new in the moment. We always return to the beginning in sound practices again and again but we do return to the beginning changed by the experience, by the journey taken. Thus in each new beginning we are available to new potentials in ourselves and in our art form.

In *Freedom from the Known*, Krishnamurthi (1969, 2010) tells us that humankind has forever sought beyond and outside of the self for another reality, a God, or an eternal transcendent dimension out of the reach of circumstance,

and undisturbed by human corruption. In the search to know such a transcendent reality, humankind has throughout time sought knowledge from many authorities, teachers, books, Gurus and Saints. And, satisfied with the descriptions found, carried them forth as truth, living on what has been told. “We are the result of all kinds of influences and there is nothing new in us” claims Krishnamurthi (1969, 2010, p. 2). The question of God, truth or reality will not be answered by books, gurus, priests, philosophers, or saviours. “Nobody and nothing can answer the question but you yourself and that is why you must know yourself....To know yourself is the beginning of wisdom” (p. 4). And what is the self? The “yourself” or the “myself”? Are we not, as Krishnamurthi proposes, localized identities—culturally conditioned entities each with an individualized world view representing a small fragment of reality only partially related to the wholeness of being?

We perceive the world and ourselves in it through a profusion of philosophical ideas, ideals, and theological concepts, while continuing to search and gather more as we journey through life. The gathering of information, of words, practices, methods, and directions, fills the seeker, though not fully, but enough to obscure clarity of mind and impede an unattached observation from the wholeness of being. Krishnamurthi cautions, “what is important is not a philosophy of life but to observe what is actually taking place in our daily life, inwardly and outwardly” (p. 9). To look into your own self location “needs no philosophy, no teacher. Nobody need tell you how to look. You just look ... to see the whole picture ... not verbally but actually ...” (p. 9). To look beyond the words that come from a source other than the Self, and to see the self in the

actual, in the moment of process, it would be hard to find another form more effectual than music making, and in particular, singing. Not that singing is always approached as a philosophical inquiry necessarily, but if pursued as *sSādhanā*, a sounding and listening practice offers a direct way to Self through self for viewing the actual.

In the state of *Sādhanā*, and through *sSādhanā* inquiry, the *Sādhaka* can come to see their own composition (composition of self) as a constellation of predispositions shaped by multiple forces and influences outside of their own awareness, time and context. Once aware, the discerning *Sādhaka*, as one participating in their own evolution, can, by their own authority, edit, reject, reclaim, subordinate, and/or sublimate the external influences. Thus, undoing and unknowing the authority of the other, freeing up energy that could be directed with greater intensity and vitality towards *sSelf*-learning and self-crafting.

The question then becomes, how might we realize our own tendencies? Through what medium might we come to see ourselves clearly? If we are full of knowledge (noun), and can only see through our conditioned self—conditioned and shaped by knowledge input—then we are unavailable to the process of knowing (verb) through direct experience. So how might we clear space within the busy mind so that we can be receptive and available to learn anew? How do we learn as if we know nothing? As a *Sādhaka* building on our practice, how do we start anew each day? The answer will be found in the appropriate *sādhanā(s)* selected in response to the need or particular tendencies of the *Sādhaka*. As

Sādhakas and Yogis we seek practices that will assist us in harnessing our nature, and practices that cultivate stillness, spaciousness, and harmony.

O—————MMMMmmmm

Now let's attend to some new (old) practices from our Sound sSādhanā Palette.

Practice (sādhanā)

There are two sound practices from the Sound sSādhanā palette specific to clearing and focusing mind and state: The Bhrāmarī Prāṇāyāma and The Mokṣa Mantra Flow. Bhrāmarī Prāṇāyāma is a sounded breath practice that is used by sound yogis to clear the mind, internalize the senses, and clarify the singing voice. The practice “opens the inner ear to the inner sounds of the body” (Paul, 2004, p. 265), and over time, awakens sensitivity and awareness of the ever subtle vibrations within. The Mokṣa Mantra practice harnesses the busy mind and focuses the Sādhaka in their sSādhanā. The mantra flow clears and focuses the Sādhaka's energy and directs their thoughts towards specific goals, and ultimately towards sSelf-realization and liberation¹⁴⁶ (Mokṣa) through their own Sound sSādhanā.

Bhramarī Prāṇāyāma: The Breath of Beeing

I will begin with a simple practice that you can add into your busy life ...

Humming.

¹⁴⁶ Moksha and liberation are discussed in detail in the front glossary of language section.

When your mind is full, or you are not feeling up for your daily practice, or you feel that your voice is not quite present, clear, or smooth enough for singing, then a good way to begin any breath and sound practice is to Hum. Any time during the day, no matter what else you are doing, you can Hum along with your life as it unfolds. Humming can accompany your thoughts, can calm anxiety, and induce peaceful feelings, or can be purely for the enjoyment of creating sound—you hum because you are happy and content.

As an awareness practice, Humming can prepare your mind, your heart, and your voice, for an intentional meditation practice, for voice cultivation, or for an outer presentation. To bring Humming into awareness as an intentional practice:

Find time in your day just for you to sit quietly and focus on breath and sound. Begin to Hum and listen into your own sound. There is very little thinking involved ... just a lot of sensing. Approach your practice gently and with ease. You will experience voice awareness almost immediately, and with regular practice you will be able to sustain your new found resonance and voice awareness. (Anderson, 2003)¹⁴⁷

Here, the author directs the practitioner to “find time in your day for you to sit and focus on breath and sound.” I would say that this is one of the primary differences between the simple practice and the intentional practice. For you to find time, to find or create space, to sit still, to listen, and to move within via sound flow, you will need intention, willingness, and action.

¹⁴⁷ Directions on cd insert that I added to assist the listener.

When you approach your Humming in the way of Bhrāmarī Prāṇāyāma, placing attention on the sound vibration works to calm, clear and focus your mind. Bhrāmarī Prāṇāyāma ritualizes the practice of Humming to intentionally harness and draw the mind into a single focus towards yogic purpose— introspection, meditation, merging, immersion, inducing spaciousness, presence, and moving further inward in Nāda yoga to listen closely into the layers of Cosmic existence. As a Yogi musician, Bhrāmarī Prāṇāyāma develops and strengthens the breath in support of the voice so that singing will flow smoothly. The practice of intentional humming polishes and focuses the voice, removes uncertainty and builds resonance, clarity, consistency and presence.

Thus we come to the Bhrāmarī Prāṇāyāma practice of Bee Breathing. Bringing your breath and sound together with intention and action. With your ears, eyes, and mouth closed, you are going to Hum and create a sound resembling the buzzing, humming drone of a bumble bee. With the Bumble Bee breath, you will be closing your senses to the outer world and opening your awareness to the inner world of the sounds and subtle vibrations of the body complex. However, before you close your eyes for a long practice, understand the directions and points of exploration.

To begin, awaken your intention to practice.

Sit steady in attentive awareness ...

Close your mouth, lips together, and breathe through your nose ...

Prepare to Hum on each exhalation to the end of each breath ...

Place your fingers on the doors of your ears and close off the sounds of the outer world.

Inhale through your nose and exhale through a hummmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm

Feel the Hum vibrating your lips, throat, ears, facial bones, skull, eyes ...

Your Humming will sound loud to you from the inside, but will sound quiet on the outside of you.

Your sound will be internal. Explorative. Not performative. No need to project outward.

As you Hum, explore the inner cavities of your face ...

the resonance of your bones ...

the placement of your tongue ...

the stream of breath and sound ... the undulation of pitch ...

the awakening of nerves ... skin ... thought ... and inner vision.

When ready to hum for a length of time, close your eyes to shut out all visual distraction...

Inhale a full body breath ... and exhale

Hummmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm the full length of your breath.

Mokṣa Mantra

This Sound Sādhanā research project works with foundational voice cultivation practices of Dhruvad Kharaj, Shadaj, Swara Sādhanā, and Alap improvisation. These foundational practices do not use language, they use pure voice and pure vowels. They are in a sense free from language and meaning so as to host the sounder into a deeper, more intimate relationship with Self beyond the word. Though seemingly simple, this kind of practice is challenging for the Sādhaka who is unwilling or unable to direct and sustain their attention throughout the long-tone practices.

Thus, before committing to the long sustained non-syllabic tonal sound meditation practices of Kharaj and Shadaj, a more tangible practice located within language and mantra might be the place to begin. For the Yogi and Sādhaka, language and words can be potent tools in a sound practice, a way for the mind to hold onto meaning and purpose, and for the Yogi Sādhaka to come to focus and stillness. Additionally, daily chanting of mantras, in particular the devotional mantras, can be an excellent way to cultivate a devotional feeling. The devotional feeling towards an object of devotion is a state of receptivity within which the Yogi overcomes obstacles to Sādhanā. The object of devotion could be the pure vibrational expression of Omkar—Om—or could be the form of a deity.

For the Sound Yogi, the Swara is Īśvara (God, Deity). For the Bhakta Yogi (devotional yogic practitioner) the Īśvara (Ishwara) is often in the form of a deity whose purpose is to illuminate reality and awaken consciousness in the Bhakta. The deity can act as a mirror of sSelf and as a portal to Source. The practice that is

offered here is a Mokṣa Mantra Flow. The individual mantras are set in a specific order for the purpose of moving energy, clearing obstacles, and awakening consciousness.

The *Mokṣa Mantras* were given to me by Nāda Yogi, Sri Yogi Hari during Yoga teacher training at his ashram in 2005. The series of Mantras are considered a garland or Mala, a set of sacred prayers on a string much like rosary beads, and are taught as a Sound Yoga Flow. Each of the Mantras contains five main sound elements: 1) Om—the primary Bīja (seed) mantra that initiates the Mantra and activates the other elements of the Mantric formula; 2) the Deity Bīja—the seed Mantra of the specific *Iṣṭa Devatā* or energy aspect (quality) being invoked. The Bījas are sounded like the striking of a drum or gong—Gam, Gum, Dum, Shreem, Aim; 3) the name of one’s own deity ideal the *Iṣṭa Devatā* —the particle or aspect of the ultimate wholeness; 4) a Shakti (energy) exclamation that energizes the deific aspect to action; and, 5) a devotional salutation to the specific Deity being invoked.

Beneath each Sanskrit Mantra I offer an affirmation to self for you to sound out. The Sanskrit mantra works on the vibrational level affecting the ground of Being, and the affirmation works on the conscious level to affect mind and psyche. The two parts combined, spoken aloud by the practitioner work to move the sounder towards Mokṣa—liberation from obstruction. Repeated as a yogic flow, the *Moksha Mantra* cycle will have consequences over time. Thus, I recommend singing each Mantra 3-9 times before moving onto the next Mantra in the cycle.

Take your time to sound all the elements clearly with the understanding that these Mokṣa Mantras are a condensed and therefore potent form of sounded self-provocation and Self invocation. A dedicated and focused practice with these Mokṣa Mantras in combination with the affirmations and personal reflection practices will accelerate personal transformation.

The Mokṣa Mantra Flow

Prepare to initiate yourself into a way of sacred sound, knowledge and insight.

Breathe three deep cleansing breaths and make space within you for practice.

Allow yourself to be empty

Listen to the Tānpūra ...

Begin ...

Sing slowly ... feel each mmmm and each consonant ...

Let your soul soar in each open vowel tone ...

You could sing each syllable separately joined by long breath like this ...

O—————MMMmmmmnnnGAMMmmmmnn

GA—————NA—————PA—————TA—————YE—————

NA—————MA—————HA—————

Or you could sing the Mantras whole as a Sound Yoga Flow.

You will find potency in both forms.

Breathe ...

Oṃ Gaṃ Gaṇapataye Namaḥ x3

I shine the light of awareness within me to see clearly all that resists the flow of inspiration. With strength and courage I awaken to the truth of myself, and am ready to clear my path forward.

Oṃ Guṃ Guru Bhyo Namaha x3

I awaken the Guru within me as the discerning filter of all teachings.

Oṃ Duṃ Durgaye Namaha x3

My sādhanā empowers my path and protects me from self-doubt and cynicism.

Oṃ Shreem Maha Lakshmiye Namaha x3

With gratitude, I awaken to the variety and abundance of opportunity presented in each moment of each day of my life.

Oṃ Aim Saraswatiye Namaha x3

I honour and respect the highest form of knowledge that is sSelf-knowledge.

Breathe ... Come to stillness ...

Listen to the reverberations of your Mokṣa practice

Repeat the mantra flow x2

Reflect ... Notate thoughts that emerged during or after your sounding

Come to stillness ... Breathe ...

O—————MMMmmmm

O—————MMMmmmm

O—————MMMmmmm

Silence—————Listen ... Breathe ...

Place your hands in prayer mudrā ... bring your practice to close

Praṇām

Praṇām to all the teachers and Gurus including your inner Guru who have influenced your presence today, human and non-human, present and not present, living and no longer living

Praṇām to the Tānpūra—the ground and mystical companion of your voice sādhanā

Praṇām to the sādhanās—the multitude of practices cultivating sSelf, sSwara, Art and Artist

Praṇām to the Sādhakas—those who accompany, support, and reflect sSādhanā

Praṇām to sSelf—to the Wholeness of you and your journey of awakening

AUM Śānti Śānti Śāntiḥ AUM



To question how your voice reverberates in the world is a practice of Svādhyāya.

To ask “Who rides upon my tongue?” is the practice of Ātma-Vichāra—sSelf-
inquiry.

Satsang~ sSelf Inquiry and sSelf Study

OM Yogis

Praṇām Sādhakas ... Welcome to Satsang on Sāadhanā as sSelf-inquiry.

We will bring ourselves to presence with three long-breath cycles followed by three OM followed by Silence and listening deeply for three long slow breaths. Let this preparatory practice clear and focus your energy and open up a space within you for new teachings, new ideas and new understandings offered here in this Satsang. With each inhalation make yourself spacious ... with each exhalation release any obstacles you may have to being fully present here and now.

Let us begin. (Readers... read along while engaging in practice)

Inhale ... slowly ... deeply ... imagine clearing a path inwards with your breath

Exhale slow and steady ... release all thoughts and energies unhelpful to this moment

Inhale ... lengthen and strengthen your breath ... clear and widen the path inwards ...

Exhale ... release and empty completely ...

Inhale ... open a receptive space within ...

Exhale ... a steady intentional stream of breath expressing the wholeness of you.

Inhale ... sense Om arising within you ... and exhale

O—————MMMmmmm

Inhale ...

O—————MMMmmmm

Inhale ...

O—————MMMmmmm

Silence—————listen into OM's reverberation for three OM's

Listen deeply into the resonance of your sounding ...

Welcome to presence.

Yogis, in my research of Sādhanā, I found one of the more recent commentaries on The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali written by Sattva Yoga Guru Ananda Mehrotra (2019). In *This is That: Patanjali's Yoga Sutras Padas 1 and 2*, Mehrotra draws our attention to the arrangement of the four books (padas) within Sage Patanjali's major work, and explains the arrangement as purposeful. The first book (pada) of the Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali, is the Samādhī pāda—the Unity book. The first book is not Sādhanā, not the journey nor the practice. It is Samādhī—Unity. The very same Samādhī that we seek through the eight limbs of yoga and through sādhanā, is our starting place. Thus our journey to Samādhī through the limbs of Yoga will always bring us back to the beginning though transformed by the experience of the journey and the realization of being already "That"¹⁴⁸ which we

¹⁴⁸ Sri Nisargadatta wrote in his famous Vedantic treatise, *"I am That"* (1973) there is no path.

seek. Which means that our approach to sSādhana is holistic, non-linear, organic and emergent. In each part we can explore ourselves in relation from the location of Wholeness. Very much like exploring a part of our body that belongs to the whole, we explore from the location of the body, for where else could we explore from? So the sSādhana journey is for us to come to realize Yoga, unity consciousness.

In writing and in thought, this approach may seem straight forward, but realization in the actual, takes time, attention, and deep inquiry. Years ago, I was initiated into Vedānta and meditation practice by a Vedic Guru who lives in the Himalayas and away from the world. After spending time in her presence and under her tutelage, my practice showed me an expanded reality, a transcendent way of looking, seeing, and being. Yet each time I glimpsed this expanded reality (Self), my personal identified and conditioned sense of reality cut short my experience. I thought that from the location of the identified and conditioned self through which I filtered, perceived, and made meaning, to the location of full-awakening or realization, I would need many years of practice and process.

I explained to the Guru that I had a lot of work to do in the relative field before I could attain and or surrender to a larger sense of universal Self, for I still had much to process and resolve. She replied that if I was aware enough to recognize the two locations, the partial and the whole, then why not shift from where and how I perceived my reality. I could view the identified and conditioned self from the location of Wholeness rather than view Wholeness through the location of the identified and conditioned self. She suggested that I

could, if I chose to, continue to refine and process my identified conditioned self from the location of Wholeness.

Her words immediately and effectively awakened me to the reality of a locatable “I” within Wholeness. From that moment, and from within the location of Wholeness (an expanded sense of Self that includes the conditioned ego and identified self), I realized *witness consciousness*. With practice, I found that I could sustain a continuity in witness consciousness while viewing and experiencing my experiences from variable degrees of distance and immersion. Eventually, the witness consciousness integrated into the fullness of Being, meaning that I could experience the various parts or facets of “me” from within Wholeness (inclusiveness, of which all facets (including witness consciousness) are part). Now, through my own reflective sādhanā practice, I investigate myself as a paradox from the location of paradox—as a “synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal ...” (Kierkegaard & Lowrie, 1946, p. 216)—the many and the One.

By starting the Yoga Sutras with Samādhī, Patanjali is saying, if we are truly interested in the art and science of Yoga, then we have to let go of the ‘me’.... and enter the journey from a state of unity consciousness...realize that we are not separate from the whole The practice of Yoga is not to take you from here to a distant future... or escape from here and now, or show you how to better mask an egotistical mind. Rather, it is to realize that you are not a separate self, you are the Self (Mehrotra, 2019, pp. 273). Thus, as we move into forms of sSelf-inquiry, consider exploring from the location of Wholeness rather than from

the assumption of self as separate and as not-yet-whole, or from the view of a self that exists in deficit, as in not-quite whole.

Today's addition to the Sound sSāadhanā Palette is sSelf-inquiry by way of Ātma-Vichāra. sSelf-inquiry practices are an integral part of the Sound sSāadhanā palette to encourage self-directed sSelf-reflection and sSelf-education at all stages of the research journey. Indeed, all the sādhanās in the Sound sSāadhanā palette have introspection and observation woven into their practice.

In this Sound sSāadhanā research, you are invited to quest, to know, and to realize sSelf. According to Vedic scholar Dr. Frawley (2002), “we all want to know ourselves and unfold our deeper potential in life. This requires understanding ourselves on all levels of body, mind and spirit ...” (Frawley, 2002, p. 12). Thus, the Sound sSāadhanā palette for this research includes both sSelf-inquiry (Ātma-Vichāra) and sSelf-study (Svādhyāya).

Though the two are part of the contemplative path of Yoga—inquiry-based embodied process of self-transformation—they are similar but not the same. They differ in their way of approach to an inquiry practice. The Ātma-Vichāra form of sSelf-inquiry is a practice of direct introspective questioning leading to the revelation of witness consciousness (Self) that lies beyond the forms and expressions of identity (self). Svādhyāya, is sSelf-study towards sSelf-realization through a more indirect path. Svādhyāya is the study of sSelf through the contemplation of sound and word, mantra, scripture, contemplative reading and writing practices, and art practices that serve as mirrors and portals to the

practitioner—the one who is studying and reflecting on both self and Self through the medium of their study.

In Svādhyāya we find alignment and inspiration, revelation and instruction, and we find new perspectives, maps and guides, and points of reflection. The process and the forms chosen for Svādhyāya are used as mirrors to reflect and refine the self—to “discover something important about ourselves and to use what we discover as valuable information in the process at arriving at a deeper understanding” of our sSelf (Kraftsow, 2002, p. 25). Whereas Svādhyāya can lead to transformation and refinement of form through form, Ātma-Vichāra can lead directly through form to the non-form of pure awareness. This Sound sSādhanā research offers both forms of inquiry for exploration.

Ātma-Vichāra, according to Dr. Frawley (2002), is

the most important meditation practice in the Vedāntic tradition, and the main source of the Yoga of Knowledge (*Jñāna Yoga*), which itself is traditionally regarded as the highest of the yogas, because it takes us most directly to liberation. (p. 12)

However, this practice is so direct that it is not for everyone. There is a warning attached to it, so approach carefully. Indeed Ātma-Vichāra is a yogic practice not understood or accessible to those with strong attachments to their conditioned self as identity—the sense of self they continually re-create, habitually sustain and persistently project into the world.

Thus, the practice of Ātma-Vichāra is a practice for the Yogis who are personally prepared to seek Self through direct introspection of the sSelf. Which also means exploring consciousness beyond the personal belief constructs that

form a large part of one's identity, including: religion, politics, and theoretical frames of viewing; and identity constructs including: gender, heredity, human form, world view, cultural status and context. Although some may argue here that gender is not a construct and that everything is political, or that non-engagement is a practice of negating present time embodied reality, such arguments are why this form of inquiry is pursued.

Indeed, Ātma-Vichāra sSādhanā is used to cut directly through the complexity of identity, to gain a meta perspective of reality, and to move the Yogi into witness consciousness. From there, the Yogi can witness the conditioned self—the nature of its creation, existence, and continuance—and its reliance on various constructs, systems, and matrices¹⁴⁹s in which it is embedded and sustained. The practice is to move directly through all mental attachments, constructs, and points of personal identification that together compose a sense of self as separate from the other, so as to reach/realize witness consciousness (Self) without literally transcending the body¹⁵⁰. For though this practice questions our entire identity as an embodied being, we do not need to leave the body, for we cannot inquire if there is no location from which to inquire (much like exploring one's hand from the location of one's body).

¹⁴⁹ Arthur Koestler in *The Act of Creation* (1964) in which Matrices are frames of thought with their own rules of play.

¹⁵⁰ There are differing Vedāntic viewpoints on the role and value of the body depending upon the lineage and the translations of the Gurus past. As a singer and sound yogi, the body, especially a healthy and vital body, is integral to a wonderful voice. Similarly, a healthy and wholesome view of the world and nourishing experiences support the pursuit of refined artistry. The practice of Ātma-Vichāra in Sound sSādhanā is an embodied practice towards Yoga through voice. Voice becomes the anchor, the thread that tethers the Yogi to embodied presence. The goal of jñāna Yoga within Sound is to ignite Self-realization (which is inclusive of the self).

Ātma-Vichāra sSādhanā is the intentional pursuit of witness consciousness that will initiate a process of deconstruction and dissolution of identity. If a Yogi strongly identifies as a stable static identity and has yet to critically inquire into what is the self and what are the constructs that make up the self, then the feeling of untethering from identity and from small-self reality is a possible outcome. Each Yogi must be made aware of this potential consequence before embarking on the Ātma-Vichāra quest. A practiced teacher, a steady daily sādhanā and regular Satsang will support the Yogi in their unfolding and refinement of self.

The process of sSelf-inquiry as Ātma-Vichāra is a simple one and so can be explained simply: “To practice it you need only trace the root of your thoughts back to the “I” thought from which all other thoughts arise. This is initiated by the question , “Who am I?” (Frawley, 2002, p. 13). The idea is that the Yogi becomes so focused on the search for the true Self that all other concerns of mind are forgotten. “Who am I? Asked by Whom?”, are the questions of Ātma-Vichāra.

... such inquiry is thinking born of awareness ... not a passive or choiceless awareness, but has a dynamic and probing energy that uses observation as a tool of questioning, ever taking it to a deeper level of examination. (Frawley, 2002, pp. 16–17)

The practice of asking the self deceptively simple yet pointedly direct introspective questions leads the seeker through the illusion of identity.

Where Svādhyāya practice studies and reflects upon the multifaceted nature of individuality towards the purpose of personal refinement, Ātma-

Vichāra (Jñāna Yoga) reveals not only the insubstantial and illusory nature of our presumptions but also our habitual commitment to the false sense of self they create. Thus, the illusion of individuality collapses before direct inspection. In this form of inquiry, witness consciousness is awakened and strengthened. Yogi Peter Marchand (2007) explains the witnessing Self as a stable location that is forever present. He asks,

As the witnessing you exists without having form or quality, it cannot change. Without form or quality, what could change? The witnessing you is ever at rest, ever in the now, ever at peace. (p. 21)

Thus viewing personal realities from a place of equanimous presence allows the practitioner greater energy and clarity to choose and to act more skillfully in their world.

For the Yogi whose mind is ready, sSelf-inquiry in the way of Ātma-Vichāra is the primary method through which Self-realization is achieved. For the Sound Yogi, the questions of inquiry could be, “What part of me dissolves into the long sounded tone?”

“Who is singing? “

“Who is asking?”

Breathe ... and together sound

O—————MMMMmmmm

Sādhakas in Satsang

Yogi 5: I was toning with the Tanpura and became aware of myself within an expanded state of consciousness. I had been thinking about what is beyond the contingent self, and wondered what the Self would look like or feel like. Then I had a vision and realization combined. I continued to tone as I watched what was being revealed to me. The air about me was filled with life forms, other beings, other consciousnesses. The sun reflected off the bodies of the multitude of forms and created light. As I breathed to continue singing I breathed in the light bodies and remembered that spirit travels on air, on breath...and that breath is not empty or clear, it is as full of potentials as silence is full. The Yogic tradition tells us that Prana or Divine energy or Spirit is everywhere permeating all. When I asked, “who am I and who is asking?” I saw me asking and something other than the me I think I know, permeating and enlivening me, passing through me, sustaining me, and holding me alive in space. An ocean of light substance filling the universe. An ocean of consciousness. Not a metaphor for Earth’s ocean. An ocean of consciousness in which we are immersed and out of which we emerge to awaken. I experienced a joyful interchange of elements and a greater vision of Self than I had ever imagined.

Facilitator: Which brings forth the question of “What rides upon your tongue?” To question how our sound reverberates in the world is the path of Svādhyāya. To ask “Who rides upon my tongue?” is the practice of Ātma-Vichara. Your vision seems to have grown out of a combination of these two inquiry paths to become sSelf-inquiry. To ask what the self is made of seems to be clear, as you are examining the object from the subject. To ask the Self from the Self, from

within subjective location that is not a “me” an “I” or a “you”, requires a deep receptivity to revelation.

A Sound Yogi engages sound practices to induce expansive states for the experience and exploration of mystical unity—that which is sought in Yoga. A regular practice will strengthen and develop the Yogi—their voice, their sound quality and breath, their listening and their sitting in concentration. A lengthy practice will induce a change of state to nondual consciousness. Inquiry in sSadhana will cultivate awareness of the journey and accelerate awakening to one’s immersion.

The sonic sādhanās from the Sound sSādhanā Palette, if practiced with a steady and attentive spirit, will awaken you into non-ordinary states of consciousness including full presence. Full awareness. Your voice is your medium and your practice is the portal through which your Psychosononaut¹⁵¹ journeys. The Om Mantra practice, long form tonal practice, Mantra chant, Tanpura and drone alignment practices are all sacred technologies for inducing non-ordinary states of consciousness within which you could navigate and explore your psyche, mind, body and soul. The degree to which you explore and experience is solely dependent upon your intention and curiosity.

Working with voice as a way of sSādhanā involves body, mind, spirit, heart, breath, and energy. Creation of vocal sound is a fully embodied act. Sonic meditations involve the deepening and slowing of the breath, awareness of body

¹⁵¹ The Psychosononaut is one who travels via the sonic dimension to explore consciousness. The Nāda Yogi is a Psychosononaut.

posture in support of breath, and the strengthening and steadying of breath in support of vocal tone. To affect and sustain vocal pitch and tonal centre, a practicing Sound Yogi needs to continually energize their presence while refining acoustic sensitivity and discernment. Sonic sādhanās (the vocal practices in Sound sSādhanā) require harnessing and focussing your entire person in the process of sounding, listening, self-correcting, re-sounding.

The question then becomes, “How best could you support yourself in the work of sSādhanā, in your exploration of sSelf, and your pursuit of sSelf-knowledge?

The answer is provocative, and will require embodied engagement on your part. For there is a way to accelerate your sSādhanā ... to amplify your effort. If you are interested in mentoring yourself into a direct path to awakening ... you will need to create an intentional environment for your daily sādhanā practices.

You will wake each morning and move to a space in your home that you have prepared for sSādhanā purpose. A space that is free from all distraction, noise, clutter, and draft.

Moving from waking into sSādhanā, you will be working with a different quality of energy, one that is fresh from sleeping and undisturbed by the events of the day.

Personal preparation will strengthen your intention.

The practice presented here is for you to carry into your daily sSādhanā.

Let's begin ...

Practice (sādhana)

Rise an hour before the sun breaks the horizon.

Drink pure water ...

Clean your body inside and out ...

Put on the clean clothes you prepared especially for your sādhana

Gently stretch in silence and in preparation for sitting

Thirty minutes before sun rise move yourself to the space that you have prepared for sādhana

Begin Tānpūra ...

Breathe ...

Listen ... relax your eyes ...

Hum for three minutes or more until you feel steady

When you feel present between sleep and awake

Between the night and the day

Gently bring your voice into focus upon your breath and upon your tongue

Open into

O—————MMMmmmm

O—————MMMmmmm

O—————MMMmmmm

Open into

Ā————— on Sa for three minutes

Slide down to Ni on

Ā————— for three minutes

Slide down to Dha on

Ā————— for three minutes

Slide down to Pa on

Ā————— for three minutes

Hold yourself steady and in sur ...

Lengthen and strengthen your breaths ...

Move up to Dha and repeat

Slide up to Ni and repeat

Slide up to Sa and sound Ā————— three minutes

Continue until the sun breaks free of the horizon.

Sit in Silence for five minutes or more

Rub your palms together to build energy in your hands

then rub your hands over your face inhaling deeply

Write your reflections while listening into the reverberations of your morning practice.

Explorations

Practice sSelf-inquiry by tracing your words and sounds through the source of your sound to the Source of all sound. Trace to before the throat, the voice, and the palate, to the breath and the heart that sustains you. Your breath arises from the great energy (*Prāṇa*) of your heart. Follow your sound into your heart, and from there into the life energy (*Prāṇa*) of the heart, and from there to the origins of *Prāṇa* and into silence of Source.

To begin, choose Shadaj 'SĀ' or Om.

Throughout your sounding meditation bring your awareness fully to the tone and to its origin. Hold both in your awareness.

Continue for ten minutes with long steady breaths, sounding the Om or SĀ on the exhalation with long silent inhalations between breaths. Remain fully conscious in your practice with all your senses in attendance. Remain in the room¹⁵². After ten minutes ask yourself: "Who rides upon the breath? Who is

¹⁵² Dr. David Frawley (2018) notes Self-inquiry should be practiced with all the senses. Only if we have control of the senses can we have control of attention and the mind itself. One of the methods of Self-inquiry is to witness the senses. One can witness the sense of sound by holding

singing? Who is asking?" Continue sounding and inquiring through your sound current and just hold the question throughout your sound meditation. In this way, sSelf-inquiry becomes a fully embodied practice-based spiritual inquiry, "not merely an intellectual or psychological inquiry but an inquiry with one's entire energy and attention (Frawley, 2002, p. 14). After sounding continue holding your question, "Who rides upon my tongue?" Move to your reflective writing practice and explore where the question takes you.

Come to stillness ... to silence

Breathe ...

O—————MMMmmmm

Breathe...

O—————MMMmmmm

Breathe...

O—————MMMmmmm

Listen into Silence ...

to a state of pure listening...one can witness the sense of sight by holding to the consciousness of the seer of the inner eye.

Bring your hands into prayer mudra to close your intentional ritual sSāadhanā

Pranam to the teachers and Gurus including your inner teacher and Guru—all who have influenced your presence today, human and non-human, present and not present, living and no longer living

Pranam to the Tāmpūra—your tonal ground and mystical guide during your voice sādhanā

Pranam to the sādhanās—the multitude of practices cultivating sSelf, sSwara, Art and Artist

Pranam to the Sādhakas—those who accompany, support, and reflect sSāadhanā

Pranam to sSelf—to the Wholeness of you, your presence and your journey of awakening

OM Śānti Śānti Śāntiḥ OM



Imagine if your experiences and insights in Sādhanā were notated, and you the explorer, the Psychosomasonautographer, were the vehicle, the navigator, narrator and ethnographer of your own evolutionary journey.

Satsang~ Writing as Re-Sounding

Om Yogis

Praṇām Sādhakas

I welcome you into awareness of the sounded vibration and resonance that you are.

To heighten your awareness in presence, bring your attention to your breathing

Gradually lengthen each inhalation and exhalation ...

Breathe in through your nose ... a long purifying breath deep into your body ...

Exhale ... releasing distracting thoughts and energies ...

Begin to slow your breath ... from 10 breaths per minute to 8 ...

From 8 breaths per minute to 6 ...

From 6 breaths per minute to 4 ...

And from 4 breathes per minute to 3 ... then 2 ... and then 1 ...

As a sound Yogi, “breath is the secret to our spiritual development” (Bhatnagar, 2020)

Breath is the secret to your smooth steady voice ... your long tones ... sur ...
your calm mind and presence.

To create a flowing voice we need a flowing breath ...

To create a steady voice we need to develop steady breath ...

For steady breath we need a steady body ...

A steady body needs a steady mind ...

A steady mind needs a steady breath ...

To cultivate a spiritual peaceful quality in your voice ... breathe from the peaceful place within you

Breathe Peace

Breathe clear mind

Breathe steady body

Breathe stillness

Now sound your peaceful, steady, clear, spiritual voice through Om

O—————MMMmmmm

O—————MMMmmmm

O—————MMMmmmm

Silence—————listen into Om's reverberation for three breath cycles

Listen deeply into the resonance of your sounding ...

Now follow the reverberation of your sounding outwards into the space about you ...

Remain connected with the reverberation through your flowing breath ... pick up your pen and write a few words from where you are, about where you are, how you are, what you see and feel and hear.

Rest in breath ... listen.

Yogis, this Satsang is about writing voice as a re-sounding meditation. Remaining with the breath and sound flow cultivated in your sounding, listening, and breathing sādhanās, and moving in that same flowing state into reflective writing sādhanās. In this Sound sSādhanā design, the reflective writing practices are not separate from the sound practices. They are part of a continuum of breath and sound and state. The writing sādhanās in the Sound sSādhanā Palette are wisdom practices on the sSādhanā journey. They are ways in which you, Yogi, can venture deeper into sSelf-study and participatory self-unfoldment. Through writing, reading and reflecting upon your own voice and experience, you will be tuning to your own wisdom ... your own inner guide, teacher, guru.

Writing as Re-Sounding

In my experience of oral tradition in Indian voice culture sādhanās beyond prepared sargam¹⁵³ combinations (Alaṅkāra)¹⁵⁴, most sound sādhanās are

¹⁵³ Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni are the Sargam, the Solfa of the Indian music scale. Practicing Sargam the singer practices with their Solfa. Singing Sargam.

¹⁵⁴ Alaṅkāra is the name of decorative combinations of Sargam—SaReGa's—to familiarize the practitioner with the notes (swaras) in the raga and in relation to each other.

memorized and to be known by heart through rigorous practice. They are not written down to be read while singing. Additionally, self-reflection is something personal. The focus of a singing class is to listen, attune, sing, listen, align, and sing. Meditation is to clear and calm the mind, body and breath for singing, not to think deeply on matters of the everyday. One's focus needs to be on voice, tone, breath and Sur (pitch and vitality of note).

The addition of intentional reflective practices to sound sādhanā comes from my own sSādhanā where I often experience a flow of thoughts and insights as I begin Kharaj each morning. Over time I realized the value of capturing the insights in writing as I continued my practice. I found that I could use the insights gained in my formal sound sādhanā to enhance and evolve my everyday existence in the world. Thus, I designed Sound sSādhanā with the inclusion of reflective writing practices to fulfil the idea of an intentional journey of sSelf-cultivation.

This Sound sSādhanā research project explores sounding, listening, and re-sounding as practice-based spiritual inquiry. Voice is the primary medium through which we investigate. To this purpose we expand the meaning of voice to include: the sounding voice in singing, toning, and chanting; the speaking voice in Satsang; the writing voice that captures and expresses the thoughts, experiences, insights and inquiries of the many facets of self in and through the written word; and, the artist composer voice that crafts the sounded and the written voice(s) into art.

Through voice cultivation practices we, as Yogis in sSādhanā, seek to know the sSelf—the individuated and identified temporal self, and the limitless Self—as Wholeness ... Fullness. Together, we are on a spiritual journey, a quest—an intentional practice-based inquiry where each day we attend to our practices that reveal, teach, inspire and challenge us in unique ways.

As this is your journey, the level of intensity that you apply to your practice is entirely up to you. Each one of us attends to our spiritual practice and our music practice in our own way and in our own time. A practice may be extended or passed by altogether. The space created for either event to occur—whether to engage or pass—re-sounds within the practitioner as resistance, inspiration, delight or disillusion, or a combination of all. Whether one or the other or all of the above, all reaction states are valuable particularly if self-observation and reflective practices are involved as part of the process.

As a spiritual journey, Yogic Sādhanā leaves traces behind in its wake. Valuable evidence of personal experience and awakening left in the past as we process onwards, eagerly seeking, gathering, filtering, assimilating new insight and cultivating new awareness. Imagine if those experiences and insights were gathered together and notated, and you the explorer, the soul sailor, were also the vehicle, navigator, narrator, scribe and illuminator of your own evolutionary journey. You could record action and reflection upon action. You could observe and write¹⁵⁵ the story of the singer and the listener, the watcher and the composer

¹⁵⁵ To be a Psychosomasononautographer means to explore consciousness, your own soul and psyche through the sounding of your own voice, and to write alongside of your experience through various re-sounding narrative forms, i.e.: field notes, journaling, creative compositions, poetry.

as separate voices and as the unique developing parts of one person. You would hear the mind's commentary, and could capture the reverberations of your practice in word and on paper¹⁵⁶

As sSādhanā is a journey of sSelf-education, ultimately the self-reliant Sādhaka—one who is listening to their inner Guru—will seek to acquire the practices and habits that will support and enhance their journey. On entering the spiritual path, the pilgrim/seeker, Sādhaka, arrives as a culmination of their past experience, trusting that whatever other forms of knowledge needed will be found or gifted along the way.

On the spiritual journey where everything and every encounter carries great significance, knowledge forms¹⁵⁷ gifted and gathered along the way become agents of transformation. There are various forms of reflective writing valuable to the Sādhaka on their journey: the sSādhanā journal, Field Notes, Sonic mapping, Poetic Reflection, and long-form Composition.

Your sSādhanā journal is an invitation to collect notes to self, thoughts about the process, inspired creative visions and or ideas generated by the voice cultivation practices, specific notes from the teacher for individual sādhanās, and insights on matters of importance to you, the Sādhaka and journal keeper. The journal is a personal resource for reflection, future long-form writing, poetry, and

¹⁵⁶ inspired in combination by Baldwin, 2007, p. 11; and, Thielemann, 2001, p. 152

¹⁵⁷ Knowledge forms—technologies—subtle technologies used for Wisdom practices. A Mantra is known as a tool of the mind. It is an instrument that can be used to work on the mind and person. A mantra, a word, as a magical object, is an agent of transformation, a technology of consciousness to be wielded by the Sādhaka on the spiritual quest. Similarly, the journal as a knowledge form can be an agent of transformation, a technology of reflection and change.

music composition. Bring your journal to sSādhanā sessions and Satsangs. Add notes and thoughts on sSādhanā and sound work to be further reflected upon and resourced during your daily sSādhanā and throughout the duration of our time together.

Journal writing is a personal writing of thoughts, feelings, ideas, experiences; stream of consciousness writing, that can ignore or play with grammar or conventional sentence construction. The writing style can be as personal and as experimental as you please. It can be un crafted (or yet to be crafted and edited). Your journal writing can also become a daily practice of reflecting upon your sSādhanā journey and could include field notes, personal experiments, poetry, lyrics, Sanskrit translation, ideas for future development, lists of things to do, new language, sketching, diagrams, charts, doodles, sonic scores and musical maps, Mantras to learn and explanations of Mantras researched, or Mantra meanings and revelations discovered through your own Sound sSādhanā practice. The personal journal is for you only, no one else will see it. Consider it as a workbook that you keep everything in as you go along this research journey.

The other form of writing you may find useful in Sound sSādhanā, is field notation. Field notes are notes on your practice, observations whilst in the action or directly afterward in reflection. Each Yogi is researching and thus participating in an investigation of sSelf through sound practices. Field notes assist the process. The field note form of reflective inquiry offers an informal approach to writing—short-hand jottings or point-form written observations on daily practice, and or succinct notes from the witness of oneself saying, “Here is

this moment (field note), here is my experience, and here are my thoughts (insight and reflection).” Thus, field notes could be: notes to one’s self written whilst working, experimenting and experiencing; and they could also be observations of personal process, words set to paper to remind you of an idea to return to later and develop, in the form of abbreviated writing, visual symbols, maps, explanatory writing, semi crafted or refined. Field notes could be poetic if you think poetically or lyrically...musically. Field notes can contain inquiry, questions or answers to a question. For example,

What part of me is being revealed in my practice today? Who rides upon ‘my’ breath?

Another form of notation that you could use while in the holotropic state, is the visual gesture. Sonic mapping is using visual gesture to articulate in a drawing what may not be articulated with words; the expression of a state or a feeling, a tonal quality, or a sense of presence that may not be fully grasped.

You could use visual gestural lines to follow the shape of a vocal ornament, a microtonal journey, the way the note bends, or perhaps the places your mind travels as it explores consciousness. Consider the sonic map is a resource if you are a visually oriented Yogi, and use map in a similar way as the musician composer uses the musical score, to retrace steps, to remember melody and shape, to capture the movement of sound, emotive impressions, dream imagery and states of conscious awareness.

Sonic mapping uses the visual gesture in ways to organize thought, make sense and meaning out of a reflection or particular lesson, for example: how the notes on a scale sit in relation to each other and or move through space while in

relation. Using the visual gesture to capture sound as it is happening is also a way of promoting stream-of-consciousness writing opening a bridge between the subconscious and conscious self.

Your field notes, journal writings, and sonic maps can be a resource for the compositions of the poet. They can also offer a way back into your original experience. The kind of poem that Yogi 2 presented in our previous Satsang took months of preparation and sSādhanā. In this research, poetic reflection is considered a distilled writing form that takes time to craft out of materials already gathered in a previous process of reflection. I call this process, re-sourcing, a second look, a deeper dive and closer examination of an original experience and its reverberations.

Poetic reflection is a cultivated response to how an event or experience continues to resonate. As a writing form, the poetic reflection is an attempt to crystallize resonance. Through the crafting and refining of the poetic expression, further reflection occurs, crystallizing thoughts sourced from the archived experiences within the subconscious, and out of the cryptic field note jottings and gestural art found within your personal sSādhanā journal.

The poem is a private thing, a personal art, a work of closely considered thoughts, words, and compositional movement describing a constellation of moments and phenomena within your personal process. The constellation is moved into being through the desire to not only express a particular profound moment in time, but to capture, hold, make sense of, relive and share the profundity of that moment. In the context of this research, the poem reflects an

artful process of refinement involving deep inquiry into experience and perception.

Your sound sādhanā will strengthen and lengthen your breath that will carry your voice on a flow of energy, body and heart. Allow your sound to flow without pause through vocal sounding to re-sounding on paper. Experience your writing flow as a continuum of sound sādhanā, not as a separate task. Remain conscious and breath aware as you ride the reverberations of your sound sādhanā into and through the written word.

Sādhakas in Satsang

Yogi 1: For me, the various levels of flow that happen inside my sound sādhanā include: continuing the tone, moving from one tone into breath into another tone, bridging the tones together, finding their own intuitive ways within each tone to connect into the practices you have given us. There is also the practice of bridging tone and breath, sound and notes, listening into vowels and syllables. There is that level of flow and the practice of that bridging...breath, sound, notes, vowels, syllables. There is the flow of structure within the Sound Sādhanā palette starting with Om Mantra then moving into Dhruvad tones and notes, exploring the range of the voice, moving into Moksha Mantras, and then into the SaReGa practice (sargam) before moving back to improvisation with the tones and Mokshas. Then there is the flow of coming out of a sound meditation practice and going into the next activity. I have been exploring whether I can extend my calmness of breath and the principles of bridging and connection within my writing.

Facilitator: You have found the transition spaces, the bridging places where flow of breath, energy, and consciousness can be evidenced. You have a heightened awareness in the moment-to-moment flowing of breath and ideas into words and form. What is the feeling of flow as it is happening?

Yogi 1: I experience flow as waves. Flow for me is a concentrated focus, so in my writing, if I go from sound meditation into writing as a practice, there is a flow that occurs during the writing which is not an un interrupted flow... it is more like waves of an idea that comes or waves of focus. Then I write into that focus...then I let it settle, then I consider the words that I use in my writing and those words provoke another wave of focus to occur in which the ideas are further elaborated, and within that elaboration there is a refinement that occurs and again the process of releasing through the writing and allowing breath to come back in and to see what other possibilities are there for me to allow the development of ideas.

Facilitator: You cultivate your focus during Sound sSādhanā as you move from one practice to the next, and then you continue to flow through your state of focus into writing. I notice in your work different kinds of writing. Could you speak about the kind of attention for the different writing you are doing because some is very creative in the way of Rap or Rantology (Anderson, 2014), another is where you make reference inside of more academic speak, a highly condensed kind of speak that might have been intuitive when it first started before becoming intentionally controlled and directed. Do you notice any shift in attention or consciousness happening inside of that?

Yogi 1: I have different types of writing that I'm experimenting with all the time. The sense of flow (more like waves in an ocean of inspiration) is informed by my sound sādhanā practice. Here are some of the types: a. poetry/rap/academic rant hybrids; scholarly writing with less wormholes than before; technical writing (instructional design documents, workshop proposals); and, reflective writing that is more informal than the first three types. While each of these contribute to being my 'voice', they are also quite distinct in their style, register and intention. I am speaking about the different voices that are being exercised, that are really feeling a grounding, not just my singing voice but my speaking voice and that is through being clear in relationships and individual engagements, listening to what is being said, not letting things slide by. And finally, my writing voice.

Yogi 3: Scholar Sādhanā

Yogi 1: I have been using the structure of Sound sādhanā to keep me on track. Using its form to keep me from formlessness, as well as to ease the path into formlessness and into my writing. Some of my writing is very experimental, academic writing which I wrote down directly after singing and I would create a genre that is more scholarly. I would write about something, whatever, it didn't really matter, and then I would go to google scholar and find scholarly papers to cite and insert whatever was in that flow. So, in a way it was playing with the formlessness and form of poetry but distilling it down to a different yet distinct type of writing. That I am happy to share.

Yogi 2: I would love to read it.

Facilitator: So, through this process for writing you remain in this wave flow immersion emergent space, and, are you surprised regarding your Sādhanā?

Yogi 1: I am always surprised by the increased clarity that the practice is giving me in terms of the other kinds of writing I do. For example, I did not anticipate coming out of Sādhanā today and completing an ethics detail form so quickly. Within 30 minutes it was done. In the past, I created boundaries for this type of writing because it seemed daunting or too complicated. I let the flow of sādhanā just work through me in a different type of writing. From there I went in to creating a proposal for a summer mentoring process. Both coming together fast. But it is not just about speed, it is about the uninterrupted flow. Within the creative act itself the flow is more wave like but I am still in the ocean, verses interrupted flow in which I am pulled away from the work completely because of a life distraction or a block.

Yogi 2: Calling the writing 'field notes' really works for me. I can flow without self-editing

Facilitator: Transcribing your own notes, your own field notes is good sSādhanā. You can reflect on your own words and thoughts. sSādhanā can be arduous. Writing is work. But your field notes offer you a way in. Reviewing what you have written and reflecting on your words and on the event you were writing about can sometimes take you into new themes and towards deeper insight.

Yogi 5: I find myself ready to write as the insights come to me out of my practice. The act of sounding moves the thoughts to flow out onto paper. Writing is not a separate practice to sound or listening for me, because all these practices are part

of my way of self-knowing and self-flowing. I feel the flow as a moving stream inside a space within me but also moving through me. There is some part of me that energetically opens during Sound Sādhanā. My mind is calm and focused, my body feels connected to my breath and sound. I am not thinking about anything other than my practice. I am not trying to think of ideas to write. Insights just seem to arise inside a space that my practice opens.

Facilitator: Who is writing ? Who are you writing into being?

When you reflect on your writing, what kind of voices are coming forth from you?

Poetic—Mystic—Ecstatic—Philosophic—Scientific—Academic—Artistic???

Yogi 5: Definitely Mystic Philosopher Artist. Which makes me wonder how useful those voices are in the world... or how valuable they are at this time in the world.

Yogi 2: I have a few voices—the voice that speaks in images and metaphors, the voice of the poet/ visual wondering wanderer—the curious explorer voice that asks a LOT of questions i.e., “Is the voice a wave and a particle? If light becomes particle when it touches matter, does the voice do the same? What is an overtone anyway—it is mysterious and beautiful, that's for sure.” These are my "why is the sky blue" questions. Then there is my professional writing voice for letters to lawyers, applications for grants, clinical notes and files. And my heartfelt voice that I have been exploring while writing for a dear friend's memorial gathering, and through letters to his friends and family members. My texting voice for family and friends that is playful, loving and informative of the daily stuff of life.

And my professional texting voice for patients and colleagues that is for information sharing. Sound Sādhanā brings out the first two voices and leads to further explorations in drawing, painting, reading, thinking. It is an open field with an ever-widening horizon, like the sun rising on the sound of Ga ...

Facilitator: Questioning how your Sādhanā moves through the various voices and personas of you is Svādhyāya—sSelf-study. You might come to know what rides upon your tongue.

Yogi 6: I have chosen Om for my daily morning sadhana and I often draw as I am singing. You never know what is in the subconscious, and the Om toning seems to open a flow from the subconscious. One morning I added self-inquiry to the Om and then followed the flow into a psychonautic journey to explore the paradox of self. Afterwards I wrote the story of my inquiry that I will share here. I call my composition Paradox.

Paradox (by Yogi 6)

It was one of the “new” mornings. The ones where I am supposed to wear a helmet on; a strange version of an astronauts’ helmet—shiny, round, claustrophobic. But also peaceful in its distance to everything, isolated, quiet with golden linings and a highly impractical purple spartan feather on the top.

I am on a psychonautic, and perhaps agno (unknown)-nautic journey, into a sea of the insides and the outsides, the unknown-knowns, the loud silence that is the path of sonically enhanced self-improvement—my Sonic Sadhana.

I begin my morning ritual **OM**.....x3, Sa..... x..... I’m gone.

Un-present Awareness. A paradox of identity. A question of who am I.. asked by whom? I know from my psych courses, about the “observer” a manifestation of the subconscious, the guardian of the body; it is the quietest of the voices of my mind, but yet the one that sounds the clearest.

Breathe ... Humm ... Vibrate ...

As my sound is about to expire, at that moment right before my mind's voice is about to call for attention, to control my pitch, is that sense of *being* which is at the same time *not-being*. Right before that moment where I am ready to activate, what I perceive is a technique to end the tone right; a slow but constant closing of the mouth akin to the dexterous curved motion done to elegantly end the pouring of wine. That is when *it* happens ...

In the known paradox of Theseus's ship the question of sameness arises. Is Theseus's ship, the same ship if, slowly as it returns from its exploration, has all of its parts replaced?

As most of our cells completely get replaced every 7 years, am I the same person that I was? Am “I” still the same “I”?

Aristotle proposes four causes, four shifting factors that can be used to solidify (concretar - my favourite Spanish word) the paradox. The “what-it-is” he proposes are as follows: Matter, Form, Agent, End or Purpose (Telos)

In the constant fluctuation of the sound of humming, the bumble bee buzzing noise is escorted by a constant stillness of the mind chatter. And “I” try to see:

The **Matter** of the sound, the material cause of the vibrating air molecules, charged up by the warmth coming from my lungs; the neighboring cells, the liquid saliva all constitute me, but they don't belong to me. What is their tendency when they are carried outwards but are affecting me inwards? And as they head to a more stable energetic state, gather in a centre that is outward.

The form, might seem more obvious, but is harder to really grasp. The motion is felt; a steady stream of a humming river, but the source is not as tangible. "I" am compressing the air, manipulating its exit with my mouth, as it carries my past and present, my feelings, my hopes, my fears, or perhaps nothing. The idea of ratios creating the octaves stimulates my imagination of a universal symphony of hums and spaces.

Intervals of frequencies, pauses and wonders, empty and full.

Agency comes into play from two ways. First is "I", the plank that directs the stream through electrical stimuli that move the muscles and organs. That "I" is the human, the organizational structure of cells constituting a space, a magnetic assembly of energetic marriages of tiny atoms vibrating. The second one is the cosmic family of links, of forces, the gears that wobble. The distinction might be just my construct, but there is a one-ness that feels distinct, content in being part of a whole, but calm in its unique-ness.

The end is the horizon in the sea. It's everywhere, its distant, but it's there. But I don't know what it actually is. Perhaps it just ends when I close my mouth, when I go back to reality. Or constitutes a new end, every... time. ~Yogi 6

Facilitator: “Who am I? Asked by Whom?” are the questions of Ātma-Vichāra—sSelf-inquiry. Asking direct questions to the self: “Who is breathing? Who rides upon the breath? Who is singing? Who is asking?”, disassociates the Psychonaut from the identified “I”, clearing the way to explore unknown dimensions of consciousness towards the transformation of Psychonaut to full witness consciousness. The sense of “Un-presence” that you experienced sounds like the distancing of witness consciousness (Self) from the identified “I” (self), or, explained in another way, the expansion beyond the limitations and boundaries of identification into the unbounded witnessing consciousness that is Self. The identified self remains seated while the Psychonaut, the Soul Sailor, sets off to explore consciousness and to question what is sSelf.

Vedic teacher Dr. Frawley (2002) posits that we really do not know who we are, for “what we call ourselves is but a conglomerate or “I and this” or “this is mine,” in which the subject is confused with an object, quality or condition” (p. 13). In this research, sSelf-inquiry as Ātma-Vichāra is the process by which we set out to discover the pure Subject. Once discovered, the question we could ask ourselves is, how might I integrate the experience of pure witness consciousness into an embodied practice?

One of the ways that I have found has been through a contemplative art practice that stimulates the processes of awakening and awareness throughout action, absorption, and reflection. A conscious practice of balancing the ‘I’ between absorption and reflection within an art-based sSādhana is a purposeful positioning towards the cultivation of both sSelf-knowledge and artistic refinement. Meaning, cultivation of self as artist, cultivation of art, cultivation of

Self as location and as Being; cultivation of knowledge of both the subject and the object of cultivation and inquiry.

In this research we are using the sonic dimension through which to induce, enter, and sustain, non-ordinary states of consciousness for the purpose of inquiring within. An area of inquiry I call *Psychosononautics*.¹⁵⁸ Further, because our sonic practices engage our own embodied voice through singing, chanting, toning, humming, listening, reverberation and silence, we enter the exploration of consciousness as *Psychosomasononauts* engaged in a form of inquiry I call *Psychosomasononautics*.

The Psychonaut is the sailor of the soul, the Psychosononaut is the Soul Sailor who travels on the sonic current. Psychosomasononaut is the Sailor of the Soul who enters, navigates, and explores consciousness through the sonic dimension of the embodied voice. Psychonautics involves the: “exploration of the psyche as the means to study and explore consciousness (including the unconscious) and altered¹⁵⁹ states of consciousness; it rests on the realization that to study consciousness is to transform it” (Cohen, 2018). From the Yogi

¹⁵⁸ I created this term specifically for the work I do with sound. I find that consciousness can be explored through a combination of breath, sound, meditation, an explorers attitude, within an intentional environment. In the case of Sound sSādhanā, the attitude is a balance of surrender to practice and determination to heightened attention.

¹⁵⁹ An alteration of what is normal by common consensus. Grof (2019), referred to earlier in the dissertation, does not use this term that he believes connotes pathology. Similarly, the term ‘non-ordinary’ is, according to Grof, too general. Neither term suggests awareness of experience of change, or intentional engagement in the process by the person who is altered or has entered a non-ordinary state. Which is why Grof created a new term for the state of experiential active engagement in the process of expansion, Holotropic. To be a Psychonaut is to enter into exploration of consciousness with awareness. I believe Grof, who was exploring Transpersonal psychology, created new language so as to remove any connotation of pathology around the shift in states of consciousness and emergent spiritual awareness.

perspective, we seek to know, to see clearly the nature of the sSelf—both the limited self and the expanded inclusive Self.

We Yogi Sādhaka Psychosomasononauts, as explorers, researchers, scientists, and artists—seek sSelf-knowledge. Whatever we discover will be unique to each of us. The Psychosomasononaut is the captain, the navigator, the voyager, the vehicle, and the initiator of their own unique experiential investigation. There is enormous potential for sSelf-discovery within the holotropic (expanded) state of consciousness within which the Psychosomasononaut, might find the answer to the question “Who am I?”

As a Psychosomasononaut navigating consciousness on one’s own sound current, if you are awake in inquiry in the holotrophic state, you are a researcher, an explorer, a scientist, engineer, technician, and philosopher leading your own evolution. Through your own sound current you can fine-tune how you travel, at what level of immersion, and for how long.

Yogi 2: I have felt a great wave of something important building in me for the past few weeks. Something important for me to acknowledge. A moving assimilation of a revelation that has come to me in parts inspired by morning Sound Sādhanā. This morning before Satsang the full form of my insight came together as a poem that I would like to read to you all ...

Coracle by Yogi 2

The coracle of my voice, thin-skinned and taut,
Floats out over the waves and tides and hunkers down in its passageway.

Other coracles have set out in the soft morning light.

I sense, but cannot see them.

I look over the curved lip of my craft and am aware of other presences -
The dolphins, walruses and whales that live and breathe both elements of air and
water.

Lifting and falling, gradually understanding the movement of the waves,
With attention and the curious ear, the heart courageous,
Wisps of sound materialize, flow out on the tide of breath and move away.

Blast! There's too much ballast to clear the pull of beach, sand, current.
First thing to go must be the stone of judgement - weighty, noisy and
cumbersome.

Over it goes.

Next to go needs be speed - that little demon - faster! faster! more! more!

Listen. The sound returns to the ear in its own good time and timing.

Next, the desire for a destination - be with each wave, next upon next,

wind rain sun calm

ocean is ocean

Here

Now

With a craft more buoyant

I see my coracle has the rudder of discernment, guiding me through pitch to sur,

And the sail of my diaphragm fills with the deep strength of Sa giving me

fullness of purpose,

The tensile rigging of my vocal chords becomes supple, resilient and responsive.

Sur will come. Speed will come. The destination remains unknown, but

knowable.

Today, at the end of practice, a thought appears -

What a joy it might be one day, when the last tide of breath has gone out

My coracle and I will sail into the ocean of vibration upon vibration

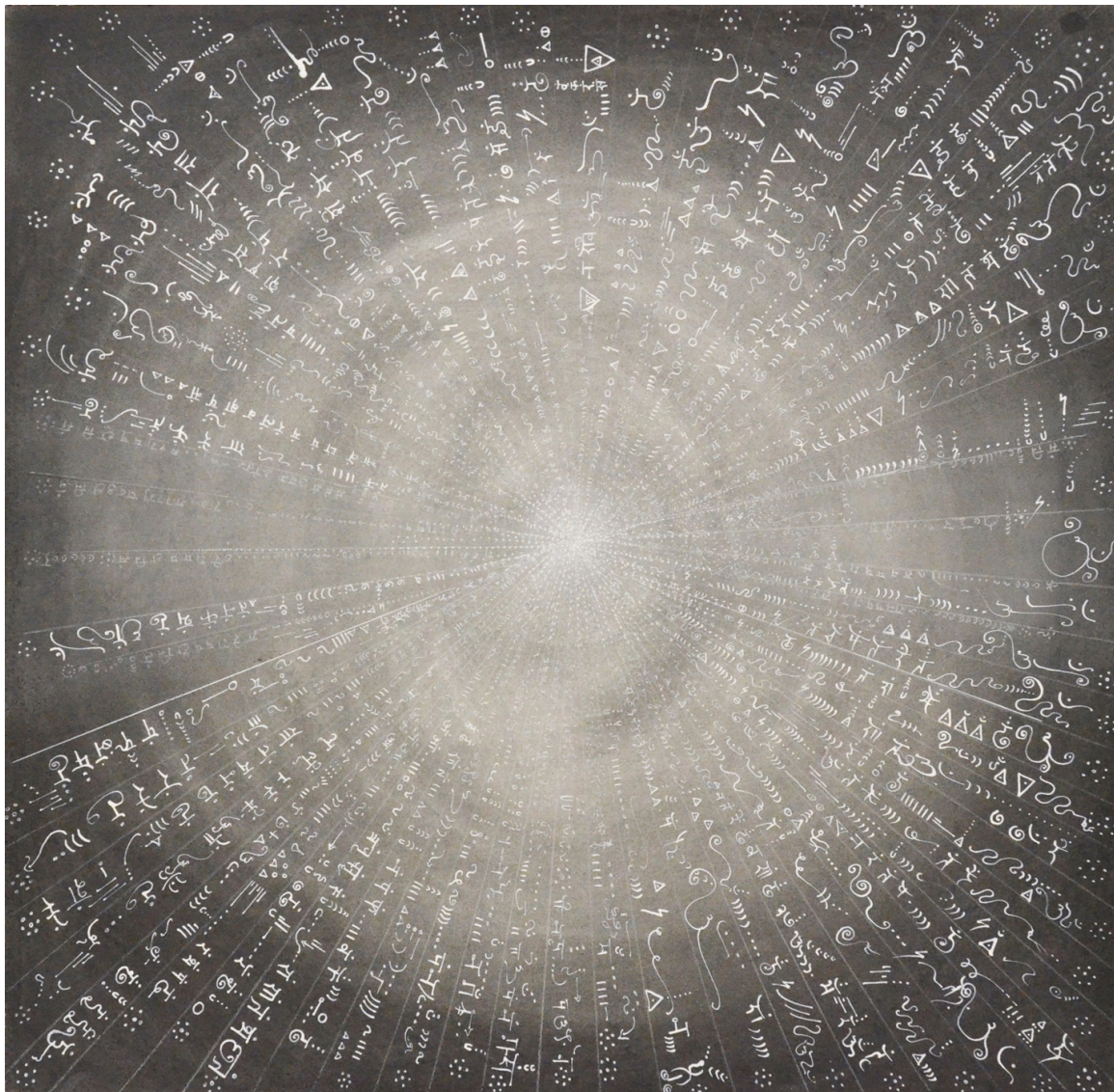
Resting in the Coracle of Being itself.

The same joy that is in this breath, this note, this morning practice.

.....

Facilitator: The churning before the moment of creation is intense. That you had the patience to wait, and to continue with your sādhanā while your art was building, speaks to your maturity as an artist and your commitment as a Sādhaka. Your poem reflects your inner teacher, your witness, your awareness, your discerning intellect, and the skill you bring to your craft. Your words reflect a Svādhyāya practice, whereby your chanting, toning, field note taking and journal writing are the means by and through which you study and reflect upon the nature of self and Self.

Yogi 5: I created my Sonic Map out of chanting Moksha Mantras. I had the visualization of outer sound and inner sound, form and formlessness. If I want to empty my mind and not project any thought or meaning into the world, I just remove form and language and move backwards with my attention to the beginning of sound. If I want to create movement in the world of form and relationship, then I shape the sound forms into language.



Sonic Map by Yogi 5

Facilitator: Have you considered holding both form and formlessness together in sound? Experiencing the body of the shaped sound as still connected to the formless source of sound? Also, inner sound can also be form, shape, and meaning to be transcended or not. The language forms are in themselves subtle technologies for shaping the self. I can see in your drawing a variety of language, some formed and some unformed. Syllables and pictograms with potential for meaning. I would be curious to see and hear how you see and hear and sound the dissolution of form into formlessness. Wonderful inquiry that prompted you to create on paper.

Facilitator: Breathe ... And together sound ...

O—————MMMmmmm

Now we move to a re-sounding sādhanā that you can each explore in your daily sound sādhanā

Practice (sādhanā): Breath, Tone, Word

Prepare your journal, notepad, pens, drawing materials and blank pages.

Place them where you do your daily sound sādhanā

Activate Tānpūra

Begin your sound sādhanā ...

Cultivate meditative feeling and attention through long breath and long tone ...

Continue for thirty minutes minimum ...

At the end of your vocal sound sādhanās, remain in sādhanā and smoothly change tasks.

Continue sounding ...

Long slow breathing ...

Toning ... on each exhale

Let the Tānpūra underscore breath, sound and consciousness

Pick up your pen ... open your journal and while you continue toning ... begin to write

If your thoughts stick, return to long flowing breath and tone

Remain immersed in sādhanā state of consciousness

After ten minutes ... rest and reflect on your experience.

Complete your sādhanā with Omkar and with Praṇām

Breathe ...

O—————MMMmmmm

Breathe ...

O—————MMMmmmm

Breathe ...

O—————MMMmmmm

Listen into Silence

Bring your hands into prayer mudra to close your sSādhanā

Praṇām

Praṇām to the teachers and Gurus including your inner teacher and Guru—who have influenced your presence today, human and non-human, present and not present, living and no longer living

Praṇām to the Tāmpūra—your tonal ground and mystical guide during your voice sādhanā

Praṇām to the sādhanās—the multitude of practices cultivating sSelf, sSwara, Art and Artist

Praṇām to the Sādhakas—those who accompany, support, and reflect sSādhanā

Praṇām to sSelf—to the Wholeness of you, your presence and your journey of awaken.

Praṇām dear Yogi Sādhakas

I Pranam with deep appreciation for your wholehearted participation in this research of Sound sSādhanā as practice-based spiritual inquiry. We have arrived at the end of our formal Satsangs together and will take time for reflection, to experience the re-sounding of your journey of sSelf cultivation through sSwara, and to consider the seeds of transformation planted through your own receptivity, effort, and intention. The final part of this experiential research, is for you to sound your thoughts, words, and voices to page. To offer the culminating insights and experiences of your sSadhana explorations over the three month duration.

Thank you for your trust in me as a teacher and facilitator.

Thank you for your sādhanās, and for your explorations of Sound sSādhanā.

Thank you for helping me in bringing this research of Sound sSādhanā to fruition.

May your sSādhanā continue onwards.

May your every word be Satsang

And may you come to know who sits upon your tongue

OM and Praṇām

OM Śānti Śānti Śāntiḥ OM



Dear Readers

Thus far you have witnessed the Satsangs that formed the foundational practices of the work.

I now invite you to witness the reflections of the Yogis along the research journey.

Reflections on the Research Journey

The Yogis' Voices

Culmination

Facilitator: For three months, we Sādhakas—Yogis, spiritual musicians, and artists—along with me as teacher, facilitator, and researcher, explored Sound sSādhanā as practice-based spiritual inquiry within a yogic paradigm. We approached the study as a spiritual journey—a pilgrimage of sSwara, wherein the voice was the reflective medium with and through which we could practice and perceive the depth and breadth of ourselves as infinitely textured complex beings.

In my teaching, I encouraged the Yogis to open their eyes, to be aware of their inner and outer worlds simultaneously, to be all, to be present in the fullness of aliveness. I encouraged re-sonance—reflective writing practices, field notation and journaling—to bring thought onto paper, into action and experimentation. In this way, a practice-based spiritual inquiry moved into the world of being and doing, of interaction, reflection in action and refinement in response. The strength and vitality of the reverberation reflected the strength and vitality of the Yogi's sSādhanā.

Some Sādhakas find clarity through discussion with others, or with a teacher or guru, and benefit from another's interpretation and or reflection of the experience. As a facilitator and teacher/mentor of sSādhanā and sSādhanā, I return the inquiry to the Sādhaka for their own interpretation and consideration

of the revelation within their own worldly existence, with the researcher as curator and guide.

Spiritual Inquiry through Practice

Researcher: The focus in this research was spiritual inquiry through practice. The idea being that the experience of practice and the knowledge gained through practice would inform and transform the practitioner. Practice meant full participation in knowing from an embodied perspective. Thus, to corroborate a theory, resolve or add to an inquiry, challenge established or given knowledge, or to personalize knowledge specific to one's own questions and context, one had to practice.

As a practice-based yogic sādhanā inquiry, the spiritual practices (sādhanās) we explored were intended to bring awareness of and through the physicality of form, to acknowledge the body as part of the spiritual path, indeed, the body as integral to the spiritual journey. As opposed to the idea that spirituality is a state of being that transcends the body, or that the spiritual experience only happens by leaving the body.

Throughout the research journey, each Yogi was tasked with notating and investigating their own sSādhanā process. At the completion of the three month study, each Yogi reflected on their experience of this Sound sSādhanā as spiritual inquiry, spiritual practice, and as a spiritual path.

This Sound sSādhanā research supports self-agency in the creation, development, and refinement of a personal sSādhanā, and holds that the

meaning of a personal revelation derived from direct first-person experience is for the experiencer alone and not for the facilitator, teacher, mentor, researcher or fellow Sādhaka to interpret, mediate, or make sense out of. However, if the Sādhaka desires to share their experience and their thoughts in Satsang, or crafts art from their revelation to be shared with the group or outer community, then group inquiry and discussion could be and sometimes were invited.

The following offers the reflections of the Yogis in their own voices, curated by the voice of the Researcher in response to themes that arrived.

Reflecting on practice based spiritual inquiry through Sound as a spiritual path

Researcher: Reflecting on the spiritual in practice and inquiry, five of the Yogis spoke from the location of no separation—Wholeness—wherein spirit is an integral aspect of the wholeness of being. These Yogis arrived with experience in spiritual inquiry and spiritual practice, and were receptive to discussion on spirituality and spiritual exploration. The one Yogi new to spiritual inquiry, Yogi 6, required more time, needed additional personal research and discussion to consider the meaning of the term ‘spiritual’, to form a comfortable/ acceptable definition of the term, and to come to an understanding of spirit as part of a holistic view of life. That did not happen during the three month duration. Although immersed wholeheartedly in the Sound sādhanā teachings and practices, Yogi 6 remained at a sceptical distance from the idea of spirit. Here, each Yogi offers their reflection of the spiritual in practice and experience:

Yogi 1: I experienced Sound sSādhanā as both a spiritual practice and a spiritual path, not one as separate from the other. Adding sound sādhanās to my daily asana practice, added another dimension through which to express my spiritual practice. Further, the deep listening sādhanās inspired a praxis of persistent and consistent ‘listening-in’ as my spiritual practice, and that act of listening-in is the path, that for me moves beyond a formal sādhanā and into my everyday world to become a living Sādhanā.

Yogi 2: I understand this entire process to be spiritual—spiritual inquiry, spiritual practice, and spiritual experience. For me, a huge theme of the experience that I would put in the category of “spiritual experience” is relationship. Relationship to everything—me to the sound, each note to each other, the sound to the universe, the universe that I could see and touch and hear, to the unseen universe. For me, the Sound sSādhanā was the relationship...experiencing relationship as process, as moreness, as expansion of presence ...and ultimately as the connection between the philosophy, the action and the practice. The more I have those spiritual experiences, which I can only get by doing the practices, the experiences influence how I think about things. I have always read about this phenomenon but now through my own direct experience, I have a more mature spirituality. I have experienced the results of my practice-in-action. My Sādhanā is a living practice and the wisdom is living.

Yogi 3: For me, Sound Sādhanā is a profound spiritual inquiry. I use my voice and ability to find the exact perfect pitch to determine my level of balance in that moment. As I am singing, I find that my mind is naturally drawn to explore topics and concepts in more depth. I find my awareness is heightened which

gives me insight into many areas of my life. Spontaneous, creative wisdom or intuitive messages are also likely to arise in this state. I associate Sādhanā with Spiritual practice.

Yogi 4: I feel that deep, sharp and subtle listening can penetrate the physical sound to enter the causeless ocean of pure consciousness or awareness without an object. When listening in a meditative state to the drone, when thoughts are quiescent, the sound reveals more qualities. There is more room to experience the whole or at least a wider range of what is happening. When listening to a tone, I practice putting my mind on where the sound is arising from.

I practice following the tone from its gross sound through the overtones, the phantom tones, through the subtle dimension of idea or thought, to the silence of infinite vibrational potentiality or pure consciousness—the state before manifestation. My experiences in Sound Sādhanā enlivened my commitment to pursue sound as a gateway to pure consciousness—the causeless source of manifestation.

Yogi 5: Practicing the way of Sound sSādhanā focuses all the parts of me, especially singing Swara and Kharaj sādhanās because even though spirituality is an integrated part of me, the time in a formal sādhanā is time to focus in a very intentional way. Through a daily sound sādhanā I can work on consciously calming my nerves, my breath, and my mind, and my voice reflects my practice immediately. Within my sādhanā, I experience a sense of expansion—a sense of breadth as well as depth. In my experience, Sound sSādhanā is a powerful practice of grounding, of presence, and of a different kind of understanding that is beyond words and theory.

Yogi 6: I am still exploring my sense of spirituality as I still struggle with its definition. That being so, Sonic Sādhanā has helped me see glimpses of the importance of “I” in relation to the Whole, and how intertwined they are.

Researcher: For Yogi 1, Sound sSādhanā was experienced as both spiritual path and spiritual practice that through the merging of the two in daily practice, arose a specific focus for the deepening of sSelf-inquiry. Similarly, Yogi 2 experienced the entire Sound sSādhanā research event as a spiritual process and experiential inquiry leading to an awareness of relationship between practice, process, inquiry and reflection, and an assimilation of these experiences and insights towards a spiritual way of being in the world¹⁶⁰.

For yogi 2, the Sound sSādhanā research brought the different working parts of practice, inquiry, reflection, action, and transformation, together into a holistic sense of sSādhanā. For one who fully embodied the Sound sSādhanā research process, transformation and greater sSelf-understanding and universal connection was the result.

For Yogi 3, the invitation to Sound sSādhanā research was viewed as a “divine appointment” — as an auspicious moment in time within a busy life. Yogi 3 was ready to attend to transformative work in the way of Sound sSādhanā and experienced the entire process as spiritual inquiry. For Yogi 3, the Sound

¹⁶⁰ Meaning, the world reality of Yogi 2 beyond the Sound Sādhanā research. Yogi 2’s revelations brought about by the Sound Sādhanā research effected response and action and way of being in relationship in the world beyond the Sound Sādhanā practices.

sSādhanā research process was an opportunity to investigate self and to find balance.

Similarly to Yogi 1, Yogi 4 found the listening practices and the listening process to be the most important parts of Sound sSādhanā. Listening deeply into sound focused Yogi 4's attention beyond the realms of the obvious and the everyday, through the layers of conscious awareness into attunement with the subtlest levels of Being. From there, Yogi 4 contemplated the potentiality of sound, reverberation, harmonics and overtones; inquired into the potential of mind to focus and attend to the subtle realms; and, considered closely the spaciousness of source before manifestation and as the source of all creative manifestation.

Thus, Yogi 4 recognized sound and sound practices as *a way to awakening* to consciousness, a way to become conscious by one's own practice. On the value of listening, Dhruvad Guru Pandit Ramakant Gundecha (2019) explained how "mindfulness and the discipline of deep listening while practicing music, expands our consciousness and connects us to something very deep and beyond our small ego-selves" (Satsang, 2018). In another music-based Satsang, Nāda Yogi Sri Shyamji Bhatnagar (2019), explained that if we want to listen into the sound of the universe, there are time-tested yogic practices and methods to do that.

Through yogic practices involving sounding, listening, breathing, and observing, we can internalize our own senses so that we can hear our own Nāda, our own vibration and sound. As we explore deeper and deeper within our own

self, we hear many sounds until we come to our own fundamental note—our own unique vibration that produces its own sound and frequency. In this case, “our own nāda” could mean our own beginning, the point of our manifestation and, since we are listening from our own unique configuration of embodiment, we might hear our own unique signature of manifestation, the hummmmming pulsation of our own constellation.

To hear something as discreet and subtle as our own signature tone—our fundamental note, we need to internalize all of our senses. Yogi 4 settled on the practice of deep listening to tone, long tone, and the tones of the Tanpura, practices that facilitated an opening into dimensions of consciousness beyond day to day consciousness.

Through the long tone and listening sādhanās, Yogi 4 was led inwards into the experience of an expansive orchestration of self, and from there observed a higher intelligence expressing itself beyond and throughout an everyday understanding of reality. Yogi 4 uses the language of the Nāda Yogi and of the Psychosononaut—the explorer of consciousness through the sonic dimension—opting to go directly to the outer (or deepest) layers of being purely for the experience of doing so. Bypassing inquiry to dwell between transcendent experiencing and conscious witnessing.

Yogi 5 experiences all of life as a spiritual path full of opportunities for spiritual inquiry and experience. On such an expansive and inclusive spiritual path, yogic sound practice is this Yogi’s formal spiritual practice. The reasons for this choice of formal practice are based in the awareness of personal

predispositions, an acknowledged necessity of wholesome embodiment (good health and wellness) to conscious evolution, and the suitability of Sound sSādhanā as a response to such a composition of awareness and being. In future research I would investigate further the “different kind of understanding” noted by Yogi 5, to see if such understanding could be put into words and theory for group discussion. For now, I present the voice and words of the experiencer without theorizing, analyzing, or speculating as to their potential meaning.

Yogi 6 was the one yogi who had no previous yogic training, little understanding of Sādhanā as practice-based spiritual inquiry, and was relatively new to the language and philosophy of Yoga and to the idea of sound practices as Yoga. Nevertheless, this Yogi desired and sought self-knowledge and personal transformation. Through persistent daily Sound sSādhanā, Yogi 6 self-activated a new way of seeing and witnessing self-in-relation to self within day-to-day reality and within various perceived, created, and self-manifested realities. Indeed, Yogi 6 regularly used vocal sound techniques to intentionally induce holotropic states for the purpose of deep investigations of psyche (spirit, soul) and consciousness.

In Classical Greek mythology, (Yogi 6’s foundational education), *Psyche* is presented as the personification of the human soul. In European psychology and psychoanalysis, *psyche* is a term used for the summative psychological structure of a person. In the case of Yogi 6, *psyche* was explored as both soul and as psychological structure.

Seeking to view Self through the layers of self, and to find an essence of self if there was one to find, Yogi 6 used the format of Sound sSādhanā as a vehicle and portal to quest as a Psychonaut. Upon re-emergence, Yogi 6 was inspired to write long-form creative compositions to capture and share the psychonautic adventures.

Integrating the Personal, Spiritual and Artistic self.

Researcher: Over the months of the formal Sound sSādhanā research, what became clear was that the Sound sSādhanā process benefitted the participant Yogis beyond the scope of what was intended or indeed expected. The personal, spiritual and artistic aspects of the Yogis' lives were affected by their practice-based inquiry.

Yogi 1 recognized their habitually distracted mind states, and used the sound practices intentionally to self-correct, to focus the mind onto what was being presented in the present, thus enabling their availability to deal with challenges and to interact with others. Yogi 1 came to see contextual reality clearly without the distractions of an unfocused mind, and to view contextual reality from the location of wholeness.

Yogi 1: I can say that the Sound sSādhanā directly informed the personal, spiritual and artistic areas of my life simultaneously, each intersecting the other a little more. The development of an artistic practice of sound-making through Sound sSādhanā has led to a deeper understanding of my spiritual 'side'. That spiritual aspect or manifestation of me, while always present, is more enhanced or deepened or more deeply felt through the Sound sSādhanā practices. And by

more deeply felt, I think what I mean is that a sense of oneness, of just listening, of being present in-the-moment beyond small self, is sustained for longer periods of no-time. The impact on my personal life has been the desire to carry (or be carried by) that sustained feeling of wholeness through my every day, and to allow that feeling to inform my interactions in the world and with others. The practice of deeper listening alerts me to monkey mind thoughts when they appear, to look at what triggered the thoughts and to remove the root cause. I often use mantra chanting to shift my thoughts if I feel stuck in redundancy. Additionally, I am improving how quickly I catch myself distracted from experiencing life in-the-moment so I can refocus my attention.

Researcher: Yogi 2 noticed the effects of a daily Sound sSādhana practice on energy, creativity, intelligence and organization in the work place while also experiencing a heartfelt flow of inspiration and connection with others in the unfolding moments of each day.

Yogi 2: I have had more energy available at work, there has been a deepening of listening and responding in work and in relationships and a greater capacity for creative problem-solving and more ability to be organized in administrative tasks. There has also been a deepening of commitment to daily practice of sound and silent meditation with a gentler, inquisitive, more compassionate approach to my practice. This seems to naturally have an accompanying sense of resonance with my fellow beings and the world around me, allowing me to enjoy a greater sense of flow in my life.

Researcher: Yogi 3 experienced the benefits of a daily Sound sSādhanā practice as an artist and as a spiritual practitioner, and found the overall experience of this form of Sound sSādhanā to be integrative of all previous spiritual experience and practices.

Yogi 3: I am a world-music singer and a spiritual practitioner, so Sound sSādhanā is the perfect practice for me. I can exercise and build my voice inside of a practice that grounds and centres me. I have had to force myself many times before exciting events or shows to do my practice, although I enjoy being high energy, I am now learning that the best place to start is always from the ground up. After just a few months of commitment to the practice the results have been miraculous. My voice has become more dynamic. New qualities, tones and textures are now accessible to me. I have an increased range, strength and flexibility in voice which has inspired me creatively in my composition, recording and performance. I've been working with sound, mantra, music, and various forms of spiritual practice for more than 20 years now, but it feels like this particular practice but all the pieces of the puzzle together.

Researcher: Similarly, Yogi 4 noted an increase in creative energy and confidence, a combination of which is vital to this Yogi's ongoing composition, musicianship, and performance.

Yogi 4: I find an increase in creative energy. I have increased ability and interest in expressing my thoughts in writing and composing music. Additionally, the Sound Sādhanā has given me increased confidence in singing. My voice has become steadier and richer in tone and pitch.

Researcher: This Sound sSāadhanā research process engages the human voice as the artistic medium and as the medium of reflection. Constant vocal practice was integral to the development of the Yogi, their voice, and their musicianship. Simply turning one's attention to their voice, to their own utterance, to their practice or lack thereof, was a means to sSelf-inquiry and a way to refine voice craft. Overcoming personal obstacles to practice became easier once results of a minimal practice were realized.

During a voice culture workshop in the summer of 2019¹⁶¹ I asked Pandit Rattan Mohan Sharma how to encourage a student in their practice. He said,

Set the task at 108 repetitions of Om. Once the student has completed 108 repetitions they will be transformed and will know the benefits for themselves. From then on they will want to do their practice and you won't need to tell them to (Sharma, 2019).

The practice of Sound sSāadhanā offers results—an improved voice, improved listening, clear and organized mind, vitality and creativity, and access to self for reflection, assessment and self-correction/ alignment or re alignment with purpose. As self-confidence grows the Sādhaka will experiment more with their personal sādhanās. As the benefits of practice are realized, the Sādhaka receives feedback from the inner teacher/Guru on the depth and quality of their sādhanā.

The spiritual Yogi musician has already integrated the spiritual dimension with the artistic. What the Sound sSāadhanā research brings to the foreground is

¹⁶¹ Pt. Rattan Mohan Sharma of the Marwa Gharana comes yearly to Vancouver to teach voice culture and to support his students in their Sadhana. I have attended his workshops since 2006 and this past summer had the good fortune to travel with him and ask him many questions on sadhana practices.

the reflective practice. Yogi 5 used the Sound sSādhanā research to deepen awareness of their self as a spiritual yogi musician. Through the Sound sSādhanā research, Yogi 5 became conscious of their spiritual and artistic practice crossing over into all the areas of their life and relationships.

Yogi 5: The study of myself and the practice of Swara, Shadaj and Kharaj has improved my voice and strengthened my mind. I am calmer and more thoughtful, mindful. I listen closer, and I can hear myself from a witness perspective, without judgement (most of the time), which allows me an opportunity to explore further, to continue to work on refining my voice, as well as trying out new ways of being in the world. I don't separate the personal, the artistic, or the spiritual so I cannot speak about these as separate facets of me. I view myself and my practices, my Sādhanā, as one, and from a holistic and Wholistic perspective. The regular daily practice, the group Satsangs, and the overall focus of this research project inspired me. I have become more focused and committed in my spiritual practice and in my artistry. More attentive, energized, conscious and aware. What I find, is that everything in my life has become potentially artful. My singing, my writing, my relationships, my relationship with myself, with food, with whatever ecology I am part of. So, spiritual, artistic, and personal expansion and clarity in all directions.

Researcher: For Yogi 6 the embodied and experiential nature of a Sound sSādhanā practice activated and inspired creativity and the art of writing as a way of sSelf-inquiry:

Yogi 6: Artistically this research has surprised me as a source of encouragement, to DO vs to just think about it. I was able to be in touch with my writing again, a skill I had forgotten about in its daily use as the means to communicate instead of as a means to express inner thoughts and deliberate.

Researcher: Yogi 6's impulse to write creatively and reflectively served as a way to sSelf-inquiry, as a way to the witnessing Self, to self-observation, and to sSelf-inquiry, to ask, "what is the self?" and, "who is asking the question".

Sound Sādhanā as sSelf-Reflective Practice

Researcher: This Sound sSādhanā research combined Satsang, voice classes, and a palette of voice, breath, and reflective practices to support and encourage a daily personal practice-based inquiry. For all six of the Yogis involved in the research of Sound sSādhanā, the voice became more than an instrument of communication through which to exclaim, theorize, or sound a stream of thought. Rather, the voice was recognized as a meeting place between the outer and inner realms of sSelf, a portal inwards to sSelf-contemplation, and a mirror reflecting the ever-transforming and daily-evolving self for personal study—sSelf-study.

For some Yogis, the voice became a vehicle for soul travel through dimensions of time and space in the exploration of consciousness, and an instrument of invocation—bringing forth inner voices and personas to be seen, recognized, heard, and developed. For the sound Yogi, the voice was a way of self-inducing meditative awareness states for the purpose of deeper sSelf-

inquiry—using sound techniques to intentionally slow brainwaves to a state conducive to insight, expansive thought, creativity, new learning, and self-transformation.

The voice became a window through which to observe and investigate the mind, body, psyche, energy, and emotions. For some Yogis, the voice became a barometer—a way of measuring stability and strength of the breath body connection; a way to determine and assess attention; a way to bring the mind into focus and alignment with a present reality, and a way of observing, discerning, refining (connecting, reforming), and distancing anxiety producing thought.

The voice became an opportunity to listen deeply, to refine perception to the degree that hearing became seeing, and seeing became a sensing into the multiple dimensions of being through active awakening, realizing moment to moment what part of being rides upon the breath, what part of the self in process sits upon the tongue, who is revealed in the quality of utterance, in the depth of resonance, and how a Sādhaka might refine and lengthen the quality of their reverberation in the world.

Yogi 1: Working with my voice regularly in Sound sSāadhanā has increased my awareness of what I say, when I say it, and has made those moments when I do speak more intentional and direct. The more time energy and attention I place on a regular sound sSāadhanā practice, the more self-reflective I become. The more self-reflective, the more that those insights guide me to deepen my self-awareness practice. For me, a sound sādhanā practice affords me the ongoing

opportunity to listen-in. In doing so I am compelled to persistently reflect. I had already been practicing self-reflection before this research, so the Sound sSādhanā allowed me the opportunity to deepen that practice and also explore the reflection of various s(S)elves.

Yogi 2: The sSelf-reflective part of practice came about with journaling and writing. I haven't journaled before and haven't written for a very long time, but I found, with practice, it became a way of clarifying ideas and stimulating a creative flow of images for visual art and poetic expression. The journaling and field notes were both a field for exploring images and ideas and a place for honoring my own process of creativity and exploration. This was very freeing as it was a means of igniting ideas and exploring them in a non-endgame kind of way. It was also a way of digesting and integrating experiences in Sound sSādhanā and bringing their insights into relationship with my daily life.

Yogi 3: Every time I try to hold a long note or work to find the pitch, I feel a shift in awareness. Reflecting on my practice is really reflecting on my life, my circumstance. As I begin to add my own sounds and sing, the balance between the drone and my voice becomes a balancing tool. As I find the perfect alignment with each note inside of the tanpura, I feel different parts of me settling into place. If I feel tension or anxiety, I use the sound to bring calm and balance to that area until I feel more in alignment. Spending long periods of time with each note allows me to find balance in each tone. As I listen carefully, I can hear and feel with each note what needs to be brought into alignment in order to find the perfect note. This almost becomes like a metaphor for everyday balance, very carefully and mindfully finding the right place in each moment to find harmony”

Yogi 4: The Sound sSādhanā research made me question why and how I make music and how I listen to sound. It made me realize that the level and quality of creativity that flows through me is dependent on my level of awareness of life as a whole. I feel that there must be no separation but a close relationship between me the artist and the creative impulse. While in sādhanā practice I noticed that there are infinite facets to a tone depending on multiple factors and combinations like, shape of throat, vocal chords mouth, nasal passage, pressure and relaxation of diaphragm, abdomen and indeed the entire body-mind-emotions. Within this process, I was able to observe the play of ego, emotions and discursive thought patterns as the observer or witness. In this way, the sādhanā revealed facets of my personality playing a role akin to formal self-introspection. My experiences in Sound sSādhanā enlivened my commitment to pursue sound as a gateway to pure consciousness.

Yogi 5: This Sound sSādhanā research brought a new level of awareness to my singing practice. I think approaching singing as Yoga and self-inquiry, is a valuable way of being as a vocalist in this world. This approach opens up an entirely different and expanded view of what a singer is or could be. As a sound yogi, I have a different purpose for creating my voice and person. I create according to what is revealed to me about me, which is a truer more authentic measurement of worth. And the closer I get to my true sound and true self, the clearer I feel about who I am in this world beyond any performance or outward presentation of me and my art form. This is new awareness for me discovered through Sound sSādhanā.

Yogi 6: The Sound sSāadhanā practice for me has become a self-reflective practice by silencing the chatter of the everyday. It has allowed me observational distance from my illusion of self. In the practice of concentrating on a particular task that offers a creative and calmative reward, I have honed my sense of self observation and deep reflection. Sound sSāadhanā has allowed me to become a clear mirror so as to see the many obstacles that hold me back in my life. The reflection has humbled me as I can now see myself in relation to the larger picture of the cosmos.

Carrying Insight into the World

Researcher: The Sound sSāadhanā research showed that each of the Yogis experienced personal insights and revelations through Sound sSāadhanā that would transform their way of being in world.

Yogi 1: The regular inducement of a Sound sSāadhanā practice has overall been of great benefit to my well-being. In essence, the practice continues to inform all aspects of my life including the interactions with mind, with the world around me, with the social interactions I have to have, and with the relationships I want to continue to nurture (and) those that are no longer important to give energy to. I feel sharper, less prone to wasting time with unnecessary flirtations of the mind, and somehow more attuned to being present in-the-moment. My ability to listen 'quickly' to others has helped me interpret what is of concern in a meeting, and to directly address it in order to move towards resolution.

Yogi 2: Through this three months of Sound sSāadhanā combined with my other practices, I have grown in confidence that expressing myself artistically is both a

benefit to myself and a benefit to the world, as it gives me the sense of participating and contributing to life, and is a gesture of embracing evolution of self\Self as I continue on this journey of exploration and discovery.

Yogi 4: The Sound sSādhanā research made me question why and how I make music and listen to sound. It made me realize that the level and quality of creativity that flows through me is dependent on my level of awareness of life as a whole.

Yogi 5: My morning sSādhanā is reflection time and my voice shows me clearly where I am in terms of health of mind and body, emotions and attitudes. I am now more present in the words I use, and in how I use them. I know in reflection if and when I have responded unconsciously, and I know that I can change my reactive habits and responses to become more aware, especially in relationships. I am inspired to speak and converse with awareness. I am also inspired to be a kinder, calmer, wiser, and more articulate person. As a spiritual musician, I found the practice of Kharaj and Shadaj very revealing. I came to realize that mastery is not something one attains, that it is a process that requires continual participation. I think that was the most humbling realization and the most valuable alignment for me in this entire research project.

Yogi 6: The sense of self in relation to the bigger picture, the humility of “all of us as vibration”, the beauty of our inner vibration when it synchs with the “whole”. I am inspired to continue even more diligently on this path, with continuous practice for a longer period of time. If this is just the beginning I am really excited to discover what comes next.

The Artistry and Craft of Voice

Researcher: Each Yogi found the experience offered by this Sound sSādhana research valuable in unique ways relative to their own expression of artistry, level of refinement, and understanding of voice craft.

Yogi 1: Musically and artistically I feel that in having a regular singing practice, I am back to my roots of always having music, musical ideas, compositional ideas at the top of my mind. I also find that I am hearing the world anew as if sounds that I hear are part of a larger palette in an ongoing orchestra of sound-making. Whenever I want to clear thoughts, I chant. Whenever I want to clear my mind to hear a composition for a specific design, I chant.

Yogi 2: My ability to keep pitch and sustain notes for longer periods of time has improved, and I notice that my breath feels more connected to and supportive of my voice. The awareness of the ‘mechanics’ of vocal expression has been fascinating, as I experience physical movement and resonance of the vocal apparatus at work. And this experience has flowed over into other important areas of my life – artistic expression and the creation of visual art, writing and poetic expression, and in releasing old, self-imposed notions of limitation.

Yogi 3: My voice has improved in just a short time. I am able to access depths and qualities that I never have before. Because of these results I am inspired to practice. I can only imagine what my voice will sound like after six months or a year of practice.

Yogi 4: The Sound sādhanā research has made me feel closer to my singing voice. I feel more open and welcoming to my own sounding. My singing voice has improved in pitch and tone. This sādhanā research has been a catalyst for me to pursue the universe of a single tone, both vocally and instrumentally, especially playing.

sSwara: will, intent, and practice

Researcher: What was confirmed for all of us in attendance was that swara sādhanā—the practice and refinement of musical notes into fine pitch, beautiful tone, and full resonance—requires much concentration and practice, two ingredients dependent upon the practitioners’ own will and intent. Similarly, Swara—the rare soul-saturated quality of an honest and artfully developed voice and person reflecting pure awakened consciousness, is an elusive phenomena, difficult to explain or teach or indeed, acquire, as it is a quality and presence cultivated only through a lifetime of dedicated personal practice.

Though a daily personal practice was expected and initially agreed upon at the start of the research, the reality that emerged during the actual research process was that each participating Yogi had their own approach to practice as well as their own translation of personal discipline. For some, the research process influenced a more persistent sādhanā and inspired a more rigorous discipline. For others, the idea of discipline in practice was accepted, but the act of cultivating discipline in practice was more difficult to manifest than originally intended.

Thus, the intention for daily sādhanā, however worthy, only held steady for some of the Yogis. What was affirmed throughout the research process was that a daily sādhanā practice requires intent, time, and action. It may begin with an agreement or a promise between teacher and student or guru and Sādhaka, but ultimately a daily practice (sādhanā) is to be fulfilled by the Sādhaka.

Obstacles to the disciplined practice required to develop sSwara

Researcher: As has been detailed in the ‘Satsang on Practice’ in the Satsang section of this dissertation, there are many obstacles to sādhanā, from personal health and wellness, to disturbed mind and thought, ego challenges, or confused understanding between teacher /guru and student, or student with their own mind. The main obstacle noted by some of the Yogis during this research, seemed to be the prioritization of time and energy within a busy and oftentimes chaotic everyday reality.

Though the Satsangs were set in a studio outside of the everyday realities of life, and were intended as a retreat within urban space, each Yogi returned daily to their worldly realities to take care of the necessities of living and working in the world. Had we the luxury of time and space in a retreat or ashram-like setting where we could close ourselves off from the everyday world for a few months, our sādhanās may have likely culminated greater depth and intensity.

However, one of the thoughts I had for creating this sSādhanā research, was to remain in the world of the everyday while engaging a formal or

intentional daily sādhanā of sound practice, and then, as the practice developed, to bring the effects of the intentional practice into the everyday. Thus the everyday and the sādhanā would eventually merge into sSādhanā, a way of being where rather than dividing the day into what is sādhanā and what is the everyday, all action and interaction would be experienced as an opportunity for sSādhanā. However, to come to such a realization would require preparation, work, discipline and practice, and of course the intention to do so.

From the beginning of the group research project, Yogi 1's personal daily sSādhanā was activated and continued without falter for the duration of the research. This Yogi desired a strong and productive discipline, and from out of the Sound Palette and Satsang teachings, cultivated a regular early morning sound sādhanā as preparation for the day ahead. Over time and with regular practice, Yogi 1's morning sādhanā continued to flow throughout the day.

Yogi 1: With few exceptions, I have cultivated a daily early-morning (4:30am-8am) practice since the beginning of the research. I've also developed some habits as to when I sing. The underlying rule of play is that if I wake up for whatever reason between 4:30-8am, I will put the tambura recording on and gently chant. The duration of the chanting is usually 30 minutes as I go through humming to swara to OM's to moksha mantra. I also have a recording of a tambura that I can play while driving so at times chant OM's and do swara practice when commuting.

Researcher: Yogi 2 initially had difficulties establishing the perfect time for a daily sound sādhanā practice as there was already a regular long-term morning

practice in place. One of the reasons for the difficulty was time ... enough time. Additionally, there were both challenging days (energetically) and “perfect flow” days, thus it took a few weeks to rearrange the daily schedule and find the best time in which to establish a consistent practice.

As the facilitator of the research I listened to Yogi 2’s time experiments, and was inspired by the Yogi’s persistence. Yogi 2 explained that a definite and consistent time for sādhanā was not really possible, rather, time needed to be in flux, flexible, depending upon the day and energy levels. Yet, regardless of time, Yogi 2 and Yogi 3 expressed that a commitment to regular sādhanā was important to cultivate the benefits.

Yogi 2: I have a morning practice of between 20 minutes to 1 hour or more. My difficulties at the beginning were with establishing a regular time for practice and overcoming that thought of ‘not having enough time’. Some days of practice flow more smoothly than others, but even if tired or agitated, I found there was always a shift towards a more positive and energetic outlook, even on difficult days. The consistency of practice built the confidence in its benefits.

Yogi 3: I am a new mother and am so busy with my son’s care that I found time difficult to manage. Finding a quiet hour to myself most days was impossible. So I sang in my car as I went about my daily business, and also I sang with my son.

Yogi 4: I was not able to get up early to do it in the morning. In the morning I do silent listening to the inner sounds and following where they lead. I chant and listen to my Guru given mantra mentally and talk to and visualize the Guru in relationship to energy centres in the body I have been doing half an hour in the

evenings or afternoons of the Sound sSādhanā after work but not regularly as I had intended to. There were periods in my life over the past four decades where I would get up at dawn and do spiritual practices like mantra, pranayama and meditation, so I do know the experience and benefits of it. I have a more relaxed approach to sadhana now, but would like to ease into one that bridges the rigorous and the relaxed approach.

Researcher: Yogi 4 did benefit from the research by keeping Sādhanā top of mind. Thus the research provoked movement in the way of resistance, contemplation, reflection on patterns, action and non-action. The research process rekindled the connection to a previous sādhanā practice and spiritual experience that transcended time, place and context.

Yogi 5 approached sādhanā as a necessary daily practice for wellbeing, health of mind, emotions, energy and body. Thus choosing specific grounding and stabilizing morning sound sādhanās as preparation for the day ahead. In Yogi 5's case, taking the time for sādhanā each day is so important that a disciplined sādhanā was embraced with intensity and devotion.

Yogi 5: A morning practice time is important to me. It calms and centres me for the day ahead. It also reveals my daily state, which is usually vulnerable and unsteady, so that I can take the time to strengthen myself. I also like to write reflections. Ideas and insights that come up during my singing that usually have something to do with what I am working on in my day, or some insight about a dream that I just woke up from. I also sing in the evening and anytime during the day when I want to steady myself or ground myself. I enjoy the practice of

Nāda Yoga, and I like to tune into the flow of the universe, first through singing, then humming, then listening into resonance, and then just being in the flow of silence and fullness. I am working on my capacity to tap into Nāda Yoga at any time of the day, no matter where I happen to be.

Researcher: Through sound sādhanās, Yogi 5 found a way of viewing the body, mind, emotions and energy, to discern what was needed as a response, and to choose the appropriate sādhanā from the sound palette. The practical application of sound tools as a counter to various states of mind and emotions throughout the day demonstrates self-awareness and self-regulation on the sSādhanā path of Wholeness.

Similarly, Yogi 6 approached sSādhanā with discipline and experienced the daily sādhanā practice as a necessary and life-changing discipline. Yogi 6 desired to know the self (the conditioned self) so as to transform the self. To see and understand the conditioned and contingent self so as to realize ways of assisting and elevating the self. Through disciplined daily sādhanā, Yogi 6 regularly activated the holotropic state of consciousness where self could be viewed and work on self could be engaged.

Yogi 6: My Practice is done consistently in the mornings with a short write-up of my thoughts right after and more extensive writing in weekend evenings. There was a couple of days that I let my anxiety of “lacking” time inhibit my practice, but I returned with more commitment and determination and worked longer and harder the following days to make up for the lost time”

Researcher: Yogi 6 came to the research with a strong desire for personal transformation first and foremost, before the desire to develop as an artist or musician. Thus, Yogi 6's daily sSāadhanā through sound was a deep inquiry into the nature of sSelf.

Yogi 6, a self-described Psychonaut, fearlessly ventured into the dimensions of consciousness seeking illumination on self and on Self. The specific sound sādhanā chosen by Yogi 6 was the intonation of Om. Long silent breaths combined with the sounded transforming tones of AUM and the singular wholeness of Ommmm, became the daily entry point for exploration of awareness states and consciousness.

Yogi 6's experience is an example of choosing the perfect sādhanā through receptivity, attunement, and alignment. The Om sādhanā was just what Yogi 6 needed. A seemingly simple entry into sound work that, once embraced, became a profound tool of sSelf-inquiry. So successful was this particular joining of sādhanā with sādhanā, that it has become a life practice that continues to this day.

Meta-Reflection on the sSāadhanā process by each Yogi

Researcher: Two complementary types of inquiry co-existed in this dissertation process. The first was an experiential exploration of Sound sSāadhanā practices. Participating Yogis notated their experiments with the sound palette and the daily reflective practices, reflected on their experiences, and created out of their own documentation. The second type of inquiry invited each Yogi to reflect on

the sSāadhanā process itself. To question the process as a *way of inquiry* and as a path of cultivation of self and artist.

Awakening the Yogis through inquiry of experience, and inquiry of inquiry process, brought awareness to sSāadhanā as a sSelf-cultivation practice, and supported each participant in developing a self-regulated sound sSāadhanā discipline; a practice that they could extend beyond the timeline of the research.

Yogi 1: I feel that my involvement in a research process challenged me to commit to a regular practice. There was some external pressure to follow-through, to reflect upon the process, to write out my experiences. The inquiry itself provoked me to develop a regular sound sādhanā practice and when the benefits began to become apparent, I almost felt like “why haven’t I done this earlier?”. This is because of the many benefits that transpired. The periodic social gathering in Satsang was also an opportunity to share how the process was going for me, and it was great to hear others speak about their own process. I felt both empathy and also new insights from others that I considered as I continued my own practice. The structures that the lead researcher provided us gave us sufficient freedom, time and challenge to continue to evolve our own sound sādhanā practice. The insights provided by the lead researcher also helped me re-think my approach and attempt new approaches that I further benefited from.

Yogi 2: I feel most aligned with the Dhruvad and riyaz practices. I love the slow practice and the sense of diving into sound and the physical embodiment of each note, and then watching this effect on my consciousness and state of mind –

usually a movement into clarity, resonance and a sense of freedom both physically and mentally.

Yogi 3: The thought of approaching a spiritual practice with the intention of becoming my own Guru was life changing for me. It is quite a profound concept for me to ponder and has a great deal of significance for me on my own personal journey. One of the translations of the Sanskrit word "Guru" means to bring darkness to light. For some time now, I have been in a deep process of praying for my own shadows to be clearly exposed so I may clear them. It occurred to me recently that what I am doing in this practice of Sound sSādhanā is essentially becoming my own Guru - bringing my own darkness into the light of awareness.

Yogi 4: What I found most intriguing in the Sound sSādhanā research was the practice of the long tone. Holding a single note, tone or vowel, and listening deeply into the infinite architecture of its sounding, was what I found most interesting.

Yogi 6: I was most aligned with the disciplined practice that yields practical results towards self-improvement. That being, a wider self-knowledge of self by helping organize thoughts, how to better deal with insecurities by seeing them through a third person perspective, control emotions, set goals and follow a constantly refined dharma. The added freedom of thought and the continuous encouragement from the lead researcher were key in identifying and pushing me to the most fruitful of directions.

Sound sSādhanā Inquiry: Foundation to Praxis

Researcher: The Sound sSādhanā research process moved the participant Yogis forward in the development of their sSādhanā beyond Sound sSādhanā. The practices kindled and rekindled an awareness to sādhanās and practice materials already in the palette of each yogi's life:

Yogi 1: The experience of the Sound sSādhanā research over three-months was rewarding and has seeped into my every day activities including writing, composition, communication at meetings and remotely. I reflected in writing how the practice of sound sādhanā improved my articulation of ideas, keeping a sense of flow and connection between written and spoken ideas, the quality of my voice and improved listening when engaged in meetings with others. The experience was transformative.

Yogi 2: The 3 months of Sound sSādhanā have been a time of exploration, discovery, healing and transformation for me. The commitment to a daily practice allowed to bring myself\Self, no excuses, to sit, focus and to attend to the listening and response, the work and play of my own consciousness unfolding and interacting with the world and realm of sound, and its immediate and often surprising and joyful effect on me. And the more days of practice, the more there was a sense of progress, of finding creative connections amongst the aspects of practice – sounding, chanting, journaling and reflection and image-making. Each practice nourished the others and so this aspect of RELATIONSHIP became a theme of discovery for me. The relationship of each note to the other, of my voice to the tanpura, of my intention to my production of

sound, of myself to the other participants and to the contribution we are making to Sheinagh's work and study. All these relationships were woven together in this practice and I am infinitely grateful for having had this opportunity and experience.

Yogi 2: I came to this practice of Nāda Yoga, of sounding without any musical ability or training, simply with a desire to express myself through sound and to discover and deepen my spiritual practice through this practice. As this 3 months of practice progressed, I realized how often, in sounding and singing, I 'play it safe' – partly through a lack of confidence in my ability and also through a more general lack of boldness and the willingness to 'fail', to miss the mark, to fall flat on my face. All necessary qualities if one is to progress in any endeavour, but it has been the way with me and artistic expression, that I find it difficult to allow myself to commit to the process, to 'take the chance'. So, it has been revelatory to find that, with a daily practice, the stretching of myself—of the notes I can reach, of really listening for the changing qualities and textures in my voice—has become 'low stakes', not fraught with 'failure'. Letting go of self-judgement and embracing exploration and curiosity as my attitude has made this a very joyful practice.

Yogi 4: I experienced an increase in creative energy. And I have increased ability and interest in expressing my thoughts in writing and composing music.

Yogi 5: Clarity of mind. I can see and hear clearer. I can see my mind working and I can also observe myself when speaking and singing. So, I have developed a witness consciousness, a kind of observer-self usually experienced in meditation.

But here the observer/ witness self also discerns and informs. Which means that I can self-guide and self-correct. I feel like I am developing super powers. This must be what the lead researcher meant by refining perception. I also have refined my voice at the same time, almost as a side effect to the focus and clarity of my mind.

Yogi 6: Emotions, overthinking, expecting vs observing are common parts of everyday, that only become apparent when your focus is funneled through a vocal tunnel. The practice has improved my focus, lowered anxiety, and even helped me in controlling my vocals better; holding a note, accepting mistakes, being un-presently aware of the self”

Beyond Artistic Practice into Praxis

Researcher: I wondered if the Yogis would continue to develop their practice. That through the Sound sSādhanā process of becoming their own sSelf-researchers, they might now be empowered to cultivate their own ever-evolving practice. Indeed, the Yogis might be inspired to integrate their work of sādhanā into their everyday living.

Yogi 1: I think it compelling to ask myself moving forward how I will initiate new collaborations that I wish to cultivate. In this way, I take increased ownership over my own creative process and collaborations. I believe in doing so, I am enacting Viveka¹⁶² and extending the discernment of pitch, tone, breath,

¹⁶² Viveka~ A Sanskrit term meaning: Discrimination, discriminative understanding (Iyengar, 1993, p. 348). A *Vivekin* is one with discrimination (Bryant, 2009, p. 595). Note: Vivekin sounds very much like ‘awaken’... an awakened one, or one who can see clearly (Anderson, 2020).

intention, focus and discipline that I am developing in my sound sādhanā, towards “the cultivation of essential virtues and the aspiration towards spiritual liberation” in every action, and in every day interactions.

Yogi 2: This practice has inspired, and continues to inspire me to remain curious and hopeful and to bring my heart, intelligence and senses to respond to each day and each moment as truly and openly as possible.

Yogi 3: Being a part of this research project has grounded my personal sādhanā and given me an strong starting point to continue forward from. This practice serves as a meditation, energy clearing and balancing, and vocal workout that is perfect for me. The best kind of sādhanā practices are the practices that suit the disposition of the practitioner, and attend to what is needing development in the practitioner.

Yogi 4: I am considering closely how I am in the world, how I want to proceed into the next part of my life and how I want to use my music in the world. To be in Sādhanā is important work, and this research has provoked me to consider how I want to be as a sound sādhanaka in the world.

Yogi 5: I will continue onwards quietly deepening my personal Sādhanā, cultivating myself on the path of artistry and subtle activism as spiritual artist, teacher and mentor. A formal daily sound sādhanā will remain as my way forward in health and in spirit.

Yogi 6: Om sSādhanā, sonic mapping, and writing will be with me from now on. I will continue to get to know who I am and how I am in the world. I now have the tools to find my balance and calm, and a place where I can truly see myself.

Researcher: By the Yogis' responses, our research together planted the seeds of transformation that hopefully will continue to grow and re-sound well after our formal research together has come to completion.

Reflections on Sound sSādhanā as Spiritual Inquiry: The Researcher's Voice

Researcher: To be a Yogi in sSādhanā is to bring attention and intention to the process of spiritual awakening through practice, attitude, and philosophical stance. If one's practice and Praxis is to become Yoga sSādhanā, then the approach to one's practice needs to align with Yogic principles.

B.K.S Iyengar (1993) posits there is an art to refining the body and senses, the visible layers of the soul, working inwards from the gross level to the subtle level of the being. The sādhanika is "one who skillfully applies [their] mind and intelligence in practice towards a spiritual goal" (p. 22)—to know the sSelf, to sSelf-realize, to merge and become Yoga (One, Whole). To this end,

Practice implies a certain methodology, involving effort. It has to be followed uninterruptedly for a long time, with firm resolve, application and devotion, to create a stable foundation for training the mind, intelligence, ego and consciousness. (pp. 16–17)

Additionally, discipline is a necessary part of the equation for a successful sSādhanā, wherein "the culture of consciousness entails cultivation, observation,

and progressive refinement of consciousness by means of yogic disciplines” (p. 16). Also referred to as *Tapas*.

Yogic disciplines come in many forms, “all are means by which we strengthen ourselves in order to break the cycle of habituated and addictive behavior that keeps us enslaved” (Kraftsow, 2002, p. 22). Through engaging in *Tapas* (disciplines), “we are challenging ourselves to wake up out of the momentum of our daily lives, to pay attention, and to look at life in a new way” (p. 22). According to the ancient scholars of Yoga, “there can be no Yoga without *tapas*” (Kraftsow, 2002, p. 19). However, for *Tapas* to be fully effective as a means of waking up, we need to also engage sSelf-study ... Svādhyāya.

This cycle of conscious intention in action and inquiry is sSādhana. For the idea behind sSādhana is that the Sādhaka engages discipline through a cycle of action, reflection on action and the effects of action, self-correction by refining action and or manner of approach, before returning again to skillful action. This active evolutionary cycle opens the way of sSādhana and the opportunity for the Sādhaka to consciously engage in their own awakening through a co-creative relationship with each emerging reality.

Yogi Ananda Mehrotra (2019) claims, “the word Sādhana means tuning” and the Sādhana Pāda in Patanjali’s Yoga Sūtras predominantly discusses the specific practices by which we could tune our consciousness. Tune our mind, and tune our body to experience the state of yoga (p. 1599). As a yogic musician tuning the instrument of self, the process of tuning is a focused refinement and development of the capacity for sensitivity and perception in a continuous ever-

evolving skillful application of self-expression directed towards deepening into one's fullest dimension as Self (that includes self, *sSelf*). Mehrotra (2019) teaches us that it is the holistic practice of the yogic path that helps us to gain attunement with our source knowledge. Source in this sense meaning our essential expanded inclusive conscious nature that is Self. He says,

Sadhana is the supreme practice of the yogic teachings and we bring the yoga into our life through our sadhana which allows us to be in yoga, not just to do yoga, but to be in yoga and gain unity with the source, with our own essential nature, and so create a greater sense of flow in our lives. (p. 1620)

Thus the invitation to this research was for yoga initiates who would already have some understanding of the background of the yogic transformation process, including knowledge and experience with the Yamas and Niyamas¹⁶³—foundational practices to living skillfully, with intention and ethical awareness—and thus know that Tapas (disciplines and quality of discipline) was integral to the path. There are various types of tapas (disciplines), just as there are various types of yogis each with their own unique disposition, requiring the shaping of *sādhanā* and the *sSādhanā* path in response to that unique need. B.K.S. Iyengar (1993) tells us, “Practice demands four qualities from the aspirant: dedication, zeal, uninterrupted awareness and long duration” (p. 18).

Admittedly, I hesitated writing the above statement in the invitation to research as I did not want to scare away any research participant, and also, I wanted to allow the research to unfold to see if any of the Yogis would pick up

¹⁶³ The *Yamas & Niyamas* (Adele, 2009, p, 15) are ethical guidelines, personal disciplines and observances.

the sādhanās and become self-activating, self-creating, and self-disciplined in their own sSelf-research, which some did. As noted in earlier writing, the hope was that each Sādhaka would choose from the sSādhanā Sound Research Palette the tools and practices that would best suit them so that they could move forward on their journey and push through whatever obstacle or diversion might emerge for them on their path.

One of the basic requirements of Tapas¹⁶⁴ (discipline) according to Kraftsow (2002), is ‘to cut through distractions and to bring our full attention to the present moment’ (p. 21). For if we are to effectively apply Tapas, we must be able to see the specific actions of our lives and our entire relationship to activity. To this end we might begin by observing the quality of attention that we bring to a given activity in a given moment. In this way we can bring a whole new level of discrimination into our practice, and on the basis of such discrimination our practice can become a way of refinement and strengthening (p. 21).

However, even knowing this to be true, throughout the research process Tapas needed to be continually examined, explained, unpacked, discussed, and reframed many times in negotiation with the equally various forms of resistance that arose in some Yogis. As the facilitator, I adapted my perspective on Tapas based on each Yogis demonstrated level of discipline. Similarly, as the primary

¹⁶⁴ Tapas~ from the Sanskrit root *tap*, which means to cook. Tapas is the means through which we transform ourselves. Also related to austerities, renunciation, and deprivation in some Yogic lineages, In depriving ourselves of something to which we are habituated, we resist acting in out habitual patterns, and this resistance leads to an internal heat that purifies, strengthens, and transforms us (Kraftsow, 2002, p. 21). Tapas takes the forms of disciplines, practices specific to counter habit or to create new habit. The goal is awareness, discernment, and ultimately self-control. The way of tapas in Yoga Sādhanā is used to intentionally transform, change, purify or remove old habits and establish new and more useful patterns and habits. So, tapas is an action, a way of action, a practice, and an attitude with discipline.

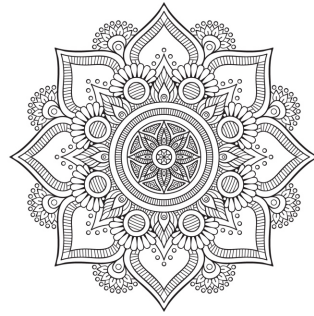
researcher, I adjusted my expectation for the research process to proceed as planned, and made space for the emergence of unique expressions of sSādhana presented by each Yogi.

In the context of Yoga Sādhana, Tapas has three aspects or layers of meaning, qualities that ensure evolution for the Sādhaka: 1) intensity; 2) self-correction (self-mastery, self-regulation); and, 3) devotion. Meaning that a Sādhaka needs to have or to cultivate passion, fire and determination in their actions; a willingness to participate in active self-refinement as in self-correction arising from self-observation; and a joy in their chosen path, devotion to their practice and to their unfolding, a quality that allows their action and spirituality to merge.

In this Sound sSādhana research, not all the Yogis were consistent or rigorously disciplined in their sādhanā or aligned with the research agreement. However, they all acknowledged the necessity of discipline for a practice to happen and benefits to be received. Thus, they continued to work towards cultivation of discipline.

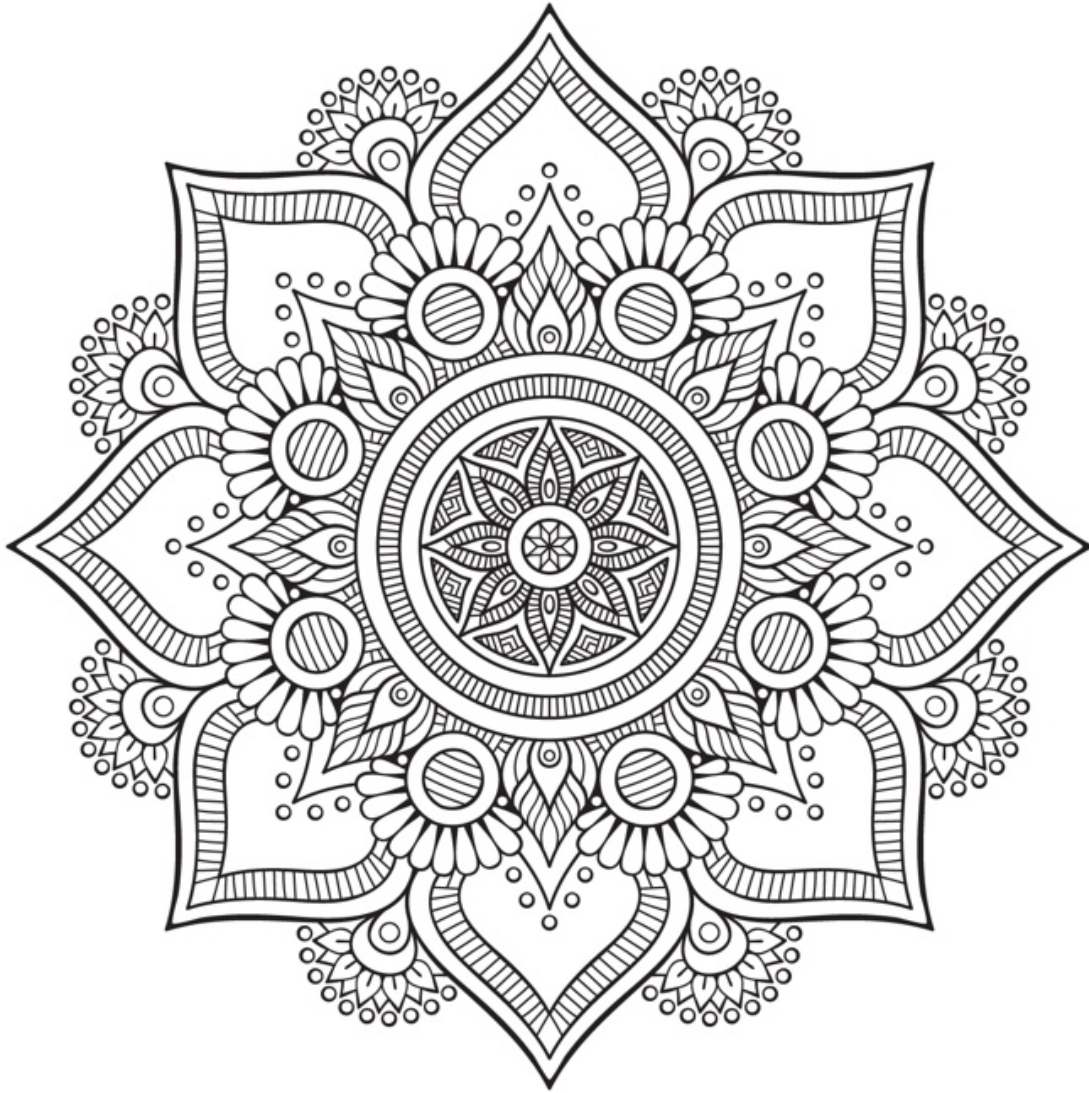
As a researcher, one of my Tapas (intentional disciplines) throughout the research process was in cultivating a balance between non-attachment and receptivity regarding the results of my inquiry. My inquiry into sSādhana as practice, as yoga, as a philosophical stance, and ultimately, as a way of practice-based spiritual inquiry, needed to be held lightly. The potential in this area of research is emergent, contextual, and thus dependent upon its constituents,

which includes time and timelessness, heart mind and energy congruence, and a generous self-encouraging curiosity.



Om

Final Arrival



Now dear Sādhakas, as we arrive at final pages of this dissertation, my first thought is to return to the beginning. To begin again as I do every morning in my sound sādhanā where each day I am new, changed fundamentally by the practices of yesterday and the days before. Each day, my personal and artistic understandings and transformations are reflected in the steadiness of my breath, in the dimensions of my voice, and in the depth of presence from and in which I approach my practice. In each new beginning I *see* that I am beginning again with a new arrangement of body mind, and energy. Each new beginning, a new constellation in the process of me. Each new beginning, an opportunity to attune self to Self.

Such is the desire to return to the beginning of this dissertation ... to begin again from where I am now. For the group research may be complete but my sSādhanā continues as I reflect on my research of sSādhanā as practice-based spiritual inquiry with a community of seekers, and examine the teachings this process offered up to me as researcher, teacher, and sādhaika.

I created this research of sSādhanā as practice-based spiritual inquiry with the understanding that experiential embodied inquiry practices translate to embodied ways of knowing for those who seek knowledge through engagement with the sources and forces of their animation, whether divine, vibrational, biological, or cosmological. Within this dissertation, voice cultivation practice is the location of sSelf-inquiry (Ātma Vichāra), sSelf-study (Svādhyāya), and daily reflection. The wider playing field for this investigation is Yoga, both theistic and non-theistic, dual and non-dual, wherein paths are numerous and paradoxes are

their points of convergence; and, where each seeker can engage at their level of commitment and understanding.

Our explorations lead me to an understanding that spiritual practice needs to be investigated. Furthermore, such investigations need to be experiential and personal endeavours unique to each aspirant. Teachers and gurus can point the way, offer guidance and a reflective mirror for thoughts and actions, but they cannot take you to heaven as Swami Chinmayananda¹⁶⁵ earlier stated. The wise words of the outer teachers and the sacred literature of gurus are to be explored through embodied experimentation and assimilated into the uniqueness of your own life. Though it is possible to renovate one's own nature by the inspiration sought and found in the words of others and through Svādhyāya, Sound sSādhanā is a personal unfolding of subjectivity, and is the work, the practice-based spiritual inquiry of the Sādhaka who seeks to know sSelf, the whole sSelf.

Art practice as sSādhanā offers that necessary subjectivity and opportunity to investigate self and experience spirit. In the art process as sSādhanā, the artist can explore and have reflected through material engagement and relationship, the composition of self in flux moment to moment, and can enter into a vertical time spaciousness and immersion in Self, soul, unity. Within a contemplative art practice is the space for the sSelf-inquiry process. For in an art practice and exploration through material mediums, including and especially

¹⁶⁵ The Holy Geeta Chapter 6 verse 5: "Let a man lift himself by his own Self alone" Swami Chinmayananda explains that it is healthy to believe in help from an external source while striving on the spiritual path "only when the thought is correspondingly complemented with sufficiently intense self-effort" (Chinmayananda, 1976, p. 407).

the ephemeral sonic materiality of the sounded and the unsounded voice, the Sādhaka as spiritual seeker comes face to face with their sSelf.

In the process of exploration, the artist plays at the boundaries between the known and the unknown. There they meet their expectations and their limitations. The artist Sādhaka in sSādhanā as practice-based spiritual inquiry, meets their resistance to the movement of transformation as a reflection of the rigidity of their identified self. In the active awareness process of Sound sSādhanā in which voice practice is approached as an awareness practice, and reflective writing is part of the sSādhanā design, the artist Sādhaka comes to know more about their self and the forces with which they are working through the medium of their engagement.

The Sādhaka has the opportunity through their practice, to gain agency, ownership and mastery of self and materials; to cultivate witness consciousness, and to watch the transformation of their self, alongside of the transformation of their materials and artistry. Through steady intentional practices, the artist comes to know, challenge, shape, transform, and sublimate the energy of resistance, softening the boundaries between resistance and reception.

However, in creating a space and place for spiritual inquiry and personal spiritual journeying, I have come to acknowledge that a spiritual journey is a personal and subjective undertaking not to be pushed or rushed or defined too early. A path created by another, no matter how inviting or well-lit, may not inspire curiosity or hold commitment.

As a practitioner of sSāadhanā, my sādhanā was to design the research, the palette of instruction, and to design, teach, facilitate, and mentor from a place of practice. As explained in the beginning story of my research dissertation, I teach from my practice and I practice what I teach. My sādhanā during the research process was to remain in my own practice alongside of the other Sādhakas. As I already have an established daily sādhanā from which I created the Sound sSāadhanā Palette, I have a profound relationship with the practices. To me they are discovery portals disguised as simple voice practices. The portals can only be accessed through surrendering to voice practice. Meaning, not through their practice alone, but through the embrace and surrender to practice. For the artist Sādhaka who immerses wholeheartedly in their practice, the Self offers up treasures, including nondual unitive vision from which to view the self. I know this through practice, through sSāadhanā.

As a teacher of sādhanās, I taught the voice cultivation practices and encouraged reflective writing. In voice lessons, I could hear a Sādhaka's practice or lack of practice in the quality of their voice, and would know of their awareness of my discernment by the questions and stories offered as a diversion. I know this, as I have used the same strategies myself in the past with my own teacher. Thus, I saw my younger self reflected in some of the Sādhakas. I also saw my resistant egoic assuredness reflected in another.

During the research, I realized that as a teacher I needed to be flexible with my approach, and receptive to the various perceived forms of resistance offered by the Sādhaka, and to the various expressions and directions of growth. I began to approach my teaching as a collaboration, to work with the pace,

readiness and interest of each Sādhaka. I came to know that my enthusiasm for practice was mine alone, and learned how to be still while listening closely to where each Sādhaka actually was inside their own practice. I also learned to sublimate my desire to teach, guide, activate and inspire transformation in each Sādhaka, into receptivity and availability to the invitations and offerings of each Sādhaka.

Reflective and responsive as both Sādhaka and Teacher within the challenges of teaching, the inquiry on stillness emerged during the research as one of my personal sādhanās. I needed to find and cultivate stillness within myself so that I could perceive the other Sādhakas clearly, without the bias or influence of my desires, and respond from the clarity of discernment. Thus, stillness in action or action in inaction¹⁶⁶ was to be the first of my personal tapas, the disciplines I was to consciously practice during my teaching.

To be still and listen closely, was the next tapas. Being quiet and still while listening closely, was the next. To quieten my own voice I needed to quieten my inner voice and thoughts, and before that, I needed to quieten my expectations and desires. Before that, I needed to surrender the process of my planned research to other processes of individual learning over which I had little understanding or control. In my surrender I made space for the unexpected to arise. I realized that my work was to find silence within me, to listen from

¹⁶⁶ Inaction in action (Bhagavad Gītā, Chapter 4: verse 18): One who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction, is wise indeed, is a yogi, who has performed all actions (para). 'All actions' here denotes all activities of mind, intellect, senses, and body (Goyandka, 1978, p. 198). As a Yogi the tapas is to perform all work without attachment, desire, egoism, to the outcome of work. To let the divine act through me without my attachment to the fruit of my action. If actions are committed with desire and attachment, the fruit of the action is contaminated by the actor.

silence, to be Silence. Essentially my tapas was to cultivate attentive awareness from the position of stillness and fullness. I already know this place as a Sādhaka, now I was to know this space as a Teacher and Researcher.

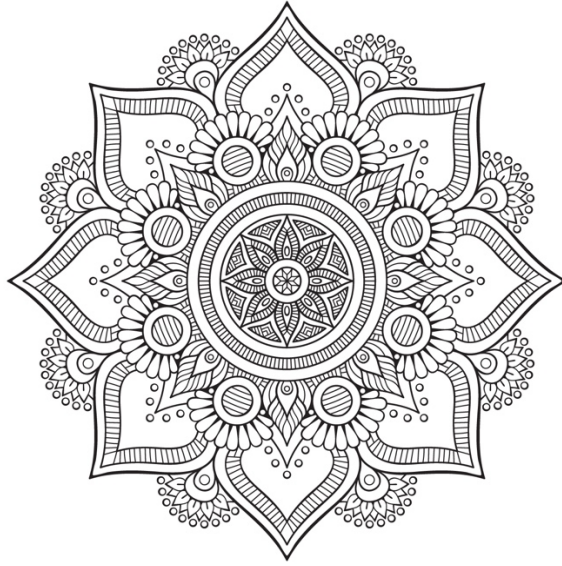
As a practitioner and teacher of Sound sSāadhanā within an oral cultural tradition, the relationship of learning between teacher and student is circular and dynamic. My experience of myself as teacher and as Sādhaka in my research, was interconnected with the group process. Although the palette for research was designed before we began, the way of application was unique to each Sādhaka. As teacher and facilitator, I bridged the palette of sound practices to the understanding and commitment of each Yogi Sādhaka.

As researcher, I gathered all the reflections that the participating Yogi Sādhakas shared. My sādhanā as a researcher was to draw all the teaching and Satsang transcripts together along with the Sādhakas' notes and reflections, to find emergent themes, and to weave them into a narrative in response to my inquiry on Sound sSāadhanā. I wanted to know if Sound sSāadhanā could be a frame for practice-based spiritual inquiry. I found that Sound sSāadhanā, by its very nature, *is* practice-based spiritual inquiry.

As researcher I wanted to know if Sound sSāadhanā could be a space for sSelf-inquiry, sSelf-study and reflection alongside of artistic development. What became clear through the research was that artistic practice, sSelf-inquiry, reflection and sSelf-study, work well together, especially in this case when the artistic medium is the living process of voice, breath, heart, and person.

Finally, I wanted to know through a group pursuit of sSwara in sSādhanā, if one could actually cultivate both the self and Self—refine the artist self and bring about whole Self integration—through practice. For myself I know that sSwara is possible. I have experienced sSwara in my teachers and have glimpsed the phenomena in myself. However, as a group sSādhanā exploration, although seeds were planted and effort made, more time in practice is needed before offering an affirmative answer to such an esoteric inquiry.

In the short term of this research, seeds of transformation were indeed planted. How they will be nourished into the future is entirely dependent upon each Sādhaka and their own path. For now, I return to my own practice to begin again though much changed by this experience. Om



Each section of this work is sSāadhanā. Each word and every piece of research is sSāadhanā.

This way of offering, dear Sādhaka, is the way of Satsang.

Om Tat Sat

The Final Praṇām

Sound Yogi/Facilitator/Teacher/Researcher:

Praṇām dear Yogi Sādhakas

We have reached the end of the story of this Sound sSādhanā research, but for many of you, your own sSādhanā journey has just begun. My hope is that this dissertation will continue to exist, not as a complete explanation, definition, or map of Sound Sādhanā as practice-based spiritual inquiry through sound, but as a catalyst for the creation of further practice-based spiritual Sādhanā research.

This dissertation contains enough information and direction to start a discussion and a practice. However, for all of you witnessing this dissertation, remember, I have been writing about an oral tradition, and almost all the practices are sound practices passed through in-person transmission.

An oral teaching practice requires the teacher to teach from their practice and not from a written page. For oral teachings are not static. They may look fixed in text upon a page, but once they are taken up by a Sādhaka, by you, they will be in motion as agents of transformation. What is important to remember is that the written voice practices are the bones of a practice, not the soul.

The work of the Sādhaka is to bring their soul into their sādhanā. The work of the teacher and Sādhaka together is to activate and enliven sSādhanā. Thus, the relationship between teacher and student Sādhaka is sacred. Teachings shift and are made specific to the composition of the student and the context in which they are being taught. The teachings I received from my teachers were for

me alone. To pass on the teachings, I teach from my own practice that has been informed and inspired by my teachers, and in response to the disposition and composition of each Sādhaka.

The teachings here in this dissertation were contextual and specific to the individuals and the composition of the group. Similarly, the themes that emerged from the individual daily practices and within Satsang, were specific to each Sādhaka. Meaning that if we were to begin again with the same palette of practices, but with an entirely new group of Sādhakas, new points of inquiry would arise, with new discussions, new themes, new understandings, and new art creations.

This dissertation has come to an end, but your sSādhanā may just be beginning. I encourage you to explore your voice—your voice tone, colour and texture, strength and flexibility—the weight of your words and the thoughts that are being shaped into sound. Watch what happens to your person as your sādhanā progresses and your voice turns golden. And when you are ready, reflect upon the mirror of your voice and ask, “Who rides upon my tongue?”

Thus I offer you, the unique composition of you, my Praṇām, with deep appreciation for your wholehearted participation as witness to this research of Sound sSādhanā as practice-based spiritual inquiry.

Thank you for your close listening as I recounted this research journey.

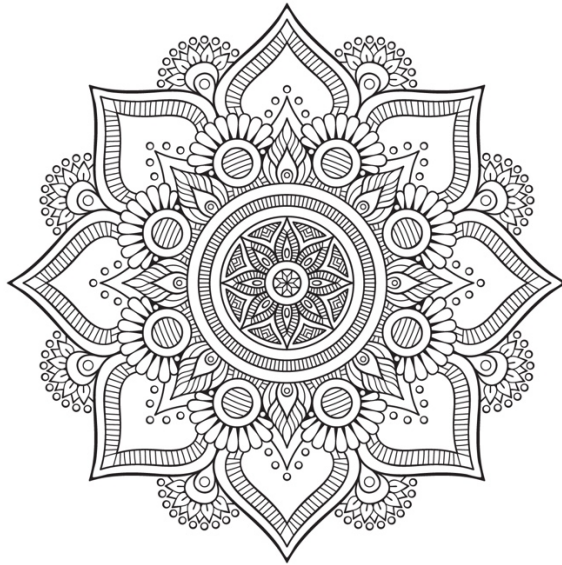
Thank you for your sādhanās, for your curiosity and joy in your explorations of
sSelf and sSādhanā.

Thank you for helping me in bringing this research of Sound sSāadhanā to
fruition.

May your sSāadhanā continue always. May all your words be in the spirit of
Satsang.

Om Praṇām

OM Śānti Śānti Śāntiḥ



Om̐

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Appendix A. The Research Design

Study Details

Sound Sadhana: Sounding and Listening as Sadhana
PhD Dissertation Study/ Ethics ID# 7608, Application # 2017s0635
Sheena A. Anderson

Supervisor

Dr. Lynn Fels, Professor, Faculty of Education

Faculty

Faculty of Education

Project Title

Sound Sadhana: Sounding and Listening as Sadhana

Principal Investigator

Sheena Anderson, Faculty of Education, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Student

No collaborators or team members

1. Introduction

Sadhana

Sadhana is a Sanskrit term meaning practice towards a goal. In a Yogic Context, Sadhana means practice towards a spiritual goal. The spiritual goal of yogic practice is self-realization. The concept of self-realization is fundamental to Yogic culture and Indian philosophy. The idea being that human nature is perfectible whilst embodied in a lifetime or through multiple lifetimes. Sadhana is based in the philosophical understanding of life as a spiritual journey within a beginningless cycle of birth-death-rebirth extending over many lifetimes, a cycle that can end once perfection is realized (Coward, 2008, p. 190). Thus, a Yogic Sadhana is an active and committed engagement with perfecting one's human nature towards the goal of self-realization.

There are different kinds of Sadhana practices towards the Yogic goal, and I am focusing on contemplative singing, sounding and listening as Sadhana.

I am naming this practice Sound Sadhana.

Sound Sadhana

Sound Sadhana as spiritual inquiry through sounding and listening practices, draws upon various forms of yoga, including: Nada Yoga—the yoga of sound, vibration, listening, and meditation; Mantra Yoga—mantra singing and sounding (for activation of energy), and meditation; Bhakti Yoga: the yoga of the heart which uses devotional singing, mantra, chanting, and prayer; and Indian Classical Music voice culture practices with raga (melodic structures) to develop the voice, breath, ear, and mind of the practitioner; Mindful reflection and recollection; Reflective writing; Satsang discussion and storytelling, reflection and inquiry into the forms, textures, and qualities of sound, compositions, aural perception, and oral expression.

Inspiration for Study

The idea of conducting a study of Sound Sadhana with a group of Yogis and Musicians interested in combining their sound practice with yogic spiritual inquiry arose from: 1) my success with Sadhana as enactive, self-designed reflexive practices through various art forms in *Artistic Sadhana: Embodied Praxis of Awakening* (Anderson (2016); and 2) from the noticeable lack of either experiential spiritual inquiry or critical spiritual inquiry in secular university education.

The Gap where I place my research

Spiritual inquiry as a research paradigm is currently emerging across disciplines and academic streams (Lin et al, 2016, p. xiii), most often entering through Adult Education, Contemplative Education, and occasionally (though indirectly) through the arts. Although “the arts...[may] offer a means for reintroducing spirituality into education” (Irwin, 2007, p. 1402), in part due to the artistic environment being potentially flexible and open to experimentation, art and spiritual inquiry are often kept at a critical distance from each other rather than directly engaged with one another as in experiential spiritual inquiry with/ in and through artistic practice. Thus, it is within this perceived gap that I place the offering of Sound Sadhana as an artistic, reflective, and experiential form within which spiritual inquiry could be explored. Indeed, within which spirituality could be performed, investigated, experienced, and shared through sound, art, group reflection and discussion.

What is Unique about Sadhana?

The difference between a reflective contemplative practice and a Yogic Sadhana, is the grounding philosophy, the approach to practice, and the goal. A reflective practice can exist separate from a Sadhana, or could become a Sadhana. Sadhana could include reflective contemplative practice as part of its process. Reflective

contemplative practice alone may not lead to an intentional praxis (engaged action in the world) or towards a specific goal necessarily.

Eastern Philosophy in Practice

A Yoga Sadhana means practice towards the goal of self-realization—the realization of being interconnected, interrelated, and interdependent with all other living beings. Which leads to an expanded sense of self beyond the separate egoistic self. As a Sadhana practitioner awakens, they realize thought and actions have consequences, and consequences reverberate throughout the larger sense of self beyond and across lifetimes. Which is how Sadhana moves through an individual practice into praxis that is of benefit to the greater planetary community.

The concept of self-realization is fundamental to Yogic culture and Indian philosophy. The idea being that human nature is perfectible whilst embodied in a lifetime or through multiple lifetimes. Sadhana is based in the philosophical understanding of life as a spiritual journey within a beginningless cycle of birth-death-rebirth extending over many lifetimes, a cycle that can end once perfection is realized (Coward, 2008, p. 190). Thus, a Yogic Sadhana is an active and committed engagement with perfecting one's human nature towards the goal of self-realization. Further thus, Sadhana can take many forms. It is basically the approach to a practice, whatever that practice may be. I have chosen to explore Sadhana through Sounding and Listening.

This study will add to the cartography (mapping) of spiritual inquiry, contemplative arts practice, and reflective practice.

Funding Source

None

Conflict of Interest

None

Location where research will be conducted

Yoga Studio. Om Studio 1540 West 13th Avenue, Vancouver, BC, V6J 2G4 Canada.

*Om Studio is my own teaching space. No permission is required. I have held workshops here over ten years.

Relationship with other previously approved studies

None

Documentation of peer review

Not applicable

Indication of harmonized or multi-jurisdictional research

Not applicable

2. Summary of Proposed Research

Objective

My objective is to engage a group of yogis, artists and/or musicians for a three-month study in a yoga studio environment for the purpose of exploring the value and potential of using Sounding and Listening practices as Sadhana—spiritual inquiry and practices of self-cultivation through art. Within the three-month study, I will explore potential of Sound Sadhana as a form of contemplative arts praxis. I intend the study to be carried out during the period beginning January 31, 2018 through to April 30, 2018

Study Purpose

The purpose of this research is to partially fulfill the requirements of my PhD Program (Arts Education), as well as to increase understanding of:

- a) How individuals might integrate their spiritual practice with their art practice;
- b) How individuals pursue their spiritual inquiry through their art practice;
- c) How individuals might self-design and self-manage their own Sadhana; and
- d) How individual artists working with their own Sadhana design might benefit from sharing their experiences of Sadhana within a group of other Sadhana artists.

Central phenomena and research questions

My inquiry rests on the central concern that an arts practice can be approached as a spiritual practice and as spiritual inquiry. That the cultivation of artistic skills can coincide with the cultivation of the practitioner. And that the benefits of such an integrated practice could extend beyond the art object and / or attained artistic skill to affect other areas of the practitioner's life.

Research procedures and methods

1. I propose:

- a) to work with 3-6 practitioners over a period of 3 months to study the process, value, potential, and effect of Sound and Listening as Sadhana;
- b) all study to be done in a yoga studio outside of SFU;
- c) the group will meet for a 3-hour workshop session bi-monthly for group sound class, discussion, reflection, and sharing of experience on the subject of Sound Sadhana; plus, one 1-hour individual Sound Sadhana session bi-weekly, for check in, design recalibration, and individual support going forward in personal daily Sadhana study; the total time of in-studio study over the three-month period will be 24 hours;
- d) all discussion and informal interview for each and every session will be recorded and transcribed by me only.
- e) Both audio recordings and digital transcriptions of discussions and informal interview from each and every session will be uploaded to a password protected external hard drive that will be kept in a locked file cabinet at Om Studio accessible by me only.
- f) All digital and audio material collected in this study will be kept for a period of 2 years at which time they will be destroyed.
- g) All digital and audio material collected in this study will be used for the purpose of my PhD dissertation only.
- h) There are no plans to use the digital and audio study materials for secondary research.

2. The first 3-hour group session will:

- a) provide the group of practitioners with the context and parameters of my investigation—the study of Sound Sadhana

through committed daily practice of sound, listening, and reflection in addition to weekly and bi-monthly meetings for study;

- b) introduce Mantra study, Omkar tonal study, sound meditation (Nada Yoga);
- c) guide a Sound Sadhana practice session with breath, voice cultivation practices, mantra, chant, meditation and reflection;
- d) introduce and encourage the accompanying practice of self-documentation: field notes, reflective writing, sonic maps, reflective drawing, recording, or other art forms conducive as both reflective processes and documentation- documents to be shared (or not) at the discretion of each practitioner, to be collected as data only with the consent of the author;
- e) invite each practitioner to decide upon their specific practice going forward;
- f) make individual appointments for bi-weekly study and check in going forward;
- g) record the session with audio recording only.

3. Each consecutive 3-hour group workshop will:

- a) include a full Sound Sadhana workshop session—training in voice, breath, mantra, meditation, reflection, readings and discussion;
- b) invite offerings of music, sound, song, poetry from the participants to share with the group;
- c) invite sharing of experience and or reflections from personal Sadhanas;
- d) facilitate group reflection: discussion and informal interview on the subject of spiritual inquiry and practice;
- e) discuss the idea and practice of self-managed Sadhana design;
- f) be audio recorded

4. Each individual bi-weekly session will:

- a) engage in Sound Sadhana to focus the participant;
- b) engage in discussion and informal interview on individual's Sadhana progress;

- c) refine, co-create and co-design the participant's Sadhana if required;
- d) note if the participant is self-creating and willingly engaged with their own Sadhana process, to then support the individual's journey by teaching and discussing new material in sound, voice, composition, narrative, textual study of Mantra, mythic story, or poem;
- e) encourage self-documentation through reflective writing forms: field notes, sonic maps, reflective drawing, recording, or other art forms conducive as both reflective processes and documentation—to be shared or kept private at the discretion of each participant;
- f) Set a goal or a plan or a map for next session;
- g) be audio recorded.

5. I will*:

- a) teach materials on Sound Sadhana at every session;
- b) facilitate informal interview and discussion on the process of sound as Sadhana;
- c) record every session on an audio only recorder;
- d) digitally transcribe every audio recording;
- e) digitally scan personal written reflections and or field notes willingly e)shared with the group for discussion, returning the original to the specific participant after scanning;
- f) share the digital transcriptions via email file with the specific participant for affirmation, addition or edit;
- g) secure all data, raw and transcribed, on a password protected external hard drive and locked in my file cabinet to be accessed by me only, to be used for this one study only, and to be destroyed after the archival period of 2 years is completed.

***There will be no coercion exerted upon participants to participate. And no conflict of interest on the part of any personnel involved in the study. Detailed risk assessment in response to question #7 and #8**

Instrumentation

Not Applicable

Data Analysis Plan

I will:

facilitate informal interview and discussion on the process of sound as Sadhana using the prepared Informal Interview and Discussion Questions for Study Participants Form;

audio record every discussion session;

digitally transcribe every audio recording;

digitally scan reflective writing and quotes offered willingly by participants and return hard copy immediately;

share digital transcripts with the specific participants for affirmation, addition, and edit;

Keep participants' reflective writing and quotes intact for use in dissertation;

Secure all data, raw, scanned, and or transcribed, on a password protected external hard drive and locked in my file cabinet to be accessed by me only, to be used for this one study only, and to be destroyed after the archival period of 2 years is completed.

I am not aware of any real or perceived conflict of interest on my part, and no coercion will be exerted upon the participants of this study. The invitation to engage in the study will describe in detail the study procedures. Participation is voluntary and participants can withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

Material Incidental Findings Plan

Not Applicable

3. Prospective participant information

Description of study population

Healthy adult yoga practitioners and or musician artists who engage in sound practices, and who are open to experiential spiritual exploration and discussion.

Inclusion criteria

Competent and healthy adult yoga practitioners, initiates of yoga, and or musicians who are open to experiential spiritual exploration through sound and listening practices and group discussion, who can commit to daily personal practice in addition to bi-weekly one-on-one and bi-monthly group meetings for the purpose of Sadhana research.

Exclusion criteria

Disinterested people; people who are curious but unwilling to commit time and energy to practice and exploration; emotionally unstable people who need additional support or counselling to maintain their wellness; addicts currently using.

Number of participants

Four to six participants and myself

Time dedicated to participation

All research will take place over the duration of three months from January 31, 2018 through to April 30, 2018. The research will require participation in bi-monthly 3-hour group workshops and bi-weekly 1-hour individual Sound Sadhana class. Total time of in-studio participation per participant will be 24 hours. Personal daily practice time would vary depending upon student and practice form. Time for daily reflections will be included in personal practice time and dependent upon each participant's interest, discipline, and commitment to the research.

Required organizational permissions and approvals

None

4. Recruitment methods

The participants will be recruited from my circle of personal students, yoga friends, and fellow musicians who have mentioned their interest in my research of spiritual inquiry and Sadhana. I will email a letter of invitation with the research study details attached, including: research purpose, study questions, timeline, time commitment, practice expectations, data collection, confidentiality, and data security. Once I receive responses, I will set up an initial interview with each person over SKYPE to discuss my research and answer any questions before confirming participation.

Justify methods employed

The methods employed create a formal agreement which will hopefully result in a personal commitment of time and energy from each participant towards my research study. Any less formal and participants might be too relaxed with time commitment and personal practices. Sadhana requires commitment to practice, therefore, the recruitment method is integral to the Sadhana position.

Incentives

There will be no financial remuneration. The incentive will be free sound workshops and voice lessons and the pleasure and support found in community engagement.

5. Obtaining consent/ assent

How I will obtain consent/ assent

I will email each participant an information and consent form to sign and return via email.

Who will obtain consent/ assent

I will obtain consent from the participants.

Competency and capacity

Not applicable. All participants will be competent, self-determined persons undertaking this research study in full knowledge of all the study details and by their own consent.

How will consent be documented

Consent will be documented on an information and consent form that will be sent to each participant via email, signed and returned to me by the participant via email, or received as a hard copy document from the participant in the first meeting. Hardcopy signed consent forms will be digitally scanned, uploaded and archived in a digital document folder on a password protected external hard drive that will be further stored in a locked file cabinet in studio office accessible by me only. All hardcopies will be placed in a file folder in the same locked file cabinet. To ensure confidentiality, all consent documents, digital and hard copy, will be stored in a folder and filed separately from all other research data.

Participant withdrawal

Participants can withdraw at any time. This will be made clear on the consent and assent form, and emphasized in individual meetings.

6. Potential benefits to participants

Participants will benefit by having my support in the co-creation of their individual Sadhana practices in addition to a shared community experience with other Sadhana practitioners in the study.

7. Potential risks

Minimal risk. No perceived risks are expected for participants in this research process.

Participants are chosen based on their active artistic sound practices and their acknowledged interest in exploring a spiritual practice. Each participant will be given complete freedom in using tools that could facilitate their practice. No judgement will be made based on if, how and when these tools are integrated. All data collected will be based on questions specific to understanding artistic and reflective practices. The consent form is the only document that will record each participant's name. On all other material, the participant will use a pseudonym, i.e.: Yogi 1, Yogi 2, Yogi 3, and so on, identified only by a shared generic name and a specific number. Any quotes used from participants within the dissertation will be under their pseudonym, thus anonymity is ensured. Any quoted data or any data used in support of any part of my dissertation will be used only with the permission of each participant. There will be an opportunity in the three-month study process for each participant to review their contribution for edits, additions, or withdrawal. Regarding data security and ensuring anonymity, consent forms with participant names will be digitally scanned, placed in a separate file from the rest of the data, and uploaded onto an external password protected hard drive that will be further stored in a locked cabinet at the Om Studio accessible by me only. All physical, handwritten, hard copy consent forms will be stored in a physical file folder separate from all other data gathered, and secured in a locked filing cabinet at the Om Studio accessible by me only. All materials will be used for this one study only, my dissertation, and will not be accessed or used for any other study. All materials, digital, recorded audio, and handwritten, will be destroyed after a period of 2 years.

8. Risk to researcher

Minimal risk. There is no perceived risk to the researcher because there is no threat or dangerous environment, I am not engaging any unsafe practices, and all participants have been long term students. My teaching and facilitation practices are based in mutual regard, and engaged by invitation and consent. The entire premise of my teaching is to facilitate self-awareness and self-agency in all participants including myself. I make this position clear at the onset of each workshop.

9. Participant confidentiality

Data type and method of ensuring confidentiality and privacy

Data will exist as consent forms (both digital scans and hard copy), digital audio recordings of discussions and informal interviews from all sound sessions, digital transcripts of audio recordings, and digital scans of handwritten reflective writings.

To ensure confidentiality and anonymity of each participant of my study, I will:

use names on the consent form only;

digitally scan and store the consent forms as digital documents in a separate folder for consent forms only on a password protected external hard drive accessible by me only for a period of 2 years, upon which time they will be deleted from the hard drive;

place the physical hard-copy of all consent forms in a closed file and store in a locked filing cabinet accessible by key and by me only;

shred the physical hard copies of the consent form after 2 years;

all other files, i.e.: digital transcripts, reflective writing, and audio recordings, will be named and numbered with pseudonyms Yogi 1, Yogi 2, Yogi 3, etc.;

all hand-written reflections digitally scanned and renamed: Yogi 1, 2, 3, etc.,

all hard copies of personal reflections returned to the participant immediately after scanning;

all scans will be uploaded to password protected external hard drive accessible by me only for a two-year storage to be deleted after two years have expired;

all audio recorded data will be destroyed/ deleted at the completion of my dissertation or at the expiration of 2 years whichever date comes first.

10. Data stewardship plan

Data type will be consent forms (hard copy and scanned digital copies), audio recording and scanned reflective writing. The discussions and informal Interviews with participants on the process of Sadhana will be recorded by zoom audio recorder.

I will ensure:

audio recordings will be kept in digital form on an external hard drive that is password protected and accessible only by me;

audio recordings will be kept until the completion of my dissertation at which point they will be deleted/ destroyed;

transcriptions of the recorded conversations and interviews will be stored with the audio recordings in digital form on an external hard drive that is password protected and accessible by me only;

transcripts will be shared digitally with the participants for affirmation, addition, and edit, then returned to me on digital format, for storage on the password protected external hard drive accessible by me only;

transcripts will be deleted/ destroyed from the password protected external hard drive upon completion of my dissertation after a period of 2 years;

consent forms in both hard copy format and digital format will be kept secure and in a separate file for 2 years at which time they will be destroyed/ deleted. Scanned copies will be uploaded to password protected external hard drive accessible by me only will be deleted after a period of 2 years. Hard copies will be placed in a file folder in a locked cabinet accessible by me only and shredded after 2 years.

11. Future use of data

I will be using the data for my dissertation only. I will not use the data for another study after I have completed my dissertation. All data will be destroyed after my dissertation is complete and after the two-year archive minimum storage deadline. The data I collect will not be shared outside of my study, and will not be stored in an open access data base.

12. Dissemination of results

I will use the results of this research in my doctoral dissertation, potentially publish my writing in academic journals, and present my thesis at an academic conference, plus I will send each participant a copy of the final document.

Once my dissertation is completed, I will:

destroy all audio recordings;

delete all session transcripts and letters of consent stored on an external password protected hard drive upon expiration of SFU's 2-year minimum retention requirement.

References

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Appendix B. Information and Consent

Information and Informed Consent Forms

Sound Sadhana: Sounding and Listening as Sadhana
PhD Research/ Ethics ID# 7608, Application # 2017s0635

Dear <<NAME>> <<DATE>>

I am a Doctoral candidate in Arts Education from Simon Fraser University in British Columbia Canada, and the principal investigator/ researcher in a study of sounding and listening as Sadhana. You are being invited to take part in this research because you have the investigative and artistic qualities that suit this project, and because you have mentioned an interest in my research of Sadhana practices.

Objective: To engage a group of yogis, artists and or musicians interested in spiritual inquiry and reflective practices from January 31, 2018 through to April 30, 2018 in an immersive study of the potential of Sound Sadhana as a form of contemplative arts praxis.

Inclusion criteria

Competent, and healthy adult yoga practitioners, initiates of yoga, and or musicians who are open to experiential spiritual exploration through sound and listening practices and group discussion, who can commit to daily personal practice in addition to bi-weekly one-on-one and bi-monthly group meetings for the purpose of Sadhana research.

Exclusion criteria

Disinterested people; people who are curious but unwilling to commit time and energy to practice and exploration; emotionally unstable people who need additional support or counselling to maintain their wellness; addicts currently using.

What Does Sound Sadhana Involve? Sound Sadhana draws upon Indian classical music voice cultivation practices, meditation, Yogic philosophy, and reflective practices, mindful recollection, writing, discussion, and inquiry.

The Opportunity: To explore sounding, singing, and listening as Sadhana; to experience how a Sound Sadhana practice might inform or impact personal, spiritual, and artistic development; and to receive guidance with developing and managing an individual Sound Sadhana practice.

Time and Location: The research will take place in Om Yoga Studio over a 3-month duration beginning January 31, 2018 through to April 30, 2018. Participation in bi-monthly 3-hour group workshops and bi-weekly 1-hour individual Sound Sadhana class is required. Total time of in-studio participation per participant will be 24 hours. Additional personal daily Sadhana practice will be at the discretion of each participant.

Group Study Session: Each 3-hour group session will be an immersive experiential workshop of Sound Sadhana followed by discussion and inquiry within the group environment.

One-On-One Session: Each 1-hour individual session will be for co-creation of a personalized Sound Sadhana practice. Each consecutive session will be for refinement, adjustment, and discussion of personal Sound Sadhana.

The Research Process—Audio Recordings, Reflective Writing, Transcripts

Every Sound Sadhana session will be audio recorded, digitally transcribed, and archived by me for my dissertation use only. Each research participant will be assigned a pseudonym for all audio recordings, digital transcripts, handwritten notes and reflective writing. All handwritten materials will be digitally scanned, and all digital materials will be uploaded and secured on a password protected external hard drive, labelled under pseudonym and date, and accessible by me only. Handwritten materials: reflective writing and or notes will be returned immediately after digital scanning. All hardcopy consent forms will be kept securely in a separate file. During the research process, digital transcripts from the Sadhana sessions will be shared with each of you through email file, at which time, you will have an opportunity to edit, retract, expand, or complete your contribution before returning the transcript to me to add to my secured data file. All data collected during this research study will be used for my doctoral dissertation only, and securely stored for a period of 2 years at which time it will be destroyed. There is no consideration of additional uses for the gathered data.

Risk: I anticipate no risk to you by your participation in the study. There is no hidden agenda or deception in this study. All questions will be answered, and transparency will be maintained throughout the process. Care will be taken to ensure confidentiality and inspired participation.

Benefit: There will be no financial remuneration for participation in this study. However, participants will receive support in their individual Sadhana practices in addition to a shared community experience with other Sadhana practitioners in the study.

Study Results: The results of this study will be reported in a graduate thesis and may also be published in academic journal articles, books, and presented at academic conferences. Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained through the use of the pseudonyms.

Participation and Withdrawal: Participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may still choose to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.

Additionally, if you choose to enter the study and then decide to withdraw at a later time, all data collected from and about you during your enrolment in the study will be destroyed.

Who to Contact for Information About This Study

If you have any questions or concerns about this research project, you may contact me; my thesis supervisor Dr. Lynn Fels; or Dr. Jeffrey Towards, Director, Office of Research Ethics

Thank you for your interest and your participation. I look forward to working with you on this exciting research project.

Yours sincerely,
Sheena A. Anderson (Principal Researcher)
Doctoral Candidate, SFU Arts Education
Transdisciplinary Artist and Educator
Holistic Contemplative Inquiry and Arts Praxis

Informed Consent Form

Sound Sadhana: Sounding and Listening as Sadhana

PhD Dissertation Study/ Ethics ID# 7608, Ethics Application # 2017s0635

Sheena A. Anderson

I have read the research description and understand what is entailed in the research process. I understand that I am being invited to participate in 24 studio hours of exploratory sound and inquiry sessions over a period of 3 months from January 31, 2018 through to April 30, 2018. I give consent for all discussions and informal interviews within each session to be audio recorded and digitally transcribed by the researcher for use in her doctoral dissertation. I understand that in order to protect my privacy, I will be given a pseudonym, thus all contributions made by me my will be anonymous. Further, I understand that all material collected from me through my participation: consent form, audio recordings of discussions and interviews, reflective writings, and digital transcripts, will be shared with me for edit first before being securely stored by the primary researcher and archived for a period of 2 years upon which time all materials will be destroyed. Additionally, I understand that if the principal researcher needs to re-contact me during the study period or after that she may do so with my permission.

My participation in this research is entirely voluntary and I am aware that I can withdraw my person and my data contribution at any time.

My signature indicates my willingness to be a participant in this research and to allow the researcher to include all data collected from me and edited by me in her PhD dissertation project.

I am over the age of 19, of sound mind and body, and make this agreement with full knowledge of what is being asked of me regarding time commitment, practice, and the collection of my words as data to be integrated into a doctoral dissertation.

Participant's Name _____

Participant's Signature _____

Date _____
YYYY/MM/DD

Sheena A. Anderson (Researcher) _____

Date _____
YYYY/MM/DD

Address:

Telephone: (H) _____ (W) _____ Cell Phone: _____ Email Address:

Once signed, this consent document will be digitally scanned and uploaded into a secure file on a password protected external hard drive and stored in a locked filing cabinet accessible by the primary researcher only. A copy of the original document will be shared with the participant for their personal files. The handwritten signed consent form will be placed in a folder in a locked filing cabinet accessible to the primary researcher only. Both digital and hard copy documents will be stored for a period of 2 years at which time they will be destroyed. All identifiable data will be secured and confidentiality of each participant is ensured.