

# Nada Brahman

## Definitional Essay

### Theosophy Trust

*Nada Brahman* means the Divine as Soundless Sound. It does not mean sound merely in the physical sense, nor merely a beautiful idea that the universe is somehow musical. In the deeper Wisdom Tradition, it points to the primordial root-vibration through which manifestation is sustained, ordered, differentiated, and inwardly recollected.

Professor Iyer gives the term unusual clarity. He places *Nada Brahman* between the One and the many. Incarnated beings must cope with multiplicity, matter, sense-experience, comparison, and the fragmenting patterns of the lower mind. In the midst of this, one may meditate upon the Soundless Sound of *Nada Brahman* “in its unmanifest essence and in its multiple differentiations as the Army of the Voice.” This is decisive. *Nada Brahman* is not only beyond manifestation, nor only within the manifold world. It is the hidden continuity between the two.

That continuity is why the term belongs with *Om*, *Oeaohoo*, *Vach*, the Army of the Voice, and the Host of the *Logos*. Sound and number belong together. Sacred sound is not vague. It is lawful, proportionate, and architectonic. The One differentiates, and the differentiated host is not a fall away from truth but the intelligent mode through which truth becomes cosmos.

The word sound must therefore be used with discrimination. An audible tone requires conditions through which it can be heard. The unmanifest essence contemplated here cannot be confined to those conditions. Calling it Soundless Sound asks thought to reach toward the ground of resonance while acknowledging the limits of a sensory image. It does not identify a particular musical pitch as the Absolute or turn the doctrine into a measurement of acoustic frequency. The analogy is helpful precisely when its metaphysical reach remains visible.

Professor Iyer's account of the Great Tone of Nature gives the image a human approach. Rivers, forests and the sea suggest many distinct sounds gathered within a more inclusive rhythm. Their differences still matter. One learns to attend to relation instead of selecting only the sound that pleases the personality. A musical ensemble offers a modest analogy: each player must hear the whole while giving the individual part its proper weight. Neither drowning out the others nor abandoning one's own responsibility produces harmony.

*Nada Brahman* must also be linked to the Great Breath. H.P. Blavatsky gives the great metaphysical field through the doctrine of eternal Motion, the outbreathing and inbreathing of universes. *Nada Brahman* is not identical with the Great Breath, but it is deeply allied with it. The Great Breath gives the sense of primordial rhythmic motion. *Nada Brahman* gives the sense of

primordial sonority. Breath suggests pulsation, emanation, and return. Sound suggests articulation, number, relation, and order. Together they help finite minds approach the mystery of a living cosmos.

This doctrine becomes contemplatively fertile because the ordinary mind hears only surfaces. It selects, reacts, personalizes, and fragments. It hears pleasant and unpleasant, flattering and disturbing, useful and intrusive. But the deeper teaching asks the student to hear more widely and less possessively. Beneath differentiated sound there is a great tone, a ceaseless eternal sound that is also soundless. This cannot be heard by the ordinary ear as one hears a bell or bird-song. It is approached through recollection, inward quiet, withdrawal from fixation upon particular sounds, and gradual attunement of the whole being.

This has direct inward usefulness. Human beings live amid inner noise as much as outer noise: remembered conversations, anticipatory arguments, judgments, anxieties, self-defenses, resentments, repeated phrases, and emotional echoes. *Nada Brahman* offers another center of gravity. It helps one listen beneath the noise of the personality for a more universal rhythm. It does not erase pain or instantly still the mind, but it begins to reduce captivity to fragmentation.

Consider listening to someone whose speech is slow or unfamiliar. The listener may begin supplying the missing words, then mistake those additions for what the person meant. A more patient attention allows the speaker's meaning to emerge in its own order. Drawing a Larger Circle of Conception includes the pauses and the circumstances of the person speaking. This ordinary discipline cannot certify inward attainment, but it can show whether meditation is making attention more hospitable and less governed by the demand for immediate satisfaction.

Human Solidarity is expressed through such hospitality. A common spiritual ground does not require everyone to sound alike, share a vocabulary or profess the same symbol. The student who contemplates a universal resonance has a reason to protect the distinct voice through which another person is trying to communicate. The practical question is whether inward recollection increases the capacity to understand and respond. A moment of silence becomes fruitful when it allows another's need to be heard more accurately.

The ethical implications are central. Professor Iyer always joins doctrine to consequence. If all beings move within one root-vibration, then separateness is not final. The same ceaseless pulse underlies life everywhere. Professor Iyer links this common pulsation with the basis of life and compassion. Listening therefore becomes an ethical discipline. One becomes more careful in speech, more patient in hearing others, more aware that harshness violates a subtler order. Universal Brotherhood ceases to be merely a noble idea and becomes rooted in the actual fabric of being.

*Nada Brahman* also helps ordinary life. In a strained conversation, one may pause and ask: beneath this surface clash, what deeper need or truth is trying to be heard? Such a pause is not passivity. It is disciplined listening. It lets speech arise from a wider field. In that way the doctrine becomes usable in relationship, work, and service.

Beauty also changes meaning through this term. Music, chant, wind, sea, sacred recitation, and the hush before dawn may all hint at the deeper tone without exhausting it. They are not themselves the Soundless Sound, but they may recall the soul to proportion, resonance, and hidden order.

Silence too is transformed. Silence is not merely absence of sound. In contemplative life it becomes a medium of hearing. This is why restraint of speech, purification of motive, mantra, reverent study, and inward recollection matter so much. These are not repressions but preparations of the instrument. One must hear more rightly before one can speak more rightly.

The governing image is the temple of living resonance. Existence is not mute matter. It is more like a vast temple of resonant spaces, where every chamber answers to hidden law and where, beneath all change, one root-vibration abides. The scattered person hears only noise. The disciplined seeker begins to hear proportion. The compassionate disciple hears relation.

The image of resonance asks for patience with this education of attention. An inward impression may be suggestive without being understood. Study supplies distinctions, and conduct tests whether an interpretation has made the student more truthful. Neither a fleeting mood nor a beautiful image should be asked to carry more certainty than it can bear.

*Nada Brahman* is therefore both doctrine and practice. It teaches that beneath all differentiated voices there is one Soundless Sound, beneath all fragmentation one hidden continuity, beneath all surface noise one lawful and compassionate pulse of being. To remember this is already to be less scattered. To meditate upon it is to become less captive to the lower mind. To live from it is to let listening become wiser, speech gentler, perception more whole, and service more natural. It gives exact hope because the world is not spiritually mute. It resounds, however faintly to our present hearing, with the hidden music of the Real.

## Glossary

**Absolute** — The unconditioned Reality, beyond the limitations and distinctions of manifested existence.

**Architectonics** — The structural ordering of a whole; architectonic means pertaining to that ordering.

**Army of the Voice** — A symbolic name for the hosts through which divine thought is expressed in differentiated manifestation.

**Brahman** — The supreme spiritual reality; distinguish the neuter *Brahman* from *Brahma*, the creative deity or *Logos*.

**Dhyanis** — Meditative spiritual intelligences; *Dhyani* is the singular. *Dhyan Chohans* is a related designation of spiritual hierarchies.

**Differentiation** — The emergence of distinct forms, functions or levels from a less divided condition.

**Drawing a Larger Circle of Conception** — Widening understanding to include more relationships, consequences and the needs of others.

**Emanation** — An unfolding or radiation from a source, distinguished in the teaching from manufacture by an external maker.

**Esoteric** — Pertaining to an inward or occult interpretation of a teaching, distinguished from its outward formulation.

**Great Breath** — A symbol of the cyclic manifestation and withdrawal of universes.

**Human Solidarity** — The shared dignity and interdependence of human beings, expressed through responsibility for one another's welfare.

**Kosmos** — The universe considered as an ordered whole.

**Logos** — The Word or principle of divine expression; *Logoi* is the plural and *Logoic* means pertaining to it. Classifications distinguish several stages of manifestation.

**Manifestation** — The expression of differentiated existence from a subtler or unmanifest condition.

**Nada** — Spiritual sound or resonance; in the cited passage, *the Voice of the Silence*.

**Nada Brahman** — The Divine as Soundless Sound; contemplated by Professor Iyer in unmanifest essence and differentiated expression.

**Occult** — Concerned with hidden principles and laws in the Theosophical account; occultism is the related field of inquiry.

**Oeao hoo** — A sacred name associated with the Father-Mother and the septenary root of manifestation.

**Om / Aum** — The sacred syllable of invocation and consecration; *Om* emphasizes its unity and *Aum* its triliteral expression in the cited interpretations.

**Personality** — The temporary identity, habits and instruments associated with a particular life, distinguished from enduring spiritual individuality.

**Satarupa** — Of a hundred forms; a designation of Nature or *Vach* in Blavatsky's account of cosmic differentiation.

**Sepher Jezirah** — A Kabbalistic text concerned with creation, letters, and numbers; often spelled Sefer Yetzirah.

**Sonority** — The quality or character of resonance; used here as a metaphor for primordial spiritual sound.

**Theogony** — An account of the origin and relationships of divine beings or powers.

**Universal Brotherhood** — The spiritual kinship of beings, expressed ethically through care extending beyond personal or sectarian boundaries.

**Vach** — Sacred speech or Voice, related to the creative expression of spiritual ideation.

## Quotes for Meditation and Self Study

1. R.N. Iyer — “Spectator and Participant”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, p. 317.

“To reaffirm the One in the many and to benefit, as a participant, from the standpoint of the spectator, one may, therefore, meditate upon the Soundless Sound of *Nada Brahman* in its unmanifest essence and in its multiple differentiations as the Army of the Voice.”

*Meditation thought:* Hold unmanifest essence and differentiated expression together. How does the image of the Army of the Voice preserve relation within multiplicity?

2. R.N. Iyer — “Spectator and Participant”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, p. 317.

“One may meditate upon the OM as the ceaseless eternal sound and also as the great affirmation of the Army of the Voice symbolized by *Oeahoo*.”

*Meditation thought:* Consider Om as an affirmation of a whole. What would it mean for one distinct voice to contribute without demanding supremacy?

3. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 94.

“The ‘Army of the Voice,’ is the prototype of the ‘Host of the *Logos*,’ or the ‘word’ of the *Sepher Jezirah*, called in the *Secret Doctrine* ‘the One Number issued from No-Number’ — the One Eternal Principle.”

*Meditation thought:* Follow the relation of number and Voice as a metaphysical symbol. Where would a merely physical interpretation narrow its meaning?

4. R.N. Iyer — “Space and Self-Consciousness”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 70.

“This vibratory current underlying all active life in the cosmos is mirrored in the grandest cycles of Nature, as in the smallest. The Chinese held that it could be discerned in the sounds made by forests, rivers, great cities and the sea; they thought of it as the voice of Nature itself.”

*Meditation thought:* Listen to several sounds without immediately ranking them by preference. What relation becomes perceptible when selection relaxes?

5. R.N. Iyer — “Space and Self-Consciousness”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 70.

“*The Voice of the Silence* is present in the seemingly still reverberation within the depths of the night ocean that seasoned sailors can experience during lonely watches. It is present too in the noontime glory of the sun, the one great root-vibration which is ceaselessly sounding and which is ever soundless.”

*Meditation thought:* The image joins stillness with ceaseless resonance. Let the apparent paradox deepen attention rather than demand an immediate sensory explanation.

6. R.N. Iyer — “Space and Self-Consciousness”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, pp. 70–71.

“Every living being has a heart that moves in sympathy with this ceaseless pulsation, the one vibration that is the basis of all life and compassion. In essence, every human being is like a drop, identical to every other drop, within a vast shoreless sea of universal existence. All beings flow within the great universal rhythm of the Soundless Sound, the *AUM* throughout the ages.”

*Meditation thought:* Reflect on compassion as participation in a common life. What responsibility accompanies the recognition that one's own pulse is not isolated?

7. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 43.

“The appearance and disappearance of the Universe are pictured as an outbreathing and inbreathing of ‘the Great Breath,’ which is eternal, and which, being Motion, is one of the three aspects of the Absolute — Abstract Space and Duration being the other two. When the ‘Great Breath’ is projected, it is called the Divine Breath, and is regarded as the breathing of the Unknowable Deity — the One Existence — which breathes out a thought, as it were, which becomes the Kosmos. (See ‘*Isis Unveiled*.’) So also is it when the Divine Breath is inspired again the Universe disappears into the bosom of ‘the Great Mother,’ who then sleeps ‘wrapped in her invisible robes.’”

*Meditation thought:* Contemplate manifestation and withdrawal as phases of a greater rhythm. How does the breathing image help, and where must it be relinquished?

8. R.N. Iyer — “The Verbum”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, p. 194.

“The secret life of the soul is constant, continuous and replete with the pure joy of effortless attunement to the whole, to the music of the spheres, to the rhythms of invisible Nature. This is the blessed privilege accessible to every human being, to become capable of entering into the pristine current of the *Dhyani*, to become self-consciously aware upon every plane of the inaudible hum in the heart, the ceaseless vibration that comes from the Soundless Sound.”

*Meditation thought:* Consider continuity of benevolent attention across changing circumstances. What small practice might make that continuity less dependent on a passing mood?

9. R.N. Iyer — “The Light of the Logos”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 51.

“When one experiences the constant reverberation within the human heart of that which is also at the core of the whole cosmos, then oneness with the cosmos and all of life is no longer a phrase, but the supreme fact of real existence. Lesser facts regarding separation and differentiation are seen to be unreal ripples on the surface of appearances, no longer able to interrupt one's attention.”

*Meditation thought:* A statement of oneness asks to become understanding. Where could that understanding alter a habitual response to another being?

10. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Voice of the Silence*, p. 2.

“Before the Soul can hear, the image (man) has to become as deaf to roarings as to whispers, to cries of bellowing elephants as to the silvery buzzing of the golden fire-fly. Before the soul can comprehend and may remember, she must unto the Silent Speaker be united just as the form to which the clay is modelled, is first united with the potter's mind.”

*Meditation thought:* The passage asks for freedom from captivity to both loud and subtle distractions. What currently commands your attention without your consent?

11. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Voice of the Silence*, p. 10.

“Thou canst not travel on the Path before thou hast become that Path itself. Let thy Soul lend its ear to every cry of pain like as the lotus bares its heart to drink the morning sun. Let not the fierce Sun dry one tear of pain before thyself hast wiped it from the sufferer's eye.”

*Meditation thought:* Let listening include another's pain. What response is called for before contemplation becomes a retreat into private satisfaction?

12. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 94.

“The esoteric theogony begins with the One, manifested, therefore not eternal in its presence and being, if eternal in its essence; the number of the numbers and numbered — the latter proceeding from the Voice, the feminine *Vâch*, *Satarupa* ‘of the hundred forms,’ or Nature. It is from this number 10, or creative nature, the Mother (the occult cypher, or ‘nought,’ ever procreating and multiplying in union with the Unit ‘I,’ one, or the Spirit of Life), that the whole Universe proceeded.”

*Meditation thought:* Trace the movement from unity to differentiated Nature. How can a symbol of number preserve a relation that spatial pictures obscure?