

THE INWARD FIRE SERIES

Booklet Two

WHEN
SILENCE
BECAME
SOUND

*Nāda Brahma, Om, Nataraja,
and Art as Worship*

A reading through sound, rhythm, language, art,
grief, and surrender

Sasidhar Valluru

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Cover photograph: Siva liṅga pratiṣṭhāpana in Kāśī, author collection.

Author's Note

This booklet is the second in The Inward Fire Series. The first booklet asked what happens when dharma is tested, when māyā is named, when knowledge is humbled, when surrender becomes the final shelter, and when even the familiar gods seem silent. This booklet begins after that silence.

Because silence is not always absence. Sometimes silence is pressure before sound. Sometimes silence is the field in which Om becomes audible. Sometimes silence is the place where the child first says, “Be with me.”

The first booklet ended by asking whether art can also become worship. This booklet turns toward that question. Not art as decoration. Not art as entertainment alone. Not art as self-display. Art as offering. Art as discipline. Art as devotion. Art as liberation.

The living doorway here is nāda: sound, rhythm, Om, the damaru, the cadence of poetry, the body in dance, the voice in prayer, the tongue in language, the hand in sculpture, the breath in mantra, and the silence beneath all of it.

I do not write this as a professional musician or as a formal scholar of musicology. I write it as someone who has lived with sound, language, poetry, performance, vivid dreams, Siva, Kāli, Kāśī, grief, and the strange unignorable rhythm that keeps playing inside.

For a seeker drowning in jargon, the matter is simpler than we make it. The body is an instrument. The mind is an instrument. Language is an instrument. Breath is an instrument. Rhythm is an instrument. Art is an instrument. Knowledge is already present as seed.

The work is to focus it, align it, and offer it.

That is the path this booklet tries to walk.

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Opening: After Silence, Sound

The first booklet ended at a hard place. Dharma had been tested. Māyā had been named. Power had been humbled. Knowledge had been warned. Bhakti had been placed at the center. Harishchandra stood where even gods seemed silent.

That silence is not a decorative silence. It is not the silence of a meditation poster. It is not the polished silence of a well-lit spiritual retreat. It is the silence after everything has been asked of a person. The silence after argument has failed. The silence after philosophy has done what it can do and can go no further. The silence after grief has entered the room and sat down without asking permission.

And then the next question arrives.

What remains?

One answer is surrender. Another answer is sound. But not sound as noise, not sound as distraction, not sound as entertainment, not sound as the restless mind trying to avoid itself. Sound as presence. Sound as Om. Sound as the background current that was always there. Sound as the first tremor of the Formless. Sound as the way silence becomes approachable without ceasing to be silence.

If the highest Truth is nirākāra, nirguṇa, nirañjana Brahman — formless, attribute-less, stainless — then why does the heart still sing? Why does the body dance? Why does poetry arise? Why does a child hold a Siva liṅgam in the dark? Why does grief go to Kāśī? Why does a father carrying his son's ashes still fold his hands and say only: be with me?

Perhaps because pure Consciousness is not dead emptiness.

It vibrates.

It resounds.

It becomes nāda.

That is the doorway of this booklet.

1. The First Prayer Was Not a Mantra

My first real prayer was not a mantra. I was in fourth standard. Balasore, Odisha. Sometime in 1985 or 1986. I was about nine years old. My grandfather had died. My parents had gone to Hyderabad. I came back from school and found our defense quarters locked. My father was a defense scientist, and the house was a large two-bedroom government quarter. To a child, it felt even larger.

A young Telugu-speaking neighbour called me from upstairs. She was newly married, perhaps around twenty years old, and had probably been chosen because she could speak to me in Telugu. She gave me a glass of milk and told me my parents had gone out of town and I would stay at her place.

I nodded. Then I asked for the keys. I went home. Bathed. Changed. Did my homework. Went back upstairs. Ate dinner. Then I insisted on sleeping alone in my own house.

This was not courage in the Republic Day-child-hero sense. I had watched those Doordarshan episodes too. Children rescuing people from fires. Children saving villages. Children being honoured for bravery. I had read Amar Chitra Katha books and Jataka tales. I had heard puranic stories from my maternal grandparents during summer vacations. So naturally, my imagination was not sitting quietly like a well-trained clerk. It was manufacturing every possible ghost, fire, demon, god, hero, shadow, and adventure.

The house was large. Outside the window there was hardly anything. No comforting city lights. No crowd. No constant traffic. No human reassurance floating in from the street. Just darkness, space, and a child trying to act bigger than his fear.

That first night, I slept in the pūjā area holding a small Siva liṅgam. I did not know proper prayers. I knew a couple of small couplets. That was all. But even then something in me felt that this should not matter. My mother had told me Bhagavān is like a father. Parents do not demand formal petitions from a child before sitting beside him.

So my prayer was simple.

Be with me.

That was all. Not give me this. Not remove that. Not make me win. Not make me special. Just be with me.

The second night, I carried the small Siva liṅgam to my bedroom. By then another thought had begun to work inside me. If He is everywhere, why should He remain only in the pūjā room? If He is truly Bhagavān, then He is in the bedroom too. He is in the dark too. He is in the empty corridor too. He is outside the window too.

Then another childhood logic arrived. My mother had told me He is Bhūtanātha: Lord of beings, Lord even of bhūtas, pretas, piśāchas, and all the strange beings that children imagine when the lights are gone. So why should I be afraid of them? If they came, I could tell them: we are under the same Lord. I am also His. You are also His. He is with me, around me, inside me. Do not waste my time. Let me sleep. Go play somewhere else.

Those seven nights changed something in me permanently. Since then, I have never really known how to ask Bhagavān for things. I go to temples. I do pūjā. I participate in homas and yāgas. I fold my hands like everyone else. But the prayer has remained almost the same from that locked house in Balasore.

Be with me.

Be with me as Krishna was with Arjuna. I will fight my fights. I am not asking You to remove Kurukṣetra. I am asking You to stand in the chariot.

That is where my understanding of sound begins. Not with music. Not with performance. Not with scholarship. It begins with silence becoming presence.

2. The House Where Language Entered as Sound

Before I ever studied Telugu formally, I heard it. My father wanted my mother to graduate after marriage. She had come from a village and had not completed a degree beyond school. When she prepared for entrance examinations, Telugu literature was part of the syllabus. She wanted to study political science and sociology, but Telugu stood at the doorway.

So my father taught her. Chandas. Meter. Grammar. Poetry. Prose. Andhra Mahabharatam.

I was a child sitting somewhere nearby. What else does a child do when the father is teaching the mother? He listens. He pretends not to listen. He absorbs.

Telugu was never a school subject for me. Not then. Not later. But it entered me differently. It did not come first as marks, exams, correction, and punishment. It came as sound in the house. It came through my father's voice teaching my mother. It came through Nannaya, Tikkana, Errapragada, through meter and meaning, through the dignity of language before I even knew how to name that dignity.

So when people ask, "Who is your guru?" I cannot answer in the usual clean way. I learnt from my parents. I also learnt with them.

That matters because nāda is not merely music. Nāda begins before music becomes formal. It begins in the way sound enters the nervous system. In the way the household carries rhythm. In the way a child hears language before he learns grammar. The tongue is trained long before the textbook arrives. The ear is initiated long before the student knows he has been initiated.

A child may think he is merely nearby while the parents are studying. But some sounds enter and stay.

Later, in Balasore, Bhagavān became the guru in another way. Not as a lecturer. Not as an examiner. As presence.

The first gurus gave language. The inner guru gave the prayer.

Be with me.

That is enough to begin.

3. Siva, Kāli, and the Parent-Child Secret

After Balasore came other doors. Teenage life in North Odisha, close to Bengal, has its own religious texture: pandal building, Kāli pūjā, Durga pūjā, Viśwakarma pūjā, bamboo, cloth, lights, drums, noise, sweat, friends, labour, excitement, devotion, spectacle. The world did not divide neatly into religion and art.

The goddess arrived through both.

By then I had found Vivekananda and Ramakrishna Paramahansa in books at home, public libraries, and wherever else they appeared. Naturally, of all the pleasant and gentle goddesses available, I became drawn to Mā Kāli.

Fearsome. Intimidating. Mother.

That is the secret outsiders often miss. Kāli is not merely terror. Dakṣiṇa Kāli is the Mother before whom terror itself is brought under control. When the mind is too disturbed to speak to the Father, the child turns to the Mother. Even in ordinary homes, if the father does not buy something, the child goes to the mother. Not because the father is absent. Because the mother has another route to the same heart.

That is how I came to understand her. Not as fear. Not as boon-machine. Not as some exotic image for dramatic religion.

As Amma.

There have been times of extreme stress when the mind was too disturbed to speak clearly to Him. In those moments, I have felt her presence. Sometimes in vivid dreams. Sometimes as anklets. Sometimes as the sense of sleeping in her lap. I do not offer this as proof for anyone else. I only say what the inner life knows.

The relationship was never born of fear or bargaining. It was parent and child.

This is why the old devotional verse remains powerful:

త్వమేవ మాతా చ పితా త్వమేవ |
త్వమేవ బంధుశ్చ సఖా త్వమేవ |
త్వమేవ విద్యా ద్రవిణం త్వమేవ |
త్వమేవ సర్వం మమ దేవ దేవ ||

You alone are my mother. You alone are my father. You alone are my kin and friend. You alone are knowledge and wealth. You alone are everything to me, O Lord of Lords.

That is not poetry alone. It is the grammar of surrender.

And the Devī tradition says the same thing through another door:

యా దేవీ సర్వభూతేషు మాతృరూపేణ సంస్థితా |
నమస్తస్యై నమస్తస్యై నమస్తస్యై నమో నమః ||

To the Devī who abides in all beings as the Mother, salutations again and again.

The seeker who understands this does not approach Bhagavān merely as a cosmic official. The seeker approaches as a child. That changes everything. A child can ask. A child can complain. A child can fall asleep. A child can stop performing. A child can simply say: be with me.

This is why bhakti is not weakness. It is not infantilism. It is the courage to stop pretending self-sufficiency before the One who was always holding the ground.

4. Kāśī: The Sound Behind Sound

My first visit to Kāśī was in 2021. Like everyone else, I went to Viśwanātha. I saw the āratī. I heard the chants, bells, drums, and the dense religious soundscape of a city where a temple seems to stand every few steps.

But Kāśī held me somewhere else.

Manikarnika. Harishchandra Ghat. The burning ghats.

There, life stops pretending. The body is no longer résumé, caste, title, beauty, argument, bank balance, grievance, or social performance. It is wood, flame, ash, river, and departure.

In that place, amid priests, pilgrims, bells, mantras, crackling fire, temple rhythm, footsteps, bargaining, chanting, and silence, I began to notice something I had known all my life without naming it. There was a background sound. Not loud. Not dramatic. Not asking to be admired. Constant. Quiet. Unmoving. Incessant.

It seemed to rhyme with Om.

I had heard it before. In childhood fear. In vivid dreams. In loneliness. In stress. In prayer. In those nights when I asked only, “Be with me.” It had been there through thick and thin, not as a melody, but as a ground.

Sometimes it was the silent background of Om. Sometimes it was movement itself — the dandakam-like thunder of hooves, the fierce cadence one hears in Siva Tāṇḍava Stotram, the rushing devotional gait that can carry even Hanuman Chalisa when the heart is aflame. Sometimes it was the damaru. Not as an instrument outside me. As rhythm behind becoming.

That is when I began to understand nāda differently. Nāda is not merely sound heard by the ear. It is not merely music. It is not even merely mantra. Nāda is the pulse by which silence allows creation to appear without ceasing to be silence.

Kāśī did not give me a new sound.

Kāśī removed the distraction.

It made me hear what had been present from the beginning.

5. Om: The Doorway Between Silence and Creation

The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad opens with a statement so compact that the mind can easily walk past it without realizing what has been given.

ఓం ఇత్యేతదక్షరమిదం సర్వం |
తస్యోపవ్యాఖ్యానం భూతం భవద్ భవిష్యదితి సర్వమోంకార ఏవ |
యచ్ఛాన్యత్ త్రికాలాతీతం తదస్యోంకార ఏవ ||

Om, this syllable, is all this. What was, what is, what will be — all is Om. Whatever is beyond the three divisions of time, that too is Om.

This is not a small claim. Om is not being treated merely as a religious sound. It is the sign, seed, vibration, pointer, doorway, and condensation of Reality itself.

The seeker should not rush here. Because the danger is that Om becomes another word. Another sound in the room. Another item in the vocabulary. Another thing printed on calendars, walls, pendants, social media posts, and spiritual merchandise.

But Om is not decoration.

Om is the border where silence allows itself to be heard.

The sound begins. The sound expands. The sound resolves. Then the silence remains. A-U-M and the silence after. Waking, dream, deep sleep, and the witnessing fourth. Form, movement, dissolution, and that which was never disturbed.

In lived terms, Om is not merely chanted. It is recognized. When the child asks “be with me” in fear, the sound is not yet formal, but the doorway is open. When the father teaches the mother chandas and the child hears language become rhythm, the sound is training the instrument. When Kāli is felt as mother-presence, sound is no longer external. It becomes reassurance. When Kāśī reveals the background current behind bells, chants, fires, and ashes, Om is no longer only a syllable.

It is the ground-note.

The seeker does not create Om. The seeker learns to stop being deaf to it.

6. Nāda Brahma: The Human Being Is Already an Instrument

The sound inside me keeps playing. Not as a song I chose. Not as entertainment. Not as something I can turn on and off. It is unmistakable. Sometimes it is the silent background of Om. Sometimes it is the fierce gait of a dandakam. Sometimes it is the damaru behind movement. Sometimes it is simply the rhythm by which I remain standing when the world has already fallen.

I have written poems for literary clubs. I have written screenplays. I have lived with words in more than three languages. I have argued with language, earned with language, led people with language, consoled with language, wounded with language, healed with language, and built entire professional narratives with language.

That is not special to me alone.

No human being is really outside language. Even the one who says little is shaped by inner speech. Even the one who cannot sing is moved by rhythm. Even the one who claims to be practical lives inside stories. Family, career, society, ambition, grief, love, pride, memory — all of these are carried by language, rhythm, tone, gesture, silence, and repetition.

We are all instruments.

The question is not whether we have nāda. The question is: toward what is our nāda turned?

One person turns language toward argument. Another toward seduction. Another toward commerce. Another toward reputation. Another toward ideology. Another toward family control. Another toward complaint. Another toward cleverness. Another toward poetry. Another toward prayer.

The instrument is not the problem. The direction is.

If the same tongue can sell, flatter, fight, negotiate, joke, wound, and defend the ego, why can it not chant? Why can it not praise? Why can it not speak truth? Why can it not bow? If the same imagination can build fear, desire, fantasy, resentment, and ambition, why can it not visualize the Divine? If the same rhythm can drive the body toward restlessness, why can it not become tāla, dance, mantra, breath, and worship?

This is where nādopāsana begins. Not when a person becomes a professional musician. Not when a person learns a rāga. Not when a person stands on a stage. It begins when the inner rhythm stops serving only the small self and turns toward Bhagavān.

Art is not automatically worship. Language is not automatically sacred. Music is not automatically liberating. The ego can sing too. The ego can write poetry. The ego can perform devotion and ask for applause.

So the question is severe.

Does expression make me more self-owned, or does it make me more surrendered?

That is the difference between performance and upāsana.

For a seeker confused by jargon and theories, it is really very simple. The body is an instrument. The knowledge is already there.

Focus it.

Align it.

Offer it.

7. Nataraja: Stillness Dancing as Creation and Dissolution

Nataraja is not merely a beautiful icon. Nataraja is theology in motion. Siva stands as stillness and dances as movement. The foot is planted and the universe is in rhythm. One hand creates fearlessness. One hand points to refuge. One foot crushes forgetfulness. One foot lifts into grace. Fire burns. Damaru sounds. Hair flies. The circle blazes.

Consciousness is not asleep.

It dances.

This matters because many seekers think of spiritual life as an escape from movement. Sit still. Close the eyes. Silence the world. Withdraw. There is truth in that. But Nataraja gives another truth.

The highest stillness does not fear movement. The highest silence does not fear sound. The highest Consciousness does not become impure because the damaru begins.

The damaru is not outside Siva. The dance is not outside Siva. Creation is not outside Siva. Dissolution is not outside Siva.

The Siva Tāṇḍava Stotram captures this with its own sonic ferocity:

డమడ్డమడ్డమడ్డమన్పినాదవడ్డమర్వయం |
చకార చండతాండవం తనోతు సః శివః శివమ్ ||

The line itself does what it describes. The sound does not politely explain the damaru. It becomes the damaru.

That is nāda.

When poetry stops being description and starts becoming vibration, the seeker understands why chandas matters. Meter is not ornament. Rhythm is not a trick. Repetition is not laziness. Cadence is not decoration. Rhythm carries force. Rhythm focuses mind. Rhythm enters the body before philosophy finishes tying its shoelaces.

This is why art can become a spiritual instrument. The body can be dragged by rhythm into restlessness, or the body can be trained by rhythm into offering.

Nataraja does not ask the seeker to hate movement.

He asks the seeker to know who is dancing.

8. The Liṅga in Kālī's Courtyard



Siva liṅga pratiṣṭhāpana in Kāśī, Kālī temple compound near Kedar Ghat. Author collection.

Years later, as a family, we decided to see whether we could do Siva liṅga pratiṣṭhāpana in Kāśī. My wife brought a Siva liṅga from Narmada to Hyderabad. From there, we carried it to Kāśī.

We looked for a place. Kāśī has temples everywhere. Shrines, courtyards, compounds, lanes, bells, lamps, priests, names, histories, and presences layered on top of one another. In such a city, one does not easily calculate where one will finally be placed.

And yet, of all possible places, the space opened in a Kāli temple compound near Kedar Ghat. I spent five days there, going through the process of consecration.

I do not know how to explain these things without either reducing them or exaggerating them. So I will simply state what happened.

As a child in Balasore, I had once slept alone holding a small Siva liṅgam and asking only, “Be with me.” Later, Mā Kāli became the Mother to whom the disturbed mind could go when it could not even speak properly to the Father. Then Kāśī showed me the background nāda that had been with me all along — the quiet Om beneath noise, the damaru behind movement, the rhythm beneath fear and prayer.

And then, years later, a Siva liṅga came through my family, from Narmada to Hyderabad to Kāśī, and found its place in the courtyard of Kāli.

The circle had closed.

Not because I had completed anything. Because something that had accompanied me from childhood had taken form, place, ritual, family, and offering.

That is what consecration means to me. Not merely placing stone in a temple. Not merely completing procedure. It is when memory, devotion, sound, form, family, and surrender gather into one act and say:

This is not mine.

Let it stand here for You.

9. Poetry, Dandakam, and the Fierce Gait of Devotion

A seeker who has not felt rhythm in the body may underestimate poetry. Poetry is not merely beautiful wording. In the Indian tradition, poetry can be vehicle, weapon, bridge, mantra, praise, surrender, and fire.

A dandakam is not just a long metrical form. In the right hands, it becomes force. It moves like hooves. It strikes forward. It does not stroll. And at another level, its pulse can feel like a beating human heart — insistent, embodied, alive, refusing to become mere ornament. That is why certain devotional compositions do not merely say devotion. They make the body participate in it.

The Siva Tāṇḍava Stotram is not gentle in the ordinary sense. It is not lullaby-devotion. It is impact. It is velocity. It is percussion. It is the damaru turned into language. Hanuman Chalisa, when recited with living fervor, carries another gait. Repetition becomes stride. Name becomes breath. Breath becomes courage. Courage becomes offering.

This is why language matters. This is why meter matters. This is why chandas matters.

The modern person often treats form as limitation. But form can liberate energy. Meter does not merely bind poetry. It channels force. A river without banks becomes flood. A river with banks reaches the sea.

So too with language. Without discipline, words become leakage. With discipline, words become offering.

The question is not whether a person can write, sing, speak, perform, or argue. Most people can do some version of all this. The question is whether the inner fire is wasted on self-display or directed toward the Divine.

RāvaṇaBrahma knew this danger and this greatness.

That is why we must handle this carefully.

10. RāvaṇaBrahma, Arjuna, and the Danger of Unsurrendered Art

Rāvaṇa should not be flattened into a cardboard villain. That is moral laziness. RāvaṇaBrahma was vast: master of śāstra, tapasvin, Siva-bhakta, musician, poet, one associated in tradition with the fierce outpouring of Siva Tāṇḍava Stotram, and one traditionally credited with the Rudra veena itself — a being of terrifying access and terrifying fall.

This is exactly why he matters in this booklet.

Great art does not automatically mean surrender. Great knowledge does not automatically mean surrender. Great tapas does not automatically mean surrender. Great access to divinity does not automatically mean surrender. The instrument can become magnificent and still remain self-owned.

That is the danger.

Rāvaṇa's greatness was real. His fall was also real. The lesson is not to deny the greatness. The lesson is to ask what happens when greatness is not finally bowed.

This is where Arjuna becomes an important counterpoint. Arjuna is warrior, disciple, friend of Krishna, and also one who learns dance during the period of concealment. This should not be treated as embarrassment. It is refinement. The warrior does not become less of a warrior because he learns rhythm, gesture, and performance.

He becomes a more complete instrument.

The body that can hold a bow can also hold rhythm. The mind that can aim an arrow can also learn discipline of movement. The hero who can fight can also bow.

This matters because spiritual life is not the rejection of human capacities. It is their alignment. Strength must be aligned. Language must be aligned. Music must be aligned. Art must be aligned. Power must be aligned.

Otherwise, the very gifts that could become worship become fuel for ego.

The artist's question is not: am I talented?

The real question is: am I offered?

11. When the Sound Remains After the World Breaks

Earlier this year, my son died. He was twenty-three. We had named him Sridhar — from Sri and Dhar, from his mother and me, and also from that name of Bhagavān that had lived in the house long before I knew how to speak of these things properly.

When he died, the world crashed. People came to console me. Many expected me to break, wail, collapse, react in a visible way that grief is supposed to behave. But something else happened. I was calm. Not because I was trying to be calm. Not because I had decided to perform strength. It felt more like an old muscle memory had taken over.

I ended up consoling the people who came to console me.

We went to Varanasi to immerse his ashes. A guru in Kāśī, one whose family had spent generations in the service of Lord Viśwanātha, spoke to me there. He knew us. He knew the family. He was hurt too.

After listening to me, he said something I could not easily dismiss. “When I talk to you, you are talking tarkam. Logic. We use tarkam to console people. Here you are consoling me.”

I tried to brush it aside. I told him, “Guruji, we came to Kāśī now. Maybe He is giving me the strength to speak this way.” But he did not let me escape so easily. He said he had seen many people in grief. Most do not come to Kāśī when shattered. Many blame God. Many blame the world. Many come to sacred places when they want something, or when they are afraid of something, or when they are hoping for a future emotion — happiness, relief, success, protection, recovery.

But grief is different.

Grief strips the bargain.

That day I understood something about my own life which I had not fully named before. The prayer had not changed from Balasore to Kāśī. As a child, alone in a locked house, I had held a small Siva liṅgam and asked only one thing.

Be with me.

Decades later, carrying my son's ashes to the river, the prayer was still the same.

Be with me.

Not remove Kurukṣetra. Not explain Kurukṣetra. Not make Kurukṣetra fair.

Stand in the chariot.

I will fight my fights.

This is where Bhagavad Gita 18.66 must be heard carefully:

సర్వధర్మాన్ పరిత్యజ్య మామేకం శరణం వ్రజ |
అహం త్వా సర్వపాపేభ్యో మోక్షయిష్యామి మా శుచః ||

Take refuge in Me alone. I will liberate you. Do not grieve.

This does not mean the human heart becomes stone. It does not mean tears are failure. It does not mean grief is weakness. It means the final ground does not move when the surface has been shattered.

People grieve differently. Some cry. Some collapse. Some rage. Some go silent. Some speak. Some cannot speak at all. None of this should be judged cheaply. But there is a form of surrender in which the inner relationship with Bhagavān does not become transactional even when the most unbearable thing happens.

That is not philosophy.

That is the sound remaining after the world breaks.

The Om beneath the crash. The damaru behind destruction. The presence that does not shout, but also does not leave.

12. Art as Upāsana

Now we can return to the question that began this booklet.

Can art also be worship?

Yes.

But only if art stops being merely self-expression.

Self-expression is not wrong. The child must express. The poet must speak. The dancer must move. The actor must embody. The singer must release. The sculptor must shape. The painter must see. Human beings are not dead stones. Expression is natural.

But expression alone is not liberation. Expression can also feed ego. Expression can become identity. Expression can become appetite. Expression can become a refined demand for applause. So art must be purified by direction.

When the poem turns toward Bhagavān, language begins to bow. When the song turns toward Bhagavān, breath becomes offering. When dance turns toward Bhagavān, the body stops being vanity and becomes instrument. When acting turns toward Bhagavān, character becomes vehicle. When painting turns toward Bhagavān, form becomes meditation. When sculpture turns toward Bhagavān, matter becomes presence.

The human being is already full of nāda. The body has pulse. Breath has rhythm. Speech has cadence. Memory has repetition. Grief has its own beat. Love has its own music. Even ambition has a drumline.

The question is where all this is being spent.

Professional life consumes language. Family consumes language. Society consumes language. Politics consumes language. Commerce consumes language. Romance consumes language. Argument consumes language. Ego consumes language.

No one is really language-less. No one is really rhythm-less. No one is really story-less. So the seeker should stop pretending that the instrument is absent. The instrument is already there. The body is already there. The tongue is already there. The imagination is already there. The pulse is already there. The inner sound is already there.

Tune it.

Turn it.

Offer it.

That is nādopāsana.

Not art as entertainment alone.

Art as discipline.

Art as devotion.

Art as surrender.

Art as liberation.

13. The Gist

If I had to compress this booklet into one flow, I would say this: silence is not always absence. Sometimes silence is presence waiting to be heard. The child in Balasore did not know ritual, but he knew how to ask: be with me. That was bhakti before vocabulary. The house where my father taught my mother Telugu chandas gave language as sound before language became subject. That was nāda before scholarship. Kāli entered not as fear, but as Mother. That was Śakti as lap, anklet, presence, and refuge.

Kāśī revealed that the sound had been there all along: the Om behind noise, the damaru behind movement, the rhythm beneath fear, dream, ritual, ash, and river. The Siva liṅga brought from Narmada to Kāśī and placed in a Kāli temple compound near Kedar Ghat closed a circle. The child who once held a small liṅga for safety had grown into a man who could place one as offering.

Then grief came.

My son died.

The world crashed.

But the old prayer remained.

Be with me.

That is the spine of this booklet.

The seeker does not have to manufacture sacredness from outside. The body already moves. The breath already has rhythm. The tongue already carries language. The mind already creates images. The heart already

knows longing. The ear already responds to sound. The whole human being is already an instrument.

The problem is not absence of instrument.

The problem is misalignment.

The same body can chase restlessness or bow in worship. The same tongue can gossip, argue, flatter, sell, wound, or chant. The same imagination can build fear and fantasy, or it can hold the form of Bhagavān. The same rhythm can serve ego, romance, ambition, and self-display — or it can become mantra, tāla, poetry, dance, and offering.

So the inward journey through nāda is not complicated.

Focus the instrument.

Align the instrument.

Offer the instrument.

That is enough for a seeker to begin. Not to become famous. Not to sound learned. Not to decorate the ego with Sanskrit.

But to let silence become sound, and sound become worship.

Epilogue: When Language Learns to Bow

After sound comes language. Not because language is higher than sound. Because language is sound shaped into meaning. The next booklet will turn toward the mother tongue, especially Telugu, as a spiritual instrument. Chandas, yati, prāsa, alaṅkāra, story, metaphor, and everyday narration will come into view.

Life is already one long narration. We narrate ourselves to ourselves. We narrate ourselves to family. We narrate ourselves to society. We narrate ourselves to God. We argue, defend, decorate, confess, hide, reveal, wound, heal, and remember through language.

The question is whether language remains merely clever, defensive, social, and worldly — or whether it learns to bow.

Booklet One asked how the seeker stands when the gods fall silent.
Booklet Two asked how silence becomes sound. Booklet Three will ask
how language learns to bow.

Because the tongue too must eventually become an instrument. Not for
winning arguments alone. Not for making money alone. Not for social
performance alone.

But for truth.

For beauty.

For offering.

For Bhagavān.

End of Booklet Two