

## Relevance of Nādōpāsana in contemporary times

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**Abstract:** *Nāda is the primordial concept of music. The core concept of Nādōpāsana is to worship through consistent repetition of a particular frequency of sound in the form of a syllable or a song or a mantra or any other method, to activate the cakras for healthy mind and body. We come across great evolved souls having experienced the power of Nādōpāsana in the past, since the Pre-Vedic period. It's important to analyse its benefits in the present times too. In this study, the various concepts of Nādōpāsana and its relevance in the contemporary times will be studied and analysed. Concepts of activating the chakras, through Nāda mentioned in the treatise Sangeetaratnakara by Śāraṅgadēva and Sangeetakalpdrumam by Muttaiah Bhagavata has been considered for the study and analysis.*

**Keywords:** *Nāda, cakras, Upāsana, Swaras, prāṇa, nādis, śrutis.*

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### I. Introduction

Music is the highest form of art as that is practised since the pre-Vedic period. Nāda which is the primordial sound is the manifestation of the Para brahman. Hence, worshipping Nāda or through Nāda is practised to attain salvation. The power of music and its impact on the all the living beings of the universe from plants to animals to human beings is very well-known and research is still being carried out around the globe to discover and harness its power to the maximum.

According to the Hindu mythology there are four Yugas. Kruta, treta, dwapara and kali yugas. In the various puranas and treatises we come across kruta, treta and dwapara to be the times where there was less space for negativities. It was known as Satyakaal, where people were known to have moral values and virtues. We come across, these qualities completely declining in the Kaliyuga, which is dominant with negativities such as anger, hatred, jealousy, passion, greed, over attachment, ego, laziness, tension, instability of thoughts and mind, several medical conditions such as cancer, diabetes and several other diseases and physical ailments. This paper attempts to analyse and study the relevance and importance of Nādōpāsana in the contemporary times by analysing the concepts of Nādōpāsana as explained in Sangeetaratnakara of Sharanagadeva, and the present era of human development.

### Nāda

Nāda is the primordial sound. It is believed that the entire creation was derived from Nāda. Nāda is of two types, Ahata and Anahata. Ahata Nāda is the sound that can be heard by the human ears. Anahata Nāda is that sound which cannot be heard by the human ears. It is audible only to the great sadhakas who would have performed severe austerity for years, through which they would have gained the eligibility to access the unheard Anahata nada. Scientifically, Nāda means sound energies. Sound in the form of energy is omnipresent.

### Nādōpatti in the human body

We all know the five basic elements of nature, known as Pancha bhootas, namely Agni, Vayu, Akasha, Jala, and Prithvi. The human body is composed of these five elements of nature. In the treatise Sangeeta Ratnakara, Śāraṅgadēva explains Nāda as "Na" meaning the prana vayu, and "da" is the Agni. This Nāda is the vital energy that moves all over the human body. Śāraṅgadēva in his treatise Sangeet Ratnakara explains that human body is made up of three gunas – Satvik, Rajsik and Tamsik which the soul carries through its journeys across various janmas<sup>1</sup>. Nāda is the vital energy that runs all over the human body through the seventy-two thousand nādis connecting all the organs and various systems of the human body. It can also be described as the manifestation of the primary vital energy. This vital energy is called Prana. Prana is the energy that runs throughout the human body and is the essential energy required for life in this world. This Nāda that rises in the human body has different stages: Para, Pashyanti, Madhyama, and Vykhari. According to science and the

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<sup>1</sup> Cycles of birth and death.

various philosophies, all the living and non-living beings in this entire universe are constantly interacting with energies. There is a lot energy exchange happening and this energy, prana, is stationed in the human body and flows throughout as a carrier of energy. Prāna always moves in the upward direction. This prāna can be categorized into five types: Prāna, Apāna, Vyāna, Udāna and Samāna.

Prāna is the most important energy situated below the root of the navel and it travels through the navel, heart, mouth, nostrils and causes verbalization of speech. Apāna is situated in the anal region, the genitals, waist, legs, abdomen, the root of navel, the thighs and the knees. Vyāna is situated in the eyes, ears, nose. Udāna dwells in the hands, feet and limbs. Samāna is running through the entire body through seventy-two thousand nerve channels or nādis of the body along with the Agni - fire.

Śāraṅgadēva also compares the human body to a veena and calls it by the name Śārīri vīṇa. He explains that śrutis<sup>2</sup> are derived out of Nāda, and swaras are derived from these Shrutis. A Rāga is thus formed by the combination of these swaras. The Various Shrutis are C, D, E, F, G, A and B<sup>3</sup>. The various swaras are shadja, rishabha, gandhara, madhyama, panchama, dhaivat and nishad.

He also explains the production of sound in the human body from nabhi(navel), hrut(heart), kantha(throat) and rasana(tongue).

### **Human body and chakras**

The concept of chakras is an ancient concept. Chakras are energy centres located in the astral spine of the human body. They are carries of energies. They are connected to all the nādis<sup>4</sup> of the human body, which distributes the required energies to the entire system. Chakras must always remain balanced and activated. Śāraṅgadēva gives a detailed description of the ten cakras in the human body which are also considered as the metaphysical centers of the human body.

There are seven chakras in the human body. They are

The Moolādhāra cakra is situated in between the anus and genitals which resembles the flower lotus with four petals in the center of which lies the kundalīni<sup>5</sup> energy or the creative power.

The Swādhiṣṭhāna cakra is situated at the root of the genitals resembling a lotus with six petals. Meditating upon this swādhiṣṭhāna cakra would make the individual free from his enemies or ariṣadvarga Maṇipūra cakra (nābhiṣṭhāna) which resembles the lotus having ten petals is located around the navel.

The fourth cakra is the anāhata cakra which has twelve petals. This anāhata nada which is considered as the unmanifested sound is situated at this cakra which is the place of the Parabrahman who resides in the form of ōmkāra.

Viśuddhi cakra is situated in the throat-larynx which is also considered as the place for worshipping Sarasvati who is the Goddess of knowledge and learning.

The Āgna cakra which is also called as lalana cakra comprising twelve petals situated in between the eyebrows. The next cakra is the manam cakra having six petals and is considered as the cycle of mind.

Next comes the soma cakra which is situated above the manam cakra having sixteen petals representing sixteen phases of moon.

The last cakra is the sahasrapatra cakra resembling thousand lotus petals is the symbol of infinity leads to consciousness of the mind beyond time and space. Worshipping music is through meditating upon the cakras. He also explains about the suśumna nādi which is the most important and central nādi connecting the entire network of nādis which spread across the human body.

Mūlādhāra Cakra

It is located in the perineum, base of your spine. This Cakra is associated with your legs, feet, bones, large intestine and adrenal glands. Out of Five Tatvas or elements, this cakra represents Bhū tatva the Earth element. Red is the associated colour. Resonates to the Indian Classical Music Svara- Śaḍjam "Sa". Has 4 petals each representing following:

Brahman-This petal is active when you are in a meditative state are unaware of the sun, rain etc.

Sahajam-This petal is normally active for everyone

Vīrānandam-The joy felt when you overcome obstacles and achieve a seemingly impossible feat, this petal gets activated

Yōgānandam-This petal is activated during yōganidram. When communication is achieved by doing asanas or when kundalīni is awakened

Svādhiṣṭhāna Cakra

<sup>2</sup> Various frequencies of sound

<sup>3</sup> The western equivalentents

<sup>4</sup> Nādis are nerves which are seventy-two thousand in number.

<sup>5</sup> Kundalīni explanation - [isha.sadhguru.org/in/en/wisdom/article/kundalini-awakening](http://isha.sadhguru.org/in/en/wisdom/article/kundalini-awakening)

Associated with your lower abdomen, kidneys, bladder, circulatory system and your reproductive organs and glands. Associated with jala tatva- the water element. Orange is the associated colour. Resonates to Indian Classical Music. Located between the base of your spine and navel. Svara-Rśabham “Ri”. This has six petals which indicates:

Anbu – Affection: Activated when we feel affection. Especially motherly or filial affection because womb is located there.

Kodumai – cruelty: Activated during cruel actions. E.g. cursing from “ĀdiVayaru” or from deep within the body.

Garvam - Arrogance, conceit

Murchai – Fainting: This petal is related to a fainting reflex- Could happen during Fits, with urination. Or Dehydration could cause fainting.

Igazdal – Criticism - “Vayatheruchal” jealous criticism

Avishwasam – Mistrust: Mistrust stems from people who have been cruel or critical

Maṇipura Cakra

Located a few inches above the navel in the solar plexus area. This cakra is concerned with your digestive system, muscles, pancreas and adrenals. This cakra is associated with Agni Tatva Fire element. Yellow is the associated colour. Resonates Indian Classical Music Svara- Gāndhāram “Ga”. This Cakra has Ten Petals:

Suśūpti - state of deep sleep

Viruppam - Desire

Asuyai- Jealousy

Kol - Telling tales, Gossiping

Lajjai - Shyness

Bhayam- Fear

Dayavu - - Pity

Mōham - Lust

Kalakkam - Confusion/Anxiety

Dukham -Sadness

Anāhata Cakra

This Cakra is located at the Chest region. Associated with your lungs, heart, arms hands and thymus gland. This Cakra is associated with Vāyu Tatva-Air element. Green is the associated colour. Resonates to the Indian Classical music Svara-Madhyam “Ma”. This Cakra has 12 petals:

Asaitthal -Movements: Because of proper breathing, heart function and lung function

Nasitthal – Crushing: Could be Positive e.g., Crushing or destroying obstacles or evil. Can help destroy bad energies.

Vanjanai – Revenge Vitharkam -Arguing: Not merely argumentative but also critical and looking to find fault with everything

Anutaapam- Compassion: It includes both sympathy and empathy

Aavalinamai -Lack or Curiosity

Chintanai – Thinking: Thinking power comes from curiosity, based on curiosity and observation, mind will start thinking

Virupputhal – Passion: Passion follows thoughts. Progression from Curiosity to thoughts from attraction to Passion

Viśuddhi Cakra

This is located in throat region. Associated with your neck, shoulders, arms, hands, thyroid and para thyroid glands. This Cakra is associated with Ākāśa tatva-Ether element. This element carries sound. Blue is the associated colour Resonates with Indian Classical Music Svara-Pañcamam “Pa”. This Cakra has 16 petals. Out of 16 petals, 1 to 8 are Mantras, 9 to 15 are the seven svaras (notes).

One to eight Mantras are:

Pranavam

Humm

Vasašt

Swathā

Swāhā

Namah

Ambrutam

Phat

Nine to Fifteen are the Sapta or Seven Svaras:

Sa, Ri, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni

Omkara Destroys the negativities and cleanses the body completely. The last 16<sup>th</sup> petal represents Ajna Cakra. This Cakra is located at the centre of your forehead at eye level or slightly above also represents the Third Eye. It is concerned with inner vision, intuition and wisdom. This also represents the Trigūnas:

Sattva is the quality of balance, harmony, goodness, purity, universalism, holism, construction, creativity, positivism, peacefulness and virtue

Rajas is the quality of passion, activity, neither good nor bad and sometimes either self-centredness, egoism, individualization, dryness, movement and dynamism

Tamas is the quality of imbalance, disorder, chaos, anxiety, impurity, destruction, delusion, negativity, dullness or inactivity, apathy, inertia or lethargy, violence, viciousness and ignorance.

Indigo is the associated colour. Resonates to Indian Classical Music the svara-Dhaivatam “Dha”

Sahasrāra Cakra

This Cakra is located at the top of your head. It is associated with the cerebral cortex, central nervous system and the pituitary gland. It is said to be your own place of connection to God, the Cakra of Divine purpose and personal destiny. Violet is the associated colour. Resonates to the Indian Classical Music Svar-Nishādām “Nī”.

Manam Cakra

This Cakra is a Upa cakra- a very important in music therapy. Located in the forehead. This Cakra has 6 petals:

They are Swapna...Subconscious state.... Dreaming

Sense of Taste

Sense of Smell

Sense of Sight

Sense of Touch

Sense of Hearing<sup>6</sup>

## II. NĀDŌPĀSANA

The concept of Upāsana is that which is followed by all schools of Philosophy. The basic concept of Upāsana is to concentrate and connect to the inner self. It is to channelise all your energies and concentration and become aware of the self. Thus, single mindedness is the way through which one will be able to get control over his mind, thoughts and organs and attain the path of self-realisation.

Upāsana means to worship, to gain the highest state of awareness and understanding of the world or to train yourself in the path of wisdom. This is followed in various ways. The practitioner must be willing to gain the ultimate wisdom and be well prepared to follow the instructions of the Guru religiously with immense faith and courage. The practitioner is given a mantra or a song or a syllable or just the Omkara or the bījākṣara for Upasana. Upāsana is a process done in a prescribed manner. It requires certain parameters such as a Guru who teaches the right way of breathing, sitting posture, eating habits, lifestyle, the concepts of cakras or energy centres in the human body, the right bījākṣara, and many other concepts required for the eligibility. Once this is achieved, the process will gradually help in washing away the negativities and help one to vibrate at a higher frequency. The process of Upāsana will lead to destruction of ariṣad vargas<sup>7</sup> and attain the purest form of bhakti to reach the lord.

In the concept of Nādōpāsana singing or chanting in the assigned scale is also vital as every swaras is connected to every chakra and in turn the respective glands and organs of the human body. This repetition should be done for the specific period of time as instructed by the initiator. This benefits in several ways.

**Benefits of Music** As discussed earlier, music can be just the Nāda or the resonance, or it can be tune with or without lyrics added to it. Nāda has various attributes, and one such is the Omkara.<sup>8</sup> Nada is that sound which is in harmony with the human ears, that which gives joy and pleasure and enhances human emotions aiding them experience heightened joy.

From times immemorial, music has been an inseparable part of one's life. Music has been an integral part of all the rituals and worships too. We learn that music's origin is from Samaveda, where music was used for chanting the Vedic hymns. Music was also a part of social and cultural practices such as weddings, naming ceremonies, and various household chores such as cooking, bathing, stitching, grinding, farming, putting a baby to sleep, and many more. Music was adapted everywhere as it provided peace and calmness to the person singing or listening, thus enabling a comfortable and stress-free life.

<sup>6</sup> Chart given by Dr Rajam Shanker whose workshop was conducted by the Jain University, she has done her referencing from SaṅgītaKalpadrumam of Muttaiah Bhagavata.

<sup>7</sup> Kāma, Krōdha, MAdā , Matsarya , Lōbha and Mōha .

<sup>8</sup> Omkara is the combination of the three sounds aa, uu, and ma.

In the past we also come across stories of the Great court musician of Akbar, Tansen who lit fire by singing the raag Deepak or who brought heavy rains by singing the Raag Miya Malhar. The benefits of music are witnessed in the compositions of Great Saint composers like Sri Tyagaraja and the Haridasas and Saints of India like Sant Meera Bai, Sant Kabir etc. Music not only impacts Humans, there are several studies that show the impact of music on animals and plants in their growth or recovery, when used as an intervention.

### **III. ANALYSIS**

In the contemporary times of increasing urbanisation life has become extremely chaotic and busy. Due to unhealthy mental and physical environment people are prone to mental and physical ailments and diseases. There are several ways to order to get rid of the worldly miseries. Music has always been a tool to get rid of the worldly traps and make way for the path of self-realization. As already discussed earlier, Nādōpāsana does not require one to understand music. Upasana means worship so sound has different attributes. It can be in the form of Omkara or any syllable or a mantra or a song composed by the great composers in the past, or it can also be the instrumental music. The very concept of Nādōpāsana is being able to align your mind and soul and all your energies with single minded focus into the syllable or the mantra or the song and practice the same for a given among period of time to reap the results. Singing or chanting constantly on a particular scale would definitely help in activating that particular chakra, which in turn provides the required energies to the associated organs and glands. This helps as an intervention to speed up the curing process in case of an ailment or a disease. For of attaining the path of realisation it helps in calming the mind, bringing in the required focus and aligning the chakras. Only with a well-balanced mind and body one will be able to not only achieve self-realization but also any other worldly desires can be achieved.

### **IV. FINDINGS**

In the present times Nādōpāsana can be considered as a holistic approach towards aligning your mind and energies. There are a few influencing factors that aid the process.

1. It should be done under the guidance of the right Guru, in a conducive atmosphere.
2. It is vital to keep the body clean and healthy with regular exercise and healthy habits.
3. It should religiously be followed for the prescribed time for it to yield results.
4. The practitioner also aim to keep his mind devoid of negativities for better results.
5. The practitioner should have spiritual inclination.
6. It can also be combined with Yoga and various breathing exercises.

### **V. CONCLUSION**

The concept of Nādōpāsana can definitely be considered an intervention in this era of modern times. Music is always considered one of the highest and the easiest forms of art to attain a well-balanced mind and body. Hence irrespective of age, time zones, or any other factor it is vital to practise Nādōpāsana experience the bliss of life.

Like the existence of higher energies is an ancient concept irrespective of the era that one belongs to the concept of chakra and its activation is the concept that has come into existence with the evolution of human cognitive powers. Humans during all times have harnessed the power of Nada to its maximum as several have been benefitted by it. But on the contrary, it can be analysed that this is a process that requires a lot of dedication, perseverance, penance and patience as the surrounding factors also need to be in favour of the practitioner and various other factors as discussed earlier.

With this we can conclude that Nādōpāsana is definitely relevant and vital in the present times.

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