

Obstacles to Nada Yoga Meditation and How to Overcome Them

For our advanced webinar this month, we will review the practice of Nada Yoga and examine the obstacles that arise for meditators. This will be a forum in which you can gain greater clarity on what Nada Yoga is and how to do it more effectively.

Nada Yoga meditation has three aspects:

- (1) Attention is focused on the spirit (Surat Dhyān)
- (2) Sensory and mental currents are withdrawn into the spirit (Pratyahara)
- (3) The spirit lifts up into the Nadamic current and opens the blocked channels of the Nada (Udgit)

When these flow effortlessly, your spirit makes steady progress towards its origin. When your spirit opens the Nadamic channels to this origin, it merges back into the Divine and does not come back. This stage is referred to as spiritual liberation or salvation.

Difficulties in Nada Yoga arise from seven sources:

- (1) Failure to focus your attention on your spirit
- (2) Failure to fully withdraw your sensory currents
- (3) Failure to fully withdraw your mental currents
- (4) Failure of the spirit to lift up into the Nadamic current
- (5) Failure of the spirit to advance in the current to advance beyond a certain level due to a particularly dense area of karmic accretion in a Nadamic channel
- (6) Failure to open all channels of the Nada that run through a band of the Great Continuum of Consciousness [This occurs when, for example, if there are two channels of light and sound, you only open the light channel and not the sound channel.]

- (7) Failure to open the Nadamic channels to their origin, stopping instead at a stage on the path and regarding this as the culmination of the journey

In this article, we will address each of these obstacles in turn and suggest potential ways to overcome these obstacles.

Difficulties in focusing upon the spirit

Meditators can contact the spirit in seven major ways

- (1) Felt sense, by feeling the presence of the spirit at its seat within
- (2) Hearing, by focusing attention upon a high frequency sound corresponding to the presence of the spirit
- (3) Referent visual or symbolic, by focusing on an image that corresponds to the spirit. This "mystery" reveals the spirit when the image is contemplated.
- (4) Direct visual or essential, by focusing attention on the spirit directly as it can be seen within
- (5) Spontaneous passive absorption, by becoming absorbed in the spirit as the result of as a biological or psychological process. An example of a biological process would be contacting the spirit after ingesting a psychoactive drug or during anesthesia. A psychological process might be working through deep feelings of grief, emotional pain, or terror, which brings about union of the attention with the spirit after moving through the embedded issue.
- (6) Direct passive absorption, by uniting the attention with the spirit through the agency of Light Immersion or guided meditation

(7) Intentional passive absorption, by focusing attention upon the spirit by intention. This directed focusing of attention by the attentional principle is called *tratakam*.

Because of the depth of the Transcendental Paths (T1 to T7), focusing attention upon the spirit at these profound levels can be specially challenging. Teachers of the paths in this Transcendental Sphere have found one solution to this problem by instructing their chelas to meditate for long periods of time.

For example, Sant Mat (T2) teachers ask their disciples to meditate for two and one half hours daily. Both Avatar Meher Baba (T3) and some Sant Mat teachers (T2) also have used Light Immersion through gazing into the eyes of the teacher (*darshan*) to draw their disciples' attention into union with the spiritual essence of their path.

We suggest that you identify and master an *active Nadamic meditation* that reliably allows you to focus your attention on the spirit. The five active Nadamic meditations are (1) felt sense, (2) hearing, (3) symbolic, (4) essential, and (5) directed intentional focusing using *tratakam*.

While Light Immersion can assist you to identify the focal point for union with the spirit, we urge meditators to not become dependent on this boost from their supervising Initiate, but to master the practice of Surat Dhyān for themselves.

We say this because you may not always be in contact with the Grace waves of your teacher or be able to have *darshan*, and you should not be limited to accessing your spiritual essence outside of these lyrical hours with your spiritual Master.

Union with your spirit through breakthrough experiences arising from physiological or psychological process is not reliable enough to use this as a primary method.

Groups such as Insight™ training seminars utilize process meditation upon deep-seated issues to focus attention on the spirit of the fourth path [1]; we suggest that not every one can navigate through the imbedded issues of the unconscious mind to reach this state of union with the spirit.

Relying upon psychoactive chemicals or voluntary anesthesia also yields unpredictable results. One episode of intoxication with LSD or Ecstasy (MDMA) may bring about union with the spirit; during another episode it may not. Inhaling anesthetics such as ether or nitrous oxide similarly do not reliably produce union with the spirit. Further use of psychoactive chemicals to try to recapture this sacred experience promotes addiction and can produce brain damage. [Brain damage ultimately deadens your ability to be receptive to the whispering of your spiritual essence.]

Failure to withdraw sensory currents

Pratyahara is the process of withdrawing the sensory currents into your spirit. Four major sensory tracks can be identified.

Track	Sensory current is withdrawn into	Major techniques
Visual	Light current of the Nada	Jyoti Laya
Auditory	Sound current of the Nada	Shabda Laya, Bhajan [2]
Gustatory-Olfactory	Nectar current of the Nada [3]	Amrita Laya
Tactile-Kinesthetic	Pranic channel of the Nada [4]	Prana Laya, Remembering the Holy Name [5]

Some meditators find that using a physical technique of placing fingers on the forehead or ears [6] is helpful; others find them distracting. Meditators will value from learning these techniques, and must determine for themselves whether they help or hinder.

We suggest that simply holding your attention one-pointedly on your spirit for a sustained period of time will automatically trigger Pratyahara.

It will also be helpful to do these practices in a quiet place, optimally when the background noises of the environment have died down, during the hours of 2am to 5am.

If you can successfully withdraw your sensory currents, you will activate the inner "senses of your spirit," which will allow you to witness the phenomena of the path of the Nada.

Failure to withdraw mental currents

In Nada Yoga meditation, you encounter the mental current in eight primary modes. The mental current passes through different bands of the mind, which produce varying kinds of mental content. These eight primary modes of the mental current are shown below.

- (1) Sensory driven – this occurs when the input from your five senses stimulates mental activity. For example, you see a sports car and you begin to think about cars you want to buy, or you might compare your own car with the sports car.
- (2) Emotional reaction driven – in this band, your attitude colors how you react to an object, person, or idea. You may find yourself ruminating on an object, person or idea that evokes feelings, and will mentally criticize or praise it (judgment). You may also sustain an attitude or prejudice about it, which will come up whenever you think about it (stereotype). You may find yourself reacting with feelings of superiority or inferiority; you may feel pride or shame and envy.

- (3) Memory driven – at this level, sensory experiences or words may trigger the emergence of memories from your past. You may enter into reverie states where you are absorbed in your past, thinking about places you have been, people you have known, or how you were.
- (4) Imagination driven – as the mental current passes through this zone, the operation of your subtle senses and astral brain produces a wide variety of fantasies. You may imagine yourself being an assortment of zany characters, being fabulously wealthy, or vacationing in an exotic location.
- (5) Cognition driven – when the mental current moves through this zone, you may find yourself trying to solve problems using logical analysis or your intellectual problem-solving skills. You may think about problems at work, in your relationship, or in a subject you might be studying. You may think about world events, or contemplate philosophical or religious ideas.
- (6) Volition driven – in this level of the mind, you think about your goals. You may acknowledge the goals you have completed, examine your progress towards current goals, or formulate new goals. You are focused on action and getting results.
- (7) Archetypal driven – as the mental current rises into the Superconscious mind, you may begin to witness and interact with archetypes. You may see fairies or pixies, angels, gods and goddesses, sages and saints. These archetypes may speak with you, conveying intuitive knowledge. They may point or gesture to you, showing you scenes on the inner Planes. They may transmit energy or powerful numinous qualities through their presence. They may teach you, warn you or scold you.

- (8) Unitive mode – at this stage, your mental currents are completely withdrawn into your spirit. You directly experience what your spirit is sensing, feeling or thinking. You sense a mental fusion with your spirit—not only do you witness the spirit, but you experience that you are the spirit.

Withdrawal of the mental currents is accomplished in two ways: repetition of a contemplative mantra or remembrance.

Repetition of a contemplative mantra is done by the attention repeating a word keyed to the presence of the spirit. This may be a single syllable, or the contemplative mantra may be contained as part of a short phrase. Some systems, such as the simran used in the Sant Mat teachings, may use names of the different forms of the Divine encountered at discrete stages of the path, using the contemplative mantra as the last name.

Remembrance occurs when the spirit itself repeats the contemplative mantra, remembering the spiritual guide within or the Divine. This form elicits powerful longing, love and devotion for the Master and for the Divine. When this stage dawns on the mind, you will find it very difficult to think about anything else but your spiritual life.

We suggest that use of contemplative mantra is most effective when the attention has first become focused in the spirit. In this case, withdrawal of the mental currents proceeds successively from one mode to the next, leading to successful immersion in the unitive mode.

Attempting to access the spirit by repeating the contemplative mantra with the attention from the periphery of the mind (e.g., from the waking state of awareness), however, may lead to your attention becoming engaged for long periods in one of the eight primary modes. For example, you may find your attention is caught up in imagination or thinking, and you cannot move beyond that mode. You might not, as a result getting stuck in one of these modes, ever reach union with your spirit during your meditation sitting.

Failure of the spirit to lift up into the Nadamic channels

When sensory and mental currents have been fully withdrawn, the spirit is freed to enter the Nadamic channel. However, because the force of the Nada in this band of the Great Continuum is typically at its weakest, there may be little impetus from the Nadamic current to pull the spirit upward.

For this reason, most Nadamic traditions utilize an initiation ceremony or sitting to send the directed power of the Initiate to actively pull the spirit into the current. This is typically done for each of the active channels—the spirit will be drawn upwards a certain distance in the light and sound currents, enough to create an upward momentum so that the spirit can catch the current and travel deeper into it.

We suggest that once these Nadamic channels have been opened, the main reason aspirants do not lift up into the current is that they have not fully withdrawn their sensory and mental currents. Indeed, the key marker that the sensory and mental currents have been withdrawn is that the spirit is caught up into the current. If the sails are up, the anchor is raised and the ship is untied from the dock, the wind will carry the vessel into the open sea. The aspirant must put up the sail of the attention, pull up the anchor of the sensory current and untie the cords of the mental current, and the spirit will be away, swept up by the winds of the Nadamic Current.

Failure to advance due to dense karmic accretion

Once the spirit has entered the channels of the Nada, there may be areas where progress is difficult due to dense karmic accretion in some sections of these channels. There are areas where progress is swift and steady, but in other areas it is slow and arduous.

Karmic accretion is the layering of karma in the unconscious band of the mind. Depending on where this karmic material layers, we refer to it by a different name. Karma that layers behind the ensouling entity on its path we describe as Adi Karma. Karma that layers behind the vehicles of the Soul we identify as Kriyaman Karma. Karma that fills the channels of the Nada we call Sinchit Karma.

The Sinchit Karma in the channels of the Nada can be dissolved by one of four methods:

- (1) The spirit opening the channel by Udgit through by its own movement through the channels in Nada Yoga meditation
- (2) The spirit opening the channel by Udgit, drawn upward by the directed volitional force of an Initiate
- (3) The Light Fire of attunement burning away these impressions, as occurs during Light Immersion
- (4) The resolution of the karmic issue by action or emotional processing

When your spirit encounters difficulties in working through a zone of karmic accretion, you may resort to any of the three alternate ways to break through the barrier. You can get help from an Initiate, who has mastered the track of the Nada where you are working, to be guided to move forward. You can go to a Light Sitting or similar forums of Grace Bestowing energy to have these channels cleared. You can discover what is the issue embodied by the karma and resolve it.

This last method requires that you gain insight into the issue that forms the karmic blockage. Methods taught in the Mudrashram® Master Course in Meditation such as process meditation, the rainbow technique, and the mandala method, are valuable tools to access and resolve these issues. In some cases, if you determine that the issue is founded upon an unfulfilled desire, and that acting on that desire will not be harmful, simply taking action may largely dissolve the issue.

Failure to open all Nadamic channels within a domain

In the twelve domains of spirituality, there are different numbers of channels. The most common configuration is two channels, one of light and the other of sound. On the Bridge Path, there is only one channel, sound. T5 adds a third channel of nectar between the currents of light and sound. On T6 and T7, there is one additional channel of pranic vibration, called Word, Holy Name, or Primordial Vibration by traditions anchored on T7.

On the Bridge Path and the seven Transcendental Paths (T1 to T7), when the spirit opens each channel of the Nada to the same Nadamic tone, it actively unfolds the ensouling entity in that realm. It is the primary, preferred and fastest method for T1 to T5; it is the only method for transformation in T6 and T7.

Mantramic methods are typically used in the Cosmic, Supracosmic, and Transcendental levels of the Bridge Path as the primary method of transformation, mainly because of the length of the path of the spirit through the Supracosmic Sphere. Later, as the spiritual work becomes focalized in the Transcendental Sphere, the spirit is drawn up to gain union with the Soul of the Bridge Path.

Teachers on T5 also use Transcendental Plane Mantras to unfold the ensouling entity on their path. They open only one or two of the three Nadamic paths through their domain, preferring to use mantras that unfold the ensouling entity and its vehicles through one Plane on their path at a time.

Opening the channels of the Nada does not effect transformation of the ensouling entity in the first four segments of the Nada, which spans the Continuum from the entrance to the Subtle Realm to the top of the Second Cosmic Initiation.

However, for balanced spiritual development, the Mudrashram® system of Integral meditation recommends that the unfolding of the ensouling entity be coordinated with the opening of the Nadamic channels. This means that when the ensouling entity moves forward to a new nodal point, the spirit should open each Nadamic path to a corresponding Nadamic tone, in synchrony with the new stage of development of the Soul.

We suggest that you open each Nadamic channel in the domain in which you are doing your spiritual work. This will resolve all remaining Sinchit Karma in this realm, which will result in the final liberation, or salvation, of your spirit. Leaving any karma in these channels will not allow you to move beyond this realm. Until you remove the Adi, Kriyaman and Sinchit Karmas in each division of the Great Continuum of Consciousness, the Alaya will not withdraw and you will remain anchored in this realm.

The major divisions of the Great Continuum of Consciousness, for which all Adi, Kriyaman, and Sinchit Karma must be resolved before the Alaya can be withdrawn, are

- Subtle Realm
- Planetary Realm
- Transplanetary Realm
- Cosmic Sphere
- Supracosmic Sphere
- Transcendental portion of the Bridge Path
- Transcendental Path One (T1)
- Transcendental Path Two (T2)
- Transcendental Path Three (T3)

- Transcendental Path Four (T4)
- Transcendental Path Five (T5)
- Transcendental Path Six (T6)

Transcendental Path Seven (T7) is the ultimate home of the Alaya. During liberation of the ensouling entity in each division, the Alaya momentarily returns to Satchitananda. Then the Alaya is sent forth to animate the ensouling entity on the next segment of the path.

We also suggest that you study the materials on Nada Yoga in the Mudrashram® Master Course in Meditation or the Accelerated Meditation Program to identify the number of channels in the domain in which you are doing your spiritual work. Then verify their location by placing your attention on their entrance of each channel, and trace the path until you can identify its origin. Notice how much of each channel your spirit has opened, and what portion remains unopened. Also contemplate the bridge between each channel by which the spirit crosses over from one channel to the next.

This channel bridging activity of the spirit is one that is often misunderstood. Some aspirants have gotten the idea that if they simply focus their attention in the light or sound current of each channel through Pratyahara, that the spirit will somehow magically go there. We suggest that the spirit, after it has opened one channel of the Nada, will actively cross over into the next channel to open it.

This open one channel, move back down, then open the next channel, has led some poets to find in Udgīt the analogy of weaving. Sufi and Sikh mystics have said that the spirit's progress up and back in opening the channels resembles the weaving of a beautiful white wedding garment. With each stitch, more of the radiant gown appears, until the entire glorious dress is seen—and the spirit is reunited with its Divine Beloved.

Failure to open the Nadamic Currents to their origin

This occurs because there are segments of the Nadamic Path, in which higher stages of the path are mirrored. This has led some wayfarers to conclude they have reached the Supreme Abode when they have not.

Arriving at these sublime way stations bestows virtues, great powers and the ability to initiate on the wayfarer. These advanced spiritual adepts perceive that they have taken a form in the presence of one form of the Divine, and conclude it is the highest realm.

Careful inspection of their actual state reveals that their spirit has not been liberated. While the spirit may be caught up and established in an inner throne, it has not traveled the Nadamic path to its origin.

Some of these stations on the path that are commonly mistaken for the Supreme Destination in several domains are shown below.

Domain	Plane	Form of Mastery
2	Abode of the Occult Adepts, Lower Astral Plane	Occult Adept
3	Heavenly Realms Subplane, Psychic Realm	Spiritual Guide
3	Abode of the Saints, First Mesoteric Initiation	Saint
3	Mystery School Adept, First Esoteric Initiation	Hierophant
3	Plane of the Ascended Masters, Second Planetary Initiation	Ascended Master
4	Planetary Hierarchy, Transplanetary Sphere	Adept Master
4	Abode of the Yogi Preceptors, 1st Cosmic Initiation	Yogi Preceptor
5	Cosmic Hierarchy	Cosmic Master
5	Mastery of a Supracosmic Path	Guru

Domain	Plane	Form of Mastery
6	T1 - 7th Plane	Subud Master
7	T2 - Mirror of the Path above the 2nd Plane	Shabd Master
7	T2 - Dwellers in the Sunna above the 3rd Plane	Paramahansa
8	T3 - 4th Plane	T3 Adepts
9	T4 - 1st through 7th Planes	Adepts of each Superuniverse; the Master of the 7th Superuniverse dwells in the Maharaj stage
10	T5 - the abode of empowerment, Sach Khand, beyond the 5th Plane	Mahdis
12	T7 - the 5th Plane, the abode of the Mahatmas	Mahatma

We point out that stopping short of the goal for many of these advanced spiritual adepts may arise from compassion and desire to assuage suffering, and not necessarily from ignorance of higher states of the path. Their disciples, however, may get the erroneous impression that their Initiate is indeed established in the highest stage and may limit their aspiration to go to the level of their Master instead of returning to their spirit's origin.

We suggest that a thorough study of the Great Continuum of Consciousness will help avoid this pitfall of suspending further spiritual progress short of the goal. Initial Continuum study may be gained on our web site and in our introductory meditation classes, the Mudrashram® Master Course in Meditation and the Accelerated Meditation Program. Intermediate studies of the Great Continuum of Consciousness include the experiential Mudrashram® Advanced Course in Meditation or the Satsang Program Home Study Course in a guided meditation format.

For a comprehensive study of the Continuum, the Mudrashram® Correspondence Course provides an in depth examination of its every level.

Nada Yoga is a key element of spiritual work in every domain. The aspirant and disciple will benefit from learning to open the Nadamic current and to overcome any hindrances in their passage along this pole. We have suggested several solutions to obstacles encountered by meditators in attempting to grasp this subtle mystic practice, and encourage you to persist until you can make steady, verifiable progress opening of these channels. Understanding clearly what is involved and implementing these measures will go a long way to make your spiritual journey a successful one. Moreover, the teachers of the Mudrashram® lineage extend their assistance to those who study with us to facilitate their homeward journey.

End Notes

1. The fourth path of the spirit begins at the entrance to the Third Planetary Initiation and culminates in the upper bands of the Second Cosmic Initiation.
2. This is the name of this practice used by Sant Mat teachers (T2)
3. The nectar current is only active on T5, T6, and T7
4. The pranic channel is only active on T6 and T7
5. This is the name of this practice used by a T7 Sat Guru, Sat Guru Balyogeshwar Paramahansa
6. The techniques of Jyoti Laya and Shabda Laya are taught in the Mudrashram® Master Course in Meditation and the Accelerated Meditation Program. Different variations of these basic Pratyahara techniques can be found in many different spiritual traditions.