

NALANIE HARILELA CHELLARAM



Relationships

Question and Answer Session on Relationships

Contrary to what we may think, unhappiness is not a negative thing. Unhappiness comes to us for a purpose. If we understand the reasoning behind it, it will lift us out of our misery. We fail ourselves when we become bitter because things are not going the way we planned.

When people become unpleasant, angry and sceptical, there's no joy in their lives and they feel imprisoned by their own emotions. At the end of the day, you have to live with yourself. You have to ask the question – how can I live with myself when there is no peace?

Don't ask for happiness. If you are peaceful, then you are already content and happy. This means you have everything you want materially, you have everything you want physically, you have everything you want emotionally – you are just peaceful. Asking for things - a bigger house, a better car and a better partner - these things may not make you happy. They may make you happy temporarily, but once you get them, what happens?

Sri Patanjali tells us that a 'man or woman of discrimination soon learns that everything is painful.' Why? Because the moment you get what you want, you're frightened of losing it. Fear sets in, and then when you are terrified of losing what you have gained, you get anxious and possessive. And when you start to get possessive, you become obsessive. When you become obsessive, life becomes unbearable for you and all those around you.

Spiritual study really only works when you live the teachings truthfully in your own lives. Ask yourself what you want from your life. Make your answer simple. What can you leave behind when you die? What can you take with you? Nothing. You can take nothing with you. What you have, you can enjoy here, and by sharing it, you will enjoy it even more.

Share what you have. What else can you do with what you have? You can hoard it, but what will that do for you or anyone else? You will die, then your children will fight for your possessions, because you would have taught them greed and fear by your example while you were living. If you teach them to share while you're living, and share what you have with them, when you or anyone else is in need they will aspire to help, because you have taught them to give. You have taught them to share, you've taught them to love – that is a wonderful legacy to leave behind.

You tell me you fear ridicule if you behave in a caring manner. Why live in fear of being yourself? Let people laugh at you for doing something good. Do something horrible and they are going to laugh at you anyway. If you do something worthwhile, at least you feel respectable! Doing good is part of being 'in spirit'. Somehow it brings fulfilment to your life.

From the moment we are born we want to be loved. Everybody needs love. Why would that be if it wasn't part of our natural way of being? Why would we look for that feeling if it wasn't what we have experienced before? Would you ask for something you have not experienced before? No. We are searching for this unconditional love because we have known it.

We realize that this search for 'Love' exists in all human beings. This is how we come to understand that 'Truth is One, Paths are many' (Swami Satchidananda). It's not good enough to just say we are all one; it is really important to live like we are all brothers and sisters. It is essential to live the spiritual teachings, to walk our talk. Sometimes, knowledge alone without the application of it, develops into an over inflated ego. Instead, develop your heart. That's where the soul lives. Make it glow! If you look at illustrated images of the great masters, for example, in the painting of Lord Jesus' entitled 'Divine Mercy' rays of light flow outwards from his heart.

There are many paintings of Saint Theresa of Avila with images of light emanating from her heart. She falls in love with her spirit. She's one of my favourite saints, I just love Saint Theresa of Avila. In Avila, there's a painting of Cupid shooting an arrow into her heart symbolizing her falling in love with God. When she falls in love with her spirit she falls in love with God, so fall in Love with Spirit!!

There has to be a Creator. Just look at the amazing machine that is our human body. Something had to have designed this machine, the way the heart beats every day, the way the wires are encased in the spine and then go to our brain, the way the motor neurons work.

When we speak of the Chakras, we speak of revolving wheels of subtle energy in our bodies. When all the wheels are perfectly aligned, we are able to connect with the Higher Self or our power station. The Chakras make up our spiritual circuit, the battery that connects us to spiritual vitality! We are mechanical devices that have the ability to connect with the Higher Source. We just have to apply the laws.

Sri Patanjali tells us very simply you can develop that connection by faith, by love, by strength. Your strength, your knowledge, what you know here in your very own heart. Knowledge is important, that's why I teach Sri Patanjali's Sutras and that's why I teach the Bhagavad Gita, and sometimes I quote the New Testament and other books. Knowledge is very important, because at least it gives you a map showing which direction to head to. Knowledge is just a map, nothing more. Use the map to move, if you're stuck, it's always better to move. Move some energy, because you can be stuck for years and before you know it, your life is over. It's over. Don't waste time! I meet so many wonderful people doing this work. And the more that I am used, the more that I travel – even though some say the world is a horrible place - I can tell you that in my experience the world is a beautiful place. There are so many incredible souls.

I recently met a young girl who, for ten years, has been serving the homeless at a homeless shelter in La Linea. The Spanish government stopped its subsidies to the charity for two years and we found out she was in dire straits. We had some money in our charity funds raised from the talks and classes that we do, so we agreed to help by donating 5000 euros, the cost for running the shelter for a month. Normally we never have that much in our funds as the moment we raise more than £2000 we make sure that any excess is given in service.

One of my students, a lawyer, decided to set up a website for the homeless shelter and to ask people to donate 10 euros a month. Then the mayor of La Linea gave her new premises where she can now accommodate sixty-five people. I watch her, so young, and so full of love and so humble with it, so young and devoting her life to help others. She said her boyfriend has asked her to marry him, but she's got no time for holidays and she doesn't know how she's going to fit in her wedding! Her fiancée seems to adore her, supports her and looks after her. Isn't that such a beautiful way to live?

I think when you do so much good the Gods bless you. I keep seeing this. When you do it from your heart, you get the help you need. It's the way it works. So I guess I'm just trying to remind you how powerful the law of Love and Service is!! But always remember, never to expect anything in return!

I am talking about relationships today, and will now look at the questions I've been given:

Q: *What do I do when irritated by the things my mother does? I tell her and then feel terrible for the whole day, feel sorry and ask for forgiveness. She always forgives me and that makes me feel even worse.*

A: In mother /daughter relationships, that's normal. I wouldn't put too much into it. When you're very close, living with someone for a long time, you're bound to get a little irritable. With your partner, your children, anybody, its quite normal when you're very close, and you live together. Mums get old, they start nagging, they start to do things that irritate you, its normal. If she's done something wrong and you tell her, then you feel bad, that is also normal, because she's your mother! What you have to tell yourself is that you're really telling her because you love her. Tough love. Not because you want to hurt her. Wisdom lies in the way you approach your mother. Be gentle, go back to her and say, "I'm sorry mum. I'm sorry but this is the way I feel, every time you say those words and do that action, I feel hurt and upset. I love you and I know you love me, but we seem to clash. Is there anyway we could sit and talk about it without blame or anger?"

You must explain completely. A mother will always forgive, unless she's a bitter person, and from what you say here, she sounds loving. She always forgives you and that makes you feel bad. Good! Next time you'll learn to say it in a nicer way, without irritation. Don't feel guilty about telling her, but perhaps look at *how* you tell her. Next time think, "If I say it rudely, I feel awful... so let me sit her down and tell her nicely". That will be the change you should make. Not that you shouldn't tell her because if you don't there will be an ongoing conversation between you and her that will make you even more angry and upset. So my advice is: tell her, but next time you feel irritation, at least say to her: " I'm getting a little irritated, maybe I'll speak to you later," and take five minutes to calm down, do the right thing, and do it more gently. She loves you unconditionally. A mother will always forgive.

Q: *How can I improve the relationship with an employee who does not have a good attitude, takes the job for granted, and tends not to use working time properly. He's arrogant and egotistical. It's not possible to ignore it. I've tried kindness but it only worked temporarily. What else can I do?*

A: If you've tried everything, I think it's time to get a new employee! It's hard to get a job these days. People should value the job they have. It's hard, and if people get cocky and arrogant at work, it doesn't resolve anything. The other day I was at a coffee shop, and the owner told me he had just employed an 18 year-old boy. He was arrogant, rude to everyone, acting as if he owns the place. "Because he's good looking and speaks beautifully, all the women are after him. He's on three months trial, everyone likes him, but he doesn't do his work."

So I said, "It's not about liking or not liking him – you have a business to run. You're in charge. If you're allowing one employee to do that, what will it do to all the other employees? Be truthful, talk to him nicely and tell him his attitude is wrong. If he wants to stay, he should do his best. He's on a three month trial and needs to pull his socks up if he wants to keep the job."

It's not that you want to hurt anyone, but people need to learn that they should respect the employer. We're too soft sometimes. I know when I was brought up, if I did something wrong, my mother told me off right way. You are correcting a wrong action so that the person becomes a better person. Think of your employee as part of your family. I would say to my employee: " We are a team, and being part of a team means we all work together. Your attitude is wrong, and it's not beneficial for our business. If you want to be part of our business, join in, be a little bit more humble and be aware of your part in it. If we all work together well, the company will be full of light and love, and will prosper. If you want to work with me, then work with all of us." That's what I would say.

Q: *Please tell me how not to lose yourself in a relationship by being too soft and kind, at service to your man who is slowly taking advantage and control of your life. Fear and doubt arises, and a new relationship seems a better option.*

A: I think the next time we should talk about fear. Fear is everywhere. So what is your fear here? It's so obvious. You have stated your own problem. You lose yourself in the relationship by being too soft and kind. I think you answered your own question – you are too soft and kind. Weakness is not goodness. Too soft, suggests weakness – soft is good, too soft, is not so good. Please remember this. I've had to tell this to many people in my life, because I have experienced it. Weakness is not goodness. Are you really too soft and too kind? Because if you were really soft and you were really kind, you would not allow anybody to control you – it's not good for you, or for that person. When you allow somebody to control you, to be harsh on you, you're not helping them or yourself in any way.

I'll tell you a story of somebody I counselled a long time ago. It was really interesting; in fact I learnt a lot from this woman, and she allowed me to use her story. She was about 64 years old, and she came to me saying she wanted to leave her husband.

NC: "Why do you want to leave your husband? Is he bad to you?"

W: "No" she said, " He's not really bad to me. I get everything I want in life. I've got a nice home, he takes me travelling, he buys me whatever I want. He is quite good to me."

NC: "So why do you want to leave him?"

W: "Because he has a terrible temper."

NC: "Oh, does he hit you?"

W: "No, no, he has never hit me, but he throws things and he breaks things in the house."

NC: "What do you do when he does that? How do you tolerate that? You've been married to him for thirty-five years, haven't you?"

W: "Yes. I get the broom and clean up. I get so scared, I get so frightened, I just clean up. And then I get so angry inside."

NC: "Do you tell him that you will not tolerate this behaviour?"

W: "No. I just get angry inside".

NC: "I don't blame him – I blame you. What have you taught him? The very first time he broke something in your house, what should you have said? 'Don't you dare do this in my house, I will not tolerate this – you break it, you clean it up!'"

W: "Oh, but my mother always cleaned up after my father."

NC: "Was she happy?"

W: "No she was miserable all her life."

NC: "You clean up for him if you want to, that's not a bad thing, but to clean up after somebody when they do something wrong – what are you encouraging them to do? He can break things in the house, he has the money to do so, but you have to face the noise, the horrible rage, the aggression, over and over again. Have you told him how you feel?"

W: "No I've just told him I want to leave him."

NC: "That's pretty unfair. He should be told how you feel. Men are not so shrewd in understanding women's emotions. You have to be straight with men. You have to say exactly what's going on. They don't deal with all this emotional stuff the way that women do. They have different ways of thinking. Really, men are from Mars and women are from Venus - it's the truth! They appear so complicated, but they are actually quite simple."

I asked her what happened when she told him she was going to leave him and she said he started crying. So I said “You really need to tell him exactly how you feel,” but she was too frightened. So I said, “Okay, let’s say you leave him, what will you do with your life?” She said she didn’t know. I said, “Why don’t you give it one more year. Give it a try. You know, after thirty-five years of marriage, at sixty-five, what are you going to do with your life? Have you ever been alone?”

W: “No”

NC: “Have you ever had a job?”

W: “No”

NC: “What are you going to do with your life? You’re going to be bored stiff! You travel with him everywhere. You have to be a little realistic. Do you love him?”

W: “I don’t know.”

NC: “Okay”, let’s give him a chance – are you ready to do this?”

W: “Yes, but I’m scared to do it alone.”

NC: “Bring him into my office.”

In those days I was working from a clinic. She brought him in, and I had to speak for her, and the first thing he said, after I told him how she felt, was: “Why didn’t you tell me?” And she looked at me and said, “You were right.”

I said, “I don’t want to be right, I just want this fixed. Whether you want it fixed or you don’t, it’s your choice. But it’s obvious there’s still some love there. Before you throw it all away, try and fix it.”

So they started to talk, and this went on for three or four sessions. A few months later, they sent me a beautiful bouquet of flowers, saying that now they feel as if they're really married. He told me in front of her: "Please tell her, tell her that I get angry, it's a bad habit. If I do this, she must stop me, she must tell me to stop and not just keep quiet."

She had to practice being a little assertive, which was not her nature. She was just so reserved, that it was nearly killing her. Well it certainly would have ruined her life.

Q: *"If your answer to this question is to be strong, then wouldn't it become just a constant battle? You know, he's aggressive, you're aggressive, there's a lower vibration."*

A: There's no need to speak aggressively. Speak strongly, with confidence. Somebody taught me, and I'm not comparing human beings with dogs - or maybe I am! I just got a dog recently. I've never had an animal in my life, but I'm learning a lot. If I say, "Gaia, don't do that," she'll continue to do it, but if I say loudly, "*Gaia! Stop it!*" she stops right away. Not screaming, not shouting, but being strong and firm. You don't go into a battle. If they start battling with you, then you walk away and come back later and say, "When you're in a good mood, I would like to talk with you."

Some people you cannot get away from and they go mad, right? Okay, so do you want to stay with somebody like that? That's the question you have to ask yourself. Someone who won't adjust, adapt and accommodate? I feel most people will, when you are quite strong and tell them, "Look, this is very hard for me, I really don't want to be aggressive, I don't want to be arguing with you all the time." Why would you want to be with someone if you're not at peace? It's a bad habit that's all. If you're not married, if you don't have children with this person, you can say goodbye. Why would you want to be with anybody that makes you live in fear?

You don't deserve it. You can't blame anybody else. You have to take it into your own hands, walk away or sort it out, one way or the other. Ask him if he's willing to go into some counselling, and if he says no, then you will constantly be at battle.

Do you want to live a life like that? Is that why you go into a relationship? Why stay with somebody that makes you so unhappy? It just doesn't make sense, especially if you're not married.

If you're going to be with somebody, make sure you get along with that person. If they're making you cry, making you feel like you could kill yourself, why are you with this person? What are you frightened of, getting old and being alone? Better to be old and happy alone, then to be with someone who makes you feel fearful. Use this time to study and learn and grow in yourself and when the time is right, you will meet the right person. If it's meant for you, it'll happen.

Make good friends, go out, and yes it's hard to be alone, but don't worry, if you really work on yourself, and you really love yourself, the rewards will be friendships from many different directions. Work will come to you that will make you feel good about yourself. You will almost feel like you don't need anybody. That's when the person will walk into your life. The person you will meet, because you're so complete, is a person who is also complete. They're happy in themselves, they don't need you to make them happy, you become a bonus to each other, a gift to each other. And that's the way it should be.

If you want to be with someone, the relationship should be a spiritual relationship. Both of you should have the same goal in life. Both of you should work towards the same goal. When two people live together there are going to be differences, that is normal. Why add to it? If you really think you're madly in love with this person, you can wait another two years to get married, see if you can solve the problems first.

Respect is so important. I don't think love is the greatest thing in a relationship actually, I think respect is. Because when you respect somebody, you can't help but love them. We women are often a little silly; we want that dynamic man to come, with that big masculine ego, and sometimes that's not what you need in your life, because they're out to prove that to other women as well. They may not be so faithful. We really have to assess what kind of person we want to be with – somebody we can talk to and be truthful with. It's so nice to sit and talk to somebody who totally understands you inside out, and loves you unconditionally. And it can happen. So think about that. To live in fear is a very sad thing.

I really understand this question. I was married to my husband for thirty-four years before he left this earth. He was dynamic, handsome, tall and had a great personality. You couldn't miss him; he'd walk into a room and everybody would look at him. He had that kind of energy - dynamic, strong. He was very loving but was very controlling at the same time; being of Indian origin deep in his psyche women were inferior. In the early years of our marriage, I was frightened of his moods. However, I would still say what I felt, but angrily, aggressively and then there would be an argument. In the early years of my marriage I used to get very angry, because I am not the kind of woman who will keep quiet. I had to express myself!

The arguments went on and on. I often asked myself how it got to this stage. I loved him so much but there were times I felt that I couldn't live with him and I am sure he probably felt the same about me, in spite of the fact that we loved each other. One day a very free-spirited friend of mine said to me: "I don't know why you're frightened of Shanky. You're an intelligent woman in your own right, you do so much on your own, and you're very capable. Why are you so frightened of him?"

That hit a nerve. I asked myself, “Why am I so frightened of him? He’s my husband. I can’t even tell him nicely about things that I am not happy with. I have to shout because I am anxious. I yell because I am afraid he won’t hear me. I’m just frightened. I don’t know what it is that makes me shout. It’s horrible. I don’t like myself this way.”

And of course, around about that time, the student was ready, and the master appeared. My Guru appeared. It was a period of great questioning in my life. I was searching for the Truth, not only my truth. I was searching for answers. Surely life cannot be about all this frivolity and nonsense! I wanted to live well, to find peace and meaning in life. So my master appeared and in His presence I realized great truths. The problem was never about my husband. It was about me finding inner peace amidst the challenges of life’s lessons. Then I decided, of course, I wasn’t going to leave my husband, I loved him, I really did. But how could I live with somebody like this for the rest of my life, with this anger? I couldn’t. Could I change him? No. So I realised that the work was to understand myself first and then the answers would reveal themselves. There is always a solution to every problem. First and foremost I needed to learn to be brave!

One of the first changes was that I wanted to be vegetarian. I said: “Darling, I want to be vegetarian.”

He said: “Oh, that’s going to be so sad. When we go to tapa bars, I’ll have nobody to eat with. We love going out together.”

“Sorry, but I’m going to be vegetarian.”

“Okay, why do you want to be vegetarian? Is it because you want to follow your master?”

“No. You know I hardly eat any meat. You must remember that when I married you, I started to eat meat again to make you happy. It’s been fifteen years now. I really want to make me happy too. I don’t mind cooking for you, but I really want to be vegetarian. I really don’t want to hurt animals anymore; I can’t do it anymore.”

“Oh, it’s really coming from your heart.”

“Yes, it is.”

“Fine, no problem.”

The next request was, “I’m going to America, to do a Raj Yoga course.”

He screamed: “How can you leave the business? You run the shop with me! What about your children? How can you...?”

“Darling, I’ll have all the windows done, it’s only for three weeks, I’ll get everything done, and just think, I’m going to come back a better wife, I’m going to be better, because I need to find myself.”

“That’s so selfish.”

“Maybe I’m selfish, but I want to be happy. I’m tired of screaming, I’m tired of myself, I want to find out who I am.”

I went. I came back. Of course he missed me so much, that we fell in love all over again. And it just happened like that, we just grew with each other over the years, and two years before he died, he said to me, “You know darling, I think from now on I’ll travel everywhere with you.” Six months before he passed away, he said “You know, you’re too busy looking after people, you have no time to sort out your books, and CDs and all this, I’m going to do it all for you.” And then he died. He died of cancer, suddenly.

So there was a perfect story, because I have to be so truthful, I was so in love with him, I couldn't leave him. I couldn't fix him, because it wasn't up to me to fix – I had to fix myself. But he too changed his belief system with every challenge he faced. He adapted to the 'real' me and I to the 'real' him.

I must tell you that sometimes I was so frustrated, especially with his habit of smoking, when he wouldn't stop. I was so tired of nagging him and realised that I did not want to shout at him anymore. So I went into my little temple and I said, "Dear God, he's your son, if you want him to stop smoking, you do it. I'm tired of fighting with him, I'm done." And do you know what? Six months before my granddaughter was born he stopped smoking of his own accord. He was working in his shop when a woman came in, holding a baby and smoking, and he thought, "That poor child, inhaling all the smoke, that's cruel." That vision altered his whole thinking about smoking.

After smoking forty to sixty cigarettes a day he threw his cigarettes away. He was showing unconditional love for the child yet to be born. And he stopped, from that moment. When people have to do it, they do it in their time. We can't fix people. All I know is that I couldn't leave him, because I loved him so much. He was such a diamond! He did wonderful things. One time I had fractured my foot and it was in plaster. He knew I loved taking baths so he made a little plank for me to rest my leg on and he'd wash my hair for me. Don't you think that's sweet?

He was a worrier and he didn't sleep much. I always slept really well, but I used to get up every morning at 5:30 for meditation. He was always up before me. He would put a cup of hot water next to the bed, so as soon as I finished meditating, I could have a drink. These are the little things that you never forget.

He was wonderful to my daughter when she was pregnant. We still had a business in Gibraltar at that time and she was living in Spain. During the last two months of her pregnancy, he said, "How can I let my daughter, pregnant with my second grandchild, drive my granddaughter to and from school?" Every morning at 7am, he drove to Spain to pick her up from Manilva, drove her to school in Estepona, went back to work in Gibraltar and then at 3.15pm left Gibraltar to pick up the grandchild and drop her in Manilva, so that my daughter wouldn't have to. Every day, rain or shine.

What I'm saying is, in life, you can't have perfection. You have to ask yourself, how do you want to live? I loved him unconditionally, but I did not want to live in fear, so I sorted myself out. I think in the end, he was a bit scared of me! When I used to get upset, I put on this serious expression, and even to my children, I would say, "Do what you like." I had this strength. "Do you want to do it? Go ahead, I'm not telling you what to do. Do what you like." Everybody in my family shook. Because they knew, when I said those words it meant, "I don't approve, if you want to do it and make the mistake, make the mistake." Most of the time they paid heed to those words!

Life is about transforming ourselves and not so much about transforming other people. And for me that is my truth, and I've seen it work with so many people. Sometimes, some people have to leave their relationship. Others, like me, realize to stay is to grow in understanding. You really have to do what your inner voice tells you. But transform yourself first before making any drastic decisions. If you are fearful you feel caged in your own mind. I don't think we were born to be prisoners. I think we were born to be free and loving.

Q: *My Spanish sister-in-law is having problems with her daughter, who is twenty years old. Her daughter is very disrespectful and stays in bed all day. She does very little and my sister-in-law is at her wits end with the situation, to the point of becoming clinically depressed. My sister-in-law is very over-protective of her.*

A: There is your answer. That is the reason the daughter is disrespectful. Any child that faces over-protection will rebel. They rebel. And that is the reason for the problem. So the question is, how can she improve their relationship? Answer: stop being so overprotective! Allow the child to grow; allow the daughter to live her life and make her own mistakes and find out for herself. Her daughter is her gift, not her possession. That's how I would answer that. If the mother is overprotective, what happens to that child? The child becomes weakened. She stops believing in herself, she stops having any desire to do anything, because every time she wants to do something its squashed by the mother. The child then enters a depression. Any child that wants to stay in bed at the age of twenty is in a state of depression. There's a feeling of hating and loving her mother at the same time. She loves her mum because, in her heart, she knows her mum means only the best; she hates her mum because she's confined in herself and she can't get out. The love/hate emotion confuses the child and she becomes immobilized not knowing how to feel or behave.

This is a very common situation, especially in Latin countries, where I find there's a lot of possessiveness in families. They don't allow their children to grow. The child feels trapped. The moment you give a child freedom to live, with the correct guidance, they want to come back. Our master used to say that when you tell people to go, they keep following you. You tell them, "I want you to stay, you have to stay," they want to run away. She's in depression, that's why she's in bed or on the sofa, she doesn't know what to do with her life, she's confused.

The only way out of the situation is for them both to talk, and get a good counsellor to listen and to advise them. I think at this late stage, they need that. I don't think they can do it themselves, because when both parties are weakened, they speak from a place of anger, sadness or blame, and there will be a lot of arguing. If they have someone skilled to mediate and if they are both willing, that's what they should contemplate doing now.

It's possessiveness that's causing this problem. Speak to the mother first, and explain what's happening psychologically to both of them. Tell her that she's coming from a very good place but, unfortunately, over-possessiveness does not work in the world today – it never has. Tell her if she wants to save the relationship with her daughter she needs to discuss things with her rather than demanding things of her. Not to scream and shout because the more she does that, the more alienated the child will feel. The child needs understanding; obviously there's a lot she needs to say that she's not saying. Maybe there is a deeper issue that is going on inside the child that she is not voicing. It could even be that she is being bullied or threatened by something. That is why she gets angry all the time and snaps. It could be that she has a lot to say, but she is afraid to say it. She's also in fear. They are both in fear.

I had a friend who was initially very controlling of her daughter. I could see her daughter cringe every time the mother went on and on about her views of what the daughter should do with her life. She never once asked the child about her own dreams and aspirations! I had a long talk with my friend about over-possessiveness and control issues and what could happen with it. Thank God she understood and started to listen to her child instead of forcing her own views on her child. The child is doing fantastic today. She's in design and doing wonderful things with her life. You know sometimes it's just that one talk. How incredible life is; it's the same friend who asked me why I feared my husband – interesting! And many years later I could advise her on her daughter. Karma repaid! Sometimes a mother doesn't even realise she's doing it; she thinks she's doing it out of love.

Now they are best friends. When situations are not discussed and attended to very early on they can create very big problems later. And this is why I love the teachings of Sri Patanjali – he tells us there are two things we have to do in our life.

Number one is 'practice'. And what do we practice? The *Yamas* and *Niyamas* are the abstinences and observances, which are included in the eight limbs of yoga. Some of you are not so familiar with the limbs of yoga so I will briefly explain them.

What we have to practice are non-violence, being truthful, not stealing, moderation and non-greed. What we have to observe is purity of thought and body, being content, accepting pain as a purification process, study of spiritual books and surrender to the Higher Power.

We need to know our body is our temple and look after it by eating the proper foods and by exercising it. Breathe to relax, learn to control our weaknesses, learn to focus and meditate.

The second thing is: 'non-attachment'. Nothing is ours. Everything is a gift.

I used to tell my children, "You do not belong to me. You are my gifts from heaven." Then you allow them to grow and learn from life with your guidance. It is wonderful now for me to observe my daughter, who has a special needs child, whom she absolutely adores. She has never once complained or said: "Why me?" On the contrary, she says: "Oh mum, I think she's more special in many ways; she never talks back – she's an angel!" What you teach your children has to be by example, love and understanding. They have to make their own mistakes and learn from them. They have to have their own successes without us taking the credit for them. We need to understand that everybody is a gift, everybody. We never know when we're going to lose them. Understand this, if people don't want us in their lives, let them go!

My master gave us this example:

“A woman came to me, crying, saying “Oh Gurudev, Gurudev, my husband is leaving me!” “So, why are you crying? They don’t love you, don’t you think you deserve better? Let them go. You deserve to be with someone who loves you. Why would you want to be with someone who doesn’t want to be with you?”

That made so much sense to me. If somebody doesn’t want you, let them go! If they prefer somebody else – go! I’d prefer to have someone who is truthful to me and loves me than someone who’s going to cheat on me. Why would you want that? No one deserves that. And as you get stronger in yourself spiritually, as you become happy within yourself, you won’t tolerate that nonsense. You just won’t. You will respect yourself too much to allow anybody to treat you badly. Why do you respect yourself? Because you realise that the Divine is in you, as it is in everyone. And then accept there is a higher purpose. Things happen for a reason. It is just the way it is.

Lord Jesus says, in the second commandment, “Love thy neighbour as thyself.” How can you love a neighbour if you can’t even love yourself? How can you treat anybody with respect when you don’t respect yourself? Do things that build up your self-esteem.

I said earlier on, I didn’t like myself being fearful, I didn’t like myself when I was angry. I didn’t like it at all. That wasn’t me. I was doing something I didn’t like. I had to learn to stop doing those things, so I could like myself a little bit more. I realised that when I was jealous, I didn’t like feeling that way. Jealousy is out of my life now. Great! It’s freedom. Jealousy is a horrible feeling. And when I see people who are jealous, I feel so sad for them, because I remembered how I used to feel.

It was hard work in the early years. I really had to work on myself. I really wanted to be free. I did not want to live in fear. Life is too short.

If you think about it, it doesn't take long to practice on yourself, to make yourself happy and it's so much better than being beaten up mentally, and being miserable.

So please talk to your sister-in-law, have a long talk to her, and tell her, "If you're depressed, your household will suffer." The next thing that will happen is her husband will leave her. Because who wants to be in the house with two miserable women? And then she will have lost it all, and all because of over-protectiveness.

The truth is, when you get on this path and you really start to understand it, you realise that the people who have hurt you the most have taught you the most.

Sri Patanjali says, "Disregard the wicked" – you won't want to be around bad company anymore, they have taught you to stay away from that. That's one of the things they have taught you, first and foremost.

They've taught you to look at yourself. They've taught you that you have to look at why you are angry and why you stay in that situation. Who is the real you? Without those people you don't learn. The problem is when you don't learn and you stay in that situation, then you're in trouble. Then they're not your teachers, they are monsters and demons. As far as I'm concerned, I don't want anybody to be a demon in my life. I avoid them. If I don't like someone, I keep away. It's very simple. And I learnt that from the science of yoga.

I never knew how avoid negative company before. Now I think, "Are you crazy? These people upset you". I used to go to parties and people used to be horrible and I'd accept an invitation the next weekend with my husband, and be miserable the next day. Why spoil my weekend? When I understood the science of the mind, I said to my husband, "I really don't want to go to these parties anymore, because I come back feeling bad. I prefer to just go out for dinner with you. It's so peaceful." And he said: "Great, that's fine by me," – he understood right away.

I studied the yoga sutras of Sri Patanjali and he said, “Disregard the wicked.” I studied Shankaracharya and he said, “Be in good company, because when you’re in good company you are not in bad company, and when you’re not in bad company your thoughts will not be negative, and when your thoughts are not negative you will be free, and when you are free you will be joyful.”

How simple was that? And there I was, going along with everyone else, just to please them, making myself miserable. Who was the fool? I was! Those people taught me that was not how I wished to live my life.

What do I want to do with my life? I want to laugh, I want to have fun, I want to be peaceful, I want to be useful. I want to do something useful for the world. When I die I hope to say I did my best when I was alive. So I will spend my time on those things. Now I don’t go to many parties, people don’t invite me anymore. Great! I’m really grateful because I don’t have to say no! I will attend those, though, that are with like-minded people, or Sangha.

I love to serve the world. People want this knowledge, and I love to share it because it’s changed my life for the better. I’m so happy to be growing older. I’ve faced death three or four times. I’ve been seriously ill, but I have never feared it. These teachings have given me a lot of freedom, and that’s why I want to communicate it to the world. What am I going to do, keep it for myself? The Universe is bursting with love, and I want everybody to know that it’s there for all of us when we have the eyes to see.

I have learnt through all these practices. I have suffered. I’ve screamed out many times: “If there’s a God show me your face!” All of that has led me to where I am now.

What I can tell people is this: “Yes it’s a hard journey but boy, am I having fun!” I really am having fun! I often go to conferences and where I see the ones with egos and the ones without egos, and you know what, it doesn’t really make a difference, I just enjoy the whole play. I love it all. I get such a nice feeling, just loving it all. There’s no nonsense from my own mind.

Sometimes I see people, I see yoga students, who do courses and they come back and they’re so disturbed. I say to them: “Why do you go and do a course and then you come back more disturbed? Isn’t a course meant to make you feel peaceful instead of bad about yourself? They say: “I’m not good enough.” I say that yoga is not about the information you have, it’s about living your life happily.

Who can live your life but you? Can anybody live your life for you? No! You have to live it. So why not make your movie a beautiful movie, why not make it full of fun, kindness, love, generosity, etc.? And laugh! What else is there to do? There’s enough pain in the world, we don’t need to add more pain. There are evil people in the world, that’s the way it is, it’s not going to change. Don’t be in their company, stay away! It’s so clear in the yoga studies: “Disregard the wicked.”

Like I said, we can’t fix everyone. I work with many people who are considered wicked. I have seen many who really caused harm and they come to my office and inside they’re soft as puppies. I once met a man who was violence personified, but with me he was a little puppy. Unless you’re strong enough and give them unconditional love, you cannot deal with them. They’ll bite your head off. Stay away. Stay away until you get strong in yourself. Stay away until you have so much love in you, that you are able to love the wicked. I discovered this through reading books written by Gandhi, my Master, all the great masters, and I saw the secret was to love those who hurt you. This was a personal practice, because when I started yoga there were a lot of people who hurt me.

When we had our first charity event in Gibraltar (we call it a Flag Day, collecting money in the street) a man came to the middle of Main Street where there were lots of tourists and shouted: This woman is a witch, she's a witch!" And my husband said: "I don't know why you do this, look at these people!" I said: "Please calm down, God is training me."

I walked up to the man, looked him in the eye and smiled. "I'm going to practice what I've learnt," I thought. "It might kill me but I'm going to practice." He said: "You, Nalanie, are evil." He was a Christian, and I love Lord Jesus, so I superimposed Lord Jesus onto his face. I just saw Lord Jesus on his face. And I thought: "Lord Jesus is scolding me, Lord Jesus is testing me." And do you know what? He didn't say anything and left. Everybody just watched him walk away. It was magical. And that's happened to me so many times in my life.

Before that occasion, I had been practicing meditation and forgiveness for about eight years. I was practicing because I wanted to be so strong and so peaceful that when hate faced me I could give it love. And when I did that, do you know how good that made me feel? But it took me eight years to get there. I couldn't have been calm without the practice, without the visualisation practice.

My Master taught me this first lesson, when I took him as my Master. I was complaining about people when I first met him. "Oh Gurudev, these people are so horrible to me and this person did this to me, etc." And he answered, "Bless them." I said, "I can't bless them, they're horrible, how can I bless them, they've done horrible things?"

He said, "Nalanie do you want peace?"

"Yes Gurudev but..."

"Nalanie, DO YOU WANT PEACE?"

"Yes."

“Then, ‘but’ what? You want peace, bless them.”

“Oh Gurudev, it would make me a hypocrite, I am a truthful person, it would be hypocritical of me.”

And he said, “Yes, in the beginning you will feel like a hypocrite, but after time, you will change”.

So I did this practice, as soon as he told me about it. I went home and I did the practice of blessing the person who had caused me so much pain and whom I was so angry with, and I covered her with light every day. I didn’t see her for six months; that was my gift. Six months later I knew I was going to see her, and all the fears came back, “Oh my God, will I still feel angry? I’m still shaking, the meditation didn’t work, what a waste of time!” But when I saw her I actually got a shock. All I felt was compassion. I saw through this person; I saw through her. I saw that she was just so unhappy. She couldn’t stand that I was doing all this to make me happy, I could see that, and then I understood that it wasn’t that she was angry with me, she was unhappy with herself and she didn’t know whom else to throw daggers at. And that’s what I realised. It did work! I can only tell you what works, I can’t tell you what doesn’t.

It works with everyone. When it’s a family member and you feel you can’t deal with it, it means you should confront it and deal with it, but in a very nice way; as best as you can. It’s very hard to be truthful but you can be truthful nicely and I will say choose the right moment, and tell them, “May I have a talk with you? Something is bothering me, I’d like to clear it up.”

Do you need to accept them? Sometimes you just have to let it go. You really just have to let it go. You can’t fix everything. I’ve learned that, too. When you do your best and the other person doesn’t respond, it’s time to let it go. You just have to let it go.

It's similar to what I told you I did about my husband's smoking. I said to God, " I can't do it anymore, I've done my best, I've done all I can. He's your child, you fix him, I don't have the right to fix anyone and I can't, it's not in my hands."

This is why I love the serenity prayer:

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference."

Please just repeat this prayer, for one week, as many times in the day as you can. Just keep repeating it and as you say the lines: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change" ask yourself, "am I accepting the things I cannot change?" Maybe you're not. You're still wanting to change them and you can't. "The courage to change the things I can." I have learned, the only thing I can change is me so the courage in your case would be to have the courage to let go.

We can only change ourselves. Ultimately that's all we can do. So have the courage to let go, just let go.

You have to be cruel to be kind sometimes. You have to have tough love. You know I've had to tell parents this so many times. For example, there was a man and his wife who had a son who was on heavy drugs. We tried to help him and he was very good for a while, he even got a job. Because he used to deal in drugs and got big money quickly, getting paid £5 an hour wasn't enough. He got bored, and started dealing drugs again. The parents came to me crying.

I said, "You can't do anything else anymore. He has to go to rock bottom and learn."

Do you know how hard it is to tell a parent that? It really broke my heart. They did let him go, and he actually ended up being a pawn for one of the drug dealers. He ended up in South America, was caught at the airport and put straight into prison. He was only twenty-one years old at the time. The parents came to me and I said: "This is really the bottom of the bottom for him. Let's find out what we can do from the embassy in South America. Your prayers are so sincere. Keep praying and see now how you can help him get out."

And do you know what happened? A South American lawyer fell in love with their son. Within one year he was out. Today he's married, with three children.

You don't know what will happen and it is really hard to let go. I know it's so easy to say, "Let go, let go." We have a word in the Yoga Science called *tapas*, and it means burning. When you let go, it burns, and you just have to face that. Like what the parents had to face. Ultimately, all the burning, led the son to realise what great parents he had. He was so grateful because they went to South America, they brought the lawyer to Gibraltar so we could talk to her, to find out what was happening before we brought him back. We wanted to make sure he came back reformed otherwise they would keep him there for another three months. Sometimes you have to be cruel to be kind. The lawyer said he had really reformed and he really wanted to change. It came from him; it didn't come from us.

I'm sorry to tell you, you will suffer when you watch somebody you love do things that are not so nice. What can we do? Suffering is part of life. It just makes you a better human being, that's all.

Q: *How do you find the courage to step out of the comfort zone of an existing relationship to experience something new in life?*

A. This is always a problem with any relationship. When you get used to certain things in life, habits etc., it is very difficult to let go or come out of the relationship, which you know is not working or which is lacking excitement. If it's still working, don't give up. It doesn't sound like a bad relationship. You see, all relationships in time get a little stale, its normal. If you stay with somebody for a long period of time it gets a little stale.

I have a philosophy: Make your relationship romantic. I think people get so comfortable in relationships that they forget to be romantic. They start becoming selfish and expect their partners to constantly be entertaining them. Be selfless, laugh more, have fun, be romantic, communicate. Keep the marriage alive! It takes work but you will benefit from it! If you go off with somebody else, you have to go through the same process again, the first few years of everything is new and magical, then it'll start to get more mundane and you'll think, "I'm bored." If you've got a good person by your side, stick with that person and make it romantic, make it work.

I learnt to do that with my husband especially after I studied the yoga science. On Valentine's Day, he did not buy me flowers and I used to get so upset and think, "There's no more romance, what's the point of this marriage?" When I studied the yoga science, I realized we expressed romance very differently. I am very romantic, but so was he. He wrote beautiful songs. He used to express all his love in songs, he could never say it in words but he wrote beautiful songs for me. I understood finally that was his way of showing romance. Then I decided that on the following Valentine's Day I was not going to complain. Instead I found the most beautiful red rose and when I joined him at work, I handed it to him and said, "To the best valentine in my life, I love you."

And the first thing he said was, " I didn't buy you anything. "

I said, "It's not expected! I'm the one who's been complaining for years, this is my way to express romance, so I'm giving you a rose."

After that, every year I got a dozen roses and he took me out for dinner. I think women are very artistic, I think we have a lot of nurturing and love to give. I have learned that when you're gentle and you tell them, "Oh baby, I love you, you're so handsome," they melt. I used to say to my husband, "*Mi marido guapo*" and it would make him smile. I learnt that was one of the gifts we women have. When we are loving and kind with belief in ourselves we can move mountains!

I would suggest doing things together, such as a project; something that interests both of you. I had loads of hobbies that interested me. I was doing so much stuff for me but I wasn't doing things with him. He loved watching movies, so I started watching movies and television with him from time to time. I soon realised that it was a really nice rest for me, too. I'd just cuddle him and watch movies, and it made him so happy, so happy! So simple. So, so simple.

I'd come home from giving a talk at the yoga centre and he would have some food ready and say "Oh darling, I downloaded this really nice movie for you today. I think you'll really like it." That was his way; I was doing enough things my way. I had such a world of fun, and marriage is about sharing. Doing that brought a lot of closeness into our relationship.

So yes, make it romantic – if it's still working, don't drop it. Make it better. If it's not working, if it's something else, then you have to let go. If it's working, fight for it. Fight for it! It's not so easy, the grass is not greener on the other side. You're either comfortable or not comfortable and if you're not comfortable, why aren't you changing it and making it comfortable? If it's a bad habit then change it! Simple solution.

When you have a *sangha*, a spiritual community, you have so much fun. We have so much fun! We have a *sangha* in Gibraltar and they've all become very close and nobody's ever lonely. If something is wrong there's so many people to help, and it becomes a family of like-minded people.

A woman I know lost her husband and we got to do a lovely ceremony for him in Sotogrande a few months ago. They were so in love. You see even when you're in love you die, so in the end what do you have? That's the question you have to ask yourself, even when you're in love, one of the partners dies. When you see the reality, you stop making so much fuss about all the petty things, and you just say: "The reality is, good or bad, it all passes, everything passes. So let us live in love, let us live in kindness, let us be caring to each other. Just do our part and let go of the results."

If your marriage is working, why would you throw it away just because you are bored? It is you that needs to do something to change things, not your partner. Do something totally different. Tell the person you're living with honestly how you are feeling. Just be totally truthful. When you are stuck, move the energy! Really! I don't know why people stay stuck for years.

I remember I knew this Scottish girl who lived in Gibraltar. She was a lovely, lovely girl. For years she was saying, "Maybe I should go back to Scotland, but I'm very happy here."

I said, "For God's sake, just go back to Scotland. Just go! And if it doesn't work after a year, come back. You have the *sangha*, you will never lose your friends here. You have us all. We all love you, so you already have a base here, but for God's sake, just go. Your soul is telling you to go, but you're too fearful. Just choose a date and book a flight and start clearing up your apartment." She did it! Do you know what? She went back to Scotland at the perfect time, because six months later, her mother died. She was able to spend those last days with her mother. Not only that, she was teaching yoga classes at a gym and there she met the man of her dreams. Previously she had been stuck in Gibraltar waiting for the man of her life to appear, and all the time he was there in Scotland!

So you don't know. Sometimes this unsettled feeling is telling you that's where you need to be.

Someone else I knew wanted to go back to England. She was a teacher in Gibraltar and she'd just broken up with her partner and was heartbroken. I told her this story and I said, "Don't waste four or five years thinking. Go back. If you don't like it you can always leave." She was smart and she went back after three months, and I just heard from her best friend that she's with a lovely guy, she's pregnant and she's so happy. I'm so glad she was courageous enough to do it right away and not wait.

You have to be brave. Get unstuck. Get unstuck. You never know, it's the fear of not knowing what's going to happen. We don't know what tomorrow will bring, but I always tell people: "If it goes wrong, you can come back." It is not the end of the world, if you make a mistake, you can turn back. But to stay trapped, for me, is a waste of your life. Move on, always move on, move on. If something's telling you to move, move. Come back if things don't work. Don't be frightened; you'll make new friends. You may have a hard time for three or four months, but you will adjust. Everybody I have encountered that has done that has adjusted. I have seen nobody turn back as yet, and I have given about thirty people this advice over the years. Nobody's come back except to visit!

It's true. All the ones who've gone have been happy with their decision. Another person I know went to America and found a new partner after being stuck in Gibraltar with the wrong partner. She's so happy now. I saw her in America last year and I said, "Why did you stay in a relationship out of guilt, you're not even married, you don't have children, what makes people do that?"

It's a little bit more difficult when you have children, because you have to put your children first. I do know that love heals everything. Love yourself first, but not selfishly. Be a little humble.

We are living in a time when women's roles are changing. We are really chosen to revolutionize our roles as women in this life. Women got the right to vote as late as 1918, that's only one hundred years ago. Can you imagine? Women were always squashed even though we had great power. It's time to regain what we lost through courage, strength, love and peace. Not to live in fear anymore or allow violence to be done to us.

Somehow, on the way, by fighting for our rights, we seem to have lost the greatest gift we have, which is to nurture. I think we've lost a lot of that in the last forty years. Now women are realising that being harsh doesn't work. Both men and women are to be treated with equal respect. Men also need to realize the feminine in them and work together with women in a kind, gentle manner. This is the way of Spirit. Genders are costumes. We are here on a spiritual journey. We are not here to be wrapped up with our egos and power play.

Now I'll tell you before I close, a spiritual message I received on one of my travels. I went to Fatima, about ten years ago and I had this constant thought: "I have to go to Fatima, I have to go to Fatima!" So I went to Fatima and it was such a commercial place, like anywhere else. Prior to that I'd always been so disagreeable when I saw people praying on the floor, on their knees and doing all this very extreme stuff. But the day I was there I saw a grandmother carrying her grandchild kneeling on holy, consecrated ground and praying, asking for her granddaughter to be healed. Suddenly, I lost consciousness of my body and I was this grandmother! I don't know where I went, all I know is that I was in her body and I felt her love and I felt her sincere prayers. All I know is that during that time I was in Fatima - I know it sounds really crazy but this is the message I got: "Nalanie, please tell the world, that the female energy needs to come back. We need the female energy. Both males and females have lost it. Please."

I remember getting back to my body, and I just couldn't stop crying. There were about eight or ten students who travelled with me. They wondered what had happened to me.

Since then I try to tell women, and men too: “We have the power; the truth is we have the power.”

All of us need to make the changes, slowly, slowly. It does work. My husband changed because I became gentler. Who changed? We did!

Neither gender should accept nonsense. We will not be sworn at, and we will not be treated like pieces of furniture. We are fighting for our rights as fellow humans. The weapon should be great love and great compassion. Our work is to share this spiritual knowledge. And this generation is going towards creating the perfect balance. We are going through an evolution.

In the beginning, when I went for my courses and when I gave retreats, I didn't ask my husband nicely. Then I learned the difference: “Darling, I have three retreats, these are the dates, is that convenient for you? Otherwise I'll change the dates.” So I'm doing what I want but I am also considering his needs. I'd say, “I am thinking of going on these dates, does it suit you?”

“No this date is too near Christmas...”

“Okay, no problem darling, it's early enough as these dates are for next year, I can just change them.”

You compromise, that's all, it's easy! Those trips were really important, because when I came back, he appreciated me even more. It took him time to accept my path and it took me time to be me. It was just a learning process.

Nowadays, when things don't work out for couples, they just want to opt out without even trying. Life is not so easy; it doesn't work like that. You can run but you still take your emotions and thoughts along with you! You need to work at things. Whatever you take on in life has it's good times and bad times. You have to work through them but nowadays people don't want to work. They want pleasure, pleasure, pleasure, all the time.

I love Buddha's four noble truths. The first one is: "There is suffering." We live in a planet of opposites and duality. In order for there to be Light, there must be darkness.

Sri Patanjali says, "For a man of discrimination, all things are painful." Does this mean we are doomed to suffer? No! It just means it's part of the journey here and the sooner we accept this truth the less pain we will feel.

Remember, we all have to leave this earth one day. We are here to realize who we truly are.

Namaste.

Painting on front cover by Nalanie Harilela Chellaram

'My Family'

The man represents the many facets of his personality. His desire to look after wife and home, his love for his family, his stresses and fears to be able to provide his family with their necessities. His confusion between material and spiritual.

The woman represents her devotion to her husband and her family. She is deeply focussed on being a good wife and mother but at the same time loves her freedom. She sees beyond the material and flows with the spiritual,

The daughter represents gentleness, fragrance and joy that she brings to the family.

The son represents sunshine, laughter and joy that he brings to the family.

The background represents all the trials and tribulations they have to go through. But, with all the love they share and their sense of unity, they can conquer all !!

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To those who have hurt me in life as they have taught me to be strong and forgiving.

And to the most Revered Lord of Light and Love for all the blessings bestowed upon us... Om Shanti... Shanti... Shanti... Loves nalanie

Nalanie was born in 1954 into a distinguished, leading family in Hong Kong, the Harilelas. In 1986 Nalanie formally became a disciple of His Holiness, Sri Swami Satchidananda and began her continuing study of the Science of Yoga.



She has been accredited by the Council of Teachers of the Satchidananda Ashram in Virginia, USA, to teach Asanas, Pranayama and Meditation. She is also an accredited teacher-trainer for Integral Yoga and a therapist under the British School of Yoga.

She is the Chairman of the Integral Yoga Centre in Gibraltar, where she runs regular weekly satsangs, teacher trainings, and counselling sessions.

Nalanie now lives in Spain, where she runs the George Harilela Yoga Hall. She frequently lectures on the Science of Yoga in Portugal, Spain, Germany, the UK, the USA and the Far East.

In 2008, she was presented with an award by the Governor of Gibraltar, on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen of England, for her service to humanity. The same year she was also awarded a Humanitarian Award from Yogaville, Virginia, USA.

Her example as a wife, mother, businesswoman, and now grandmother, who has devoted her life to God and His service, has been a beacon to her students. She shows that it is not necessary to withdraw from life in order to find the "Guru within." She is also deeply involved in many charities, one of the main one being Service in Satchidananda, www.sisproject.org.

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