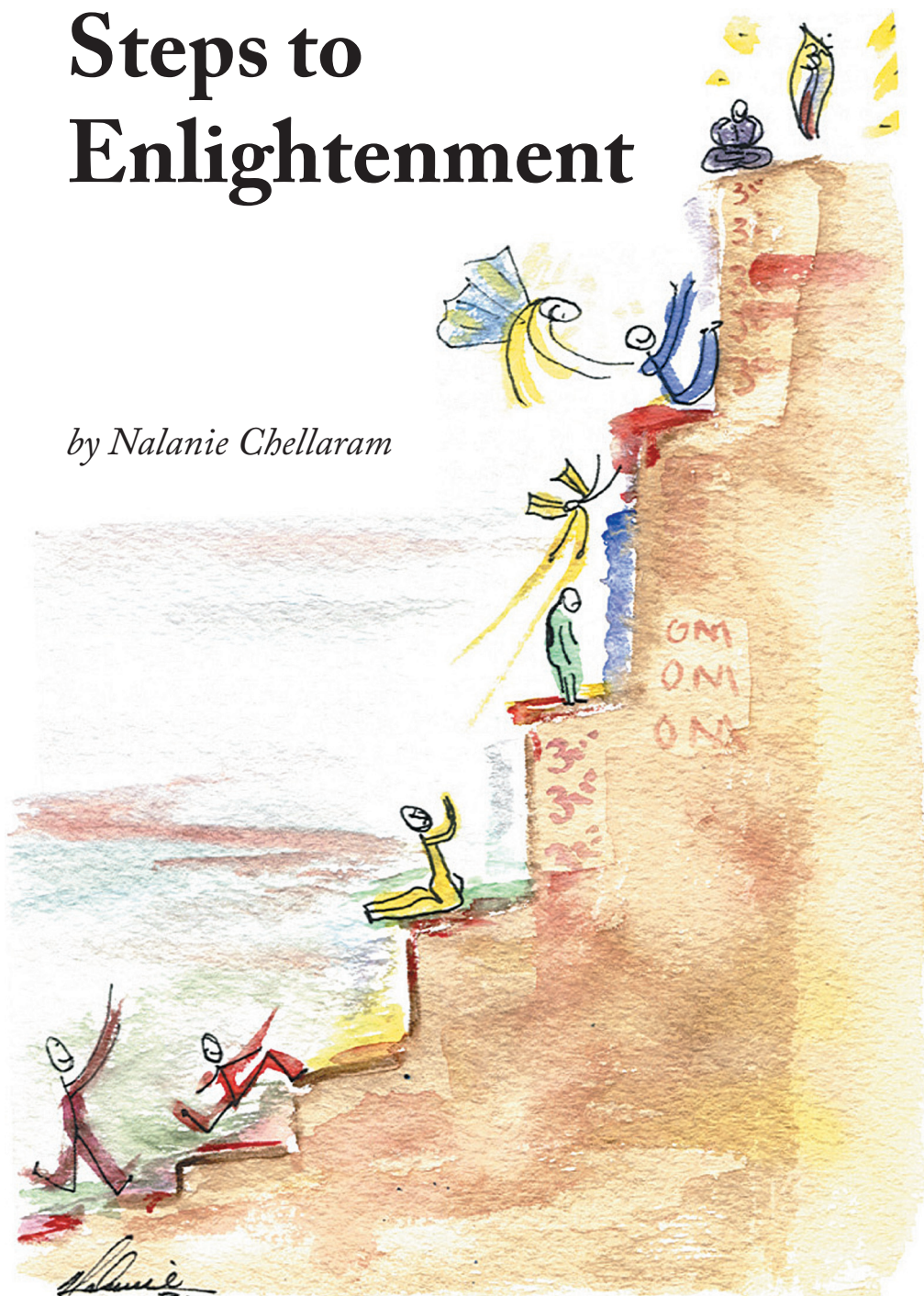


Steps to Enlightenment

by Nalanie Chellaram



About the Author



Nalanie was born in 1954 into a distinguished, leading family in Hong Kong, the Harilelas. Nurtured by very spiritual Hindu parents and educated at a Catholic Convent school, she grew up in the presence of a close family friend, who, unbeknown at the time, was to have a deep and lasting influence in her life. This frequent visitor and friend was Sri Swami Satchidananda, her Beloved Gurudev.

Nalanie attended university in the United States where she read, Philosophy, Psychology and Fine Arts. In 1975 she moved to Gibraltar with her husband Shanky, where, for many years, they ran a very successful fashion business. Nalanie continued her study of Philosophy and Psychology whilst running a very popular dance school and raising their two children Shani and Shaman.

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 training and counselling sessions. This Centre is a registered Charity serving the community. She has also been instrumental in setting up another Integral Yoga Centre, "Ashiana", in the South of Spain.

Nalanie, who now lives in Spain, frequently lectures on the Science of Yoga, in Portugal, Spain, Germany, the United Kingdom, the USA and the Far East. She is the first of a new generation of spiritual teachers. Her particular upbringing and education has given her a special insight into both Hinduism and Christianity, inspired by her Beloved Guru. 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"

In March 2008, Nalanie received an Honour in Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second New Year Honour's List. She was recognised for her "Services to Humanity". His Excellency the Governor of Gibraltar, Sir Robert Fulton, presented her with a certificate and medal.

In October 2008 she also received a "Humanitarian Award" from The Satchidananda Ashram in Virginia, USA.

Nalanie was recently widowed and has been an example to all in the way she bore her grief at Shanky's sudden passing. Her inner strength was amazing.

She is the proud grandmother of four beautiful girls, Tara, Natasha, Talia and Indira.

Steps to Enlightenment

Steps to Enlightenment is a transcript of a talk given by Nalanie Chellaram at the Integral Yoga Centre in Gibraltar. The talk is printed verbatim, with only a few minor changes to avoid repetition.

The Sangha, or spiritual community, meet once a week in Gibraltar to hear Nalanie speak, and lead discussions, on many spiritual topics. *Steps to Enlightenment* is the first in a series of booklets taken from those talks.

If you would like any further information about these booklets or any aspects of Integral Yoga please contact:

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Acknowledgements

Dedicated to my spiritual master, His Holiness Sri Swami Satchidananda, whose teachings I humbly pass on to all who wish to listen.

To my husband and family for their love, patience and endless understanding.

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May all who seek find the Guru within.

Steps to Enlightenment

An explanation of the illustration

When we first start out on the spiritual path we are very excited at the prospect of discovering the true self, or God, and we find the first few months of practice so easy and so exciting that we think we can achieve everything and we try to run before we can walk.

After a while, we start to realize that we need help, that the struggle is normal and humility absolutely necessary. Sincere prayer sets in and we start to realize that the spiritual path is like a razor's edge, not as easy as we thought in the beginning, and that meditation is hard work.

Letting go of ourselves and detachment seem to be such a struggle, such a difficult goal to achieve, that we ask ourselves "Do I really want to do this?" At the same time, we are aware that there is a force coming from somewhere else and, despite all the doubts, we feel that force, greater than ourselves, pushing us forward and guiding us. The feeling becomes an awakening, an awareness, and grace enters our hearts.

Although there are still struggles, they become enjoyable as we start to understand that they actually bring us closer to God! At this point we have experienced some bliss. Not only that, we also understand that there is something definitely greater than us, guiding us and looking after us and then firm faith sets in.

Finally, there is nothing more for us to do. Total faith in God sets in. We are at peace. We realize that every action must be a God action for we are nothing but channels. Resigning our egocentric personalities, the freedom and joy set in. Recognizing that it is all God give us pure peace and stillness.

Om Shanti ॐ



Today we are talking about Steps to Self-Realization. That's what you're all here for, Yes? Are you not sure? What is self-realisation? Do you know? That is why we're here! To know who we really are. Because if this body is temporary, as we know it is, then what are we? Are we the soul? Are we more than the soul? Are we one with the father? How do we get from the son to the father? What is the meaning of the trinity? What is the meaning of all these teachings? What are they trying to tell us? All the saints and sages say that God cannot be talked about but can only be realized. Who can realize it? Only the individual. That means that nobody can do it for you. And before we go into the steps, let me just talk to you a little bit about self-realization.

We can say "*I'm not this body, I'm not this mind, I'm absolute spirit*" because, really, ultimately we're consciousness. Scientists have proved it today. There is something in the universe that is perfect. Scientists have even seen the sun close up. I saw in a documentary that the sun gives off perfect geometrical designs out to the earth. And the sun gives off vibrations. So who are we? What are we? You know that we have electricity in our body, don't you? And you know we even look like an electrical circuit. If you look at our spinal system you will see that our nervous system sits in the spine. It is encased in the spine, just the same as electrical cables in a house are encased and our nervous system spreads out from the spine.

So, what are we? We all have to ask this question at some point in our life, otherwise life, death, relationships, people – nothing makes sense. Suffering doesn't make sense.

All the greatest saints and sages say you can know this Self, by the self. You can know this Self by total devotion, bhakti yoga; it is one of the paths. You can know this self by constantly asking the question *"who am I?"* which is jnana yoga. You can know this self by meditation which is raja yoga, the king of yogas. Why the king? The most difficult! You know how difficult it is to keep your mind still. This is why, when people realize who they are, as in the case of Mother Theresa, for example, and my spiritual master, Swami Satchidananda, what do they see? They see God in everything, in everyone. Mother Teresa will say *"I see Lord Jesus in everything, in everyone so what is the difference if I touch a man with lice all over his body? That's God to me."* It's easy to say but very few people can do it.

It is easy to say *"I am spirit, ultimately that is where I'm going."* Hard to realize. Our job, in this human birth, is to realize it. Why in human birth? Because it is only in the human birth that we can decipher information. When we don't decipher the information, when we don't question, when we just sit back and live life as if we were robots living day to day, go to work, make some money and go home. Then sooner or later, everyone comes to a point and says *"What for?"* This has been confirmed to me in my work in the last five years.

Sooner or later one will think *"I don't know what I'm doing, what is all this for? I don't want to do this anymore"*. So many people come to me like that. Even young people, saying *"I don't want to study anymore. What for? What for? I'd rather commit suicide."* A nineteen year old told me *"if this is life, just reaching all these goals, and at the end of it just suffering, then I don't want to live."*

You see, nobody talks about the soul anymore. Nobody talks about this consciousness, this God. Oh yes, we do talk about God. We go to a church, and say the prayers, and all the time, in our mind, we think *"I can't stand this one, oh look at the clothes that one is wearing and what a silly fool that is."* Why bother? So, of course, there is no place for God in that time. There's no realization.

Self-realization is knowing, for a fact, *"I am one with the Father and yet I am not the Father"*. Hard ! *"I am everything and I am nothing"*. But you see, if I tell you, you think I am crazy because it's a paradox. So I can only tell you in words but only you can realize. And how can you realize? What are your tools? Practice and non-attachment. Today I'm going to teach you the steps, the method by how we should practice to realize that our real goal in life is to be happy. Didn't God say, *"Be happy. Multiply. Enjoy these things?"*

And what do we do? We don't listen. Our birthright is to be happy. Did you know that? Did you know that we deserve to be happy? That is the truth. That's why we all search for happiness. Watch a baby, a baby is naturally happy. And then when we start putting all these ideas into the babies head, he will lose his happiness and learn

Are we not like that baby? Are we not that pure baby? Each, and everyone, in this room? Did we suddenly grow up? No! And that's why Lord Jesus said to be like children. *"Blessed are the children, they will inherit the earth, blessed are the children."*

Why? Because of purity of life. Now, why do you need purity in order to self-realise? So simple and nobody wants to hear it. Nobody wants to hear it because it is so simple. Because when you apply certain rules in your life you obtain peace and these rules are simple; be good and love all! *"Oh"*, we say *"that's too simple to self-realise"*.

Why, because when you do good and you feel good and you really have no intention to harm anyone, then what do you see? Everyone is your brother and sister, right?

When you are very close to any person in your life you never want to hurt or harm them. You know how you feel for that person. Now magnify it with everybody that exists. Can you imagine? Everybody is your brother and your sister. There's so much love around. And this is what we are to do with this knowledge. Why? Because when we achieve that, we are happy. So simple, when we love unconditionally.

Why do we get disappointed? One gets disappointed because we expect so much from others, and when they disappoint us, we think that they have harmed us. So we are dependent on others. But if we just loved everybody unconditionally we would never have expectations and we would never be disappointed in anyone, we would think "*Oh well that's human nature, that's the play of life*".

If consciousness is unconditional love, if this God is full of energy and vibrancy, I certainly don't think he would be so petty to say, "*Oh, you're looking for me in the form of Lord Krishna, you will go to hell.*" If that's God, I really don't want to know Him, would you? I wouldn't want to know God. But all the beautiful saints and sages have told us otherwise. And they've all taught us to love.

Some people are going to be grouchy. Some people are going to be wonderful. Some people are going to be negative. I know that when I'm around negative or grouchy people, it upsets my spirit, I get depressed, I get down. Let me walk away. Because I am much more than that. I deserve to be happy. I deserve peace because that is what God made me to be and all the scriptures prove it. They keep telling me the same thing. So I'm going to be happy. Lord Jesus says, '*Love each other as I have loved you.*' And how did he love his disciples? Unconditionally! Unconditionally!

So, in all my years of study, I have come to this conclusion - how to find God my way. Your way may not be the same. For me, I was first a jnana yogi - which means I constantly asked; *"What is God, who is God, Who am I"* I became very confused because the intellectual mind had a million questions.

And it made me very uncomfortable because, when I tried to find God in that way, I realized God was just energy. So it was rather dry, not the God I liked or was comfortable with, because vibrant energy, for me, was not too comfortable. I was lost - God is everything and God is nothing. Oh, I felt nobody cares about me. Then I dropped that path. Then I went to the path of bhakti - raja yoga - which is the one that covers all the paths. It covers every single path.

And then I realized that when I love unconditionally, anything or anyone, I am totally at peace. You try it. Do any of you have grandchildren? I say grandchildren because most grandparents have this unconditional love. They hold the grandchild and they see nothing but perfection. If the child is crippled, broken, ugly, they will say the child is beautiful. The mother will complain, *"Oh my child is..."* I know quite a few. *"Oh my child is deformed and cries and screams."* The grandmother will take the handicapped child home and treat it like a king or queen. I've seen this in my own life. Do you know why? The grandmother's love is unconditional. And you know, when you look into their faces, you see joy and happiness.

So self-realization is realizing what we are; who we are and what our purpose is on this earth. The yogis describe this state as 'Sat-chid-ananda, Truth - Consciousness - Bliss Absolute.

And, you know, in my five years of working with people who have not been very well, or have had a problem, I have seen that whenever they have got in touch with this inner self; this feeling of God inside themselves, in whichever form they have realized this God, they've seen with that faith - they have healed.

I had a young chap a few weeks ago. From one minute to the other - wanted to kill himself, die, nothing to live for, and in three minutes he wanted to live and do everything.

What happened? He suddenly realised he was more than the body and yet his body was important to realize, so now he no longer wants to die, because he wants to spend the rest of his life realizing who he is.

It was the experience, in a split second. I don't know why that happens to certain people but I've seen it happen quite a few times. And it's so exciting because once they find that speck of bliss they will stop at nothing to continue. They'll go on and on and say, *"I want to experience this all the time, what can I do to experience this more?"* Because it's such a beautiful drug. It makes us happy all the time. You know when we are happiest? When we are not thinking, poor me, poor me, poor me.

So, the steps to self-realization..... Sri Patanjali, in his Yoga Sutras, puts it in a very scientific form. Don't forget, he's the master of the science of the mind. He lays down the methods for self-realization. We can practice to get there because what is stopping us to realize who we really are is our mind; because our mind will tell you, *"Oh I have a husband. I have a wife. My name is Nalanie. I have two children."* Your mind will tell you that. *"Oh, without my job, I'll be miserable."*

But the truth is, the very truth, is that Nalanie only exists so long as I have this body. And, whilst I am concerned with Nalanie and so worked up with all my problems, I can never see beyond it. When you start to realise or become a little bit more aware, the mind gets very light. You watch you mind think, *"Ah, this is just a play. Why get so worked up with it. Oh, my body is sick. I'm not sick; my body is sick."* It is the body that is sick, not the mind. And then you start to feel the pain less. Fears leave you, because why do you fear? Why do we have phobias? Because we fear death, ultimately. We fear death. We fear, *"Oh, I'm gong to get hurt. That's pain, pain, pain!"*

The body is temporary. That is a fact. But, whilst we are in the body, we can achieve bliss. That is what the science of yoga says and any other spiritual tradition really tells us to seek that first by which all else will be known. But we never seem to get the message. You say, *"I want peace. I want peace. I want peace."* Sit in silence and think of God. Think of nice things, think of a beautiful sunset, think of the waves in the ocean. *"Oh, I don't have time to do that. I have to run and get to work."* Well, forget it. You won't get peace. Run and get to work. Go to work and get a heart attack! It's your choice. Do you see? We never seem to hear. You say you have faith, but do you really? Do you really have trust?

The ancient yogis left information that teach us how to transcend suffering. Yes, we are going to suffer, but we can look at it from a different point of view. And when we look at it from a different point of view, what happens? It no longer becomes suffering.

Remember last week, when you were sad, when your friend died? Some of you came and were really down. After the class someone said to me, *"Oh, I feel so much lighter."* What happened? A friend still died a couple of hours ago, but the mind remembered, *"Listen, this too may happen to me one day"* Yes it's true. We all have to die. Don't get so locked up in the suffering that you can't live now. One can do so much more with an easy mind and you feel lighter and when you go home, you're not sitting crying. Crying for four days makes everybody miserable and does not help anyone. Yes you cry because you love someone. You have to grieve. It's important. The body needs to grieve. When somebody dies, it's normally - if somebody is close to you - it's normally six months, if not more; sometimes a year, sometimes two years. The sooner you get out of it and start living your life the better. Sometimes when people break up with their spouses, it's like dying. They have to face this grief. It's the same as dying.

So, the eight steps to enlightenment and how we should practice. Sri Patanjali, in The Yoga Sutras says *"By the practice of the limbs of yoga, the impurities dwindle away and there dawns the light of wisdom leading to discriminative discernment"* Look at the words, *"when you practice these things, the impurities dwindle away"*.

That means all you have to do is practice. If you practice, you don't have to force the impurities to go away from the mind, they dwindle away by themselves. They dwindle away. I know this for a fact because it happened to me with all my phobias. *"And there dawns the light of wisdom"* And, suddenly, you wake up one day and you think, *"Oh, wow, what a fool I've been!"* And you feel really great. You feel really good and you just want to tell the world, *"hey listen, have some fun together. Let's laugh. That's what I'm doing here. Let's all laugh together. Let's have fun. Let's forget all the nonsense and love each other because tomorrow, when you die or I die, there's nothing that's going to be important. Let's go to the direct source - the peace, the bliss - whilst we are alive. We can do it. We can do it!"* This is what it's saying.

“Leading to discriminative discernment”. That is when you really start to understand what your life is all about. And if you understand what your life is all about, will you fear it? You won’t fear it. Will you be frightened? Will you say, *“Oh no! that’s going to happen tomorrow”*? No, you won’t, because you just know everything is as it should be. And that’s the freedom real spiritual practice gives us.

The freedom of getting up every day, living every moment, and realizing that you are much more than this body, much more than this mind. One really knows that one can communicate with the consciousness. One can send energy and light to so many people. And you can be happy doing that all day long and you know that you don’t have to worry for tomorrow, and even if you do worry for tomorrow, there may be an earthquake and you may be dead. Because it’s a fact. It doesn’t mean you don’t put something aside for a rainy day, but you don’t torture your whole family just to put something aside for a rainy day. You understand the difference? You plan but don’t become obsessed.

People are obsessed with money. I knew a very wealthy gentleman who had billions and yet he took a bus to work! He was such a miser and he gave his family such a miserable life. The moment he died the family spent it all! They gambled away all his billions. He was so restricting to the family that of course the moment they saw the money they did the opposite. They rebelled! So what did he do to his grandchildren really? He taught them to go on drugs, travel all over the world, stay at the top hotels and go from one relationship to another. Because they had been deprived they couldn’t handle it – so what good did his money do? Sad, isn’t it?

So much nicer to share it! And this is one of the laws of the universe as well. It is the law that we must share. Did you know that? You practice it; it's wonderful. Give a little percentage, of whatever you make, to serve someone who is less fortunate than you. Even a little; it can be even one per cent. You watch! It will multiply back to you, at some time in your life, ten times. It's wonderful! Practice it. You will love it.

In the beginning you can do it because you want something back. After a while you just do it because it's so much fun to give it, because you realise that you can't take it with you when you die so you might as well share everything. The best thing you can share with anybody is yourself, your love and your heart

Remember that always because for each one of you in this room, there is one special person that adores you and you can make their world a heaven or a hell. Wow, isn't that a nice feeling? So choose to make that person's life a heaven. You will feel so good about it. You'll forget all your problems.

The eight limbs of yoga are: Yama, which is abstinence. Things that you should abstain from, that you shouldn't do in your life e.g. non-violence, don't lie, don't steal, celibacy (moderation for householders) and non greed. These are the yamas. And the niyamas? The niyamas are saucha – which is purity. Be pure in your mind, in your body and spirit. Always have beautiful thoughts, and samtoshā – contentment.

Practise contentment. Be content. Get up in the morning and say, *"I have everything I need"* Do any of you do that practice? You just have to say it four or five times and you feel great.

The other day somebody phoned me; she was having a panic attack on the phone. She said to me, *"Ah Nalanie, everything in my life is going wrong and this is happening and that is happening"*.....and I said, *"Stop, stop a moment. Take a deep breath and say – All is well. Everything is well. All is well."* And I made her breathe. It was five minutes on the phone and she said to me, *"Wow, I feel better."*

So easy! Can you believe it's that easy? So I asked her why doesn't she do that all the time, she has the tools and she answered *"I forget"*! What makes us forget? The mind; lack of practice. When you practise it all the time, you get used to it. You don't forget, okay? So that's why we practice.

The next one is tapas. Tapas is accepting pain and not wanting to cause it to anybody else. And then svadhyaya which is the study of spiritual books. What is that? We read beautiful, spiritual books because they elevate your mind. They remind us that *"I am not this body."*

Don't get so entangled in all these problems, don't become hysterical and have panic attacks, you know, because when you are very calm you can do lots of good things.

If your child is sick, when you're very calm you know how to look after that child. When you panic, you make all the mistakes. Some of you who have young babies will know what I mean.

And then Isvarapranidham – that is the last niyama. And that means – surrendering to God. Total surrender. “God, it is all Your will”. My spiritual master says, *“It’s all His form. It’s all His name. It’s all His deed and it’s all for good”* Because, if the energy created everything out of the energy, do you think it wants itself to suffer, really? But it created us to realize who we are so that the two, in duality, could have fun. But if there was just energy and energy and energy and bliss and bliss and bliss, we couldn’t experience anything.

So we had to come here, but the idea was that we enjoyed this bliss and we can only do that in a human body, and then God knows God. That is self-realization. The image of God. We are made in the image. The mind is like the mirror. Clean the mirror and what do you see? The image of God, and that is Truth, Knowledge, Bliss, Absolute. So when you see that, even for five minutes in your life, you will know it and, when you know it, you will always aim at that. Sometimes you will forget it. That’s okay, but once you’ve experienced that magic, you always will come back for more. So that is self-realization.

The next of the eight limbs is asana. What is asana? Postures. Doing different postures. Why do we need postures? Because if the body is sick or if the body is not very well, it’s very difficult to sit down and meditate. It’s very difficult!

I know because this morning I sat down, in my prayer room, at six o’clock. I had a terrible cough and I was there till seven thirty and I felt I didn’t meditate because every time I sat, what happened? Cough, cough, cough. So it does disturb us. So the asana is to teach the body and train the body to keep good health and be still.

Also the reason for asana is to help us keep a firm and steady posture. When the body is really quiet and the mind is quiet then you sometimes stop breathing and this is what is called *“Be still and know that I am God.”*

When you practise this over a long period of time, you become very still and when you're really still - wow, it's magic; it's so peaceful. I don't want to be anywhere else. So we have to get still, very still, to realize this. And even the breath stops. Sometimes I don't realise until half an hour later - and I'm an asthmatic - how can I not breathe for such a long time? It's not possible! How does it happen? I don't understand. It's interesting, the body.

And the next one is pranayama; control of the breath. Why? Because when we learn to control the breath, we control the mind. A nervous person cannot breathe properly.

When you start to be nervous or upset, slow down the breath immediately. There are lots of techniques, one of them is called nadi suddhi, alternate nostril breathing. When you do the nadi suddhi properly, it actually massages the nervous system. So when you breathe in it goes down your brain, down the left side of your body, then down the right side of the body so it massages both your left brain and the right brain. The nervous system is along your spine and as you breathe in the breath goes all the way down the spine.

The yogis know it, and now a lot of people are accepting this truth, that we have a subtle body; an astral body that is within this human body and when this body dies, we have the astral body.

Within the astral body is a channel called the sushumna, which is parallel to the spine, and along this channel there are two other nerve channels which come up either side in a figure eight, crossing the sushumna, almost like the shape of a snake, going all the way to the nose. That's why we do the breathing, to purify the energy within us and to waken the spiritual source.

When these channels open, our spiritual energy awakens, we call it the kundalini energy, the Catholics would call it the Holy Spirit. Now many people try to awaken the Holy Spirit through a lot of chanting and such like but sometimes people become very hysterical and they speak in all kinds of tongues and do all kinds of things. I don't encourage this too much. Why? Because if your mind is not pure and this energy awakens, it can be too much for the body. It's like an electricity circuit. If you put too much energy into a voltage that is not ready for it, what happens? The fuse blows! That's why many people say don't meditate, don't go to these things. You know these people that chant and chant and you see them go crazy and then afterwards they end up so depressed.

I have seen people who have experienced this. They have gone to these meetings and raised the spiritual energy within themselves but they still can't stand the people around them. They still swear at everyone. They still cause harm to everyone. When they open this energy, but without the other practices, the channels are not clear, they are not pure and this energy, this God energy, is only an energy.

All it does is magnify what you have. If you have a negative mind it will magnify that. That's why we say keep the mind pure. So, let's say you are very evil in your heart. You don't practise these limbs, these steps, and you're not a very good person. Of course, everybody here is! And even if you aren't now you soon will be.

Gurudeva always says, “*Yesterday’s thief becomes tomorrow’s saint.*” And I’ve seen it too! With the practice of the Science of Yoga anyone can become a saint! And so, what happens is that when you charge up this energy, if your mind is pure, it will give you so much you can do. But if you have this energy and you are not a very good person, and you don’t do all the other practices, then all the negativity and hypocrisy will be magnified.

That’s why when you’re really pure and you love someone you can heal them. Those of you with children will understand. A child is feeling ill but as soon as Mum comes home he is already better. I used to be sick a lot, and if Mummy was out with Dad, the maids would look after me and they would tell my that I was really suffering, but as soon as my mother walked into the room I felt better. I would say, “*Oh, Mummy, now that you’re here I feel better, I am fine!*” Did you ever say that to your Mum? Well I did, and I know my children used to say that I healed them. So this is it. With love, you see, you can heal because when people have faith in you, you can do anything, but you must keep the mind pure.

Now, if I tried to do that with somebody I didn’t like, it wouldn’t work. They could sense the hypocrisy. That’s why when you don’t like somebody and you pretend to be nice, you’ll just get a really rude remark back from them. You will think “*well I did try to be nice*”. But they can see right through you. Do you think people are stupid? Better you don’t even go in their company. Walk out of their company until you can purify your mind.

And that's when the magic works! Because when your mind is pure and somebody is swearing at you, and you're really thinking, "*God bless the person,*" they have to melt. I've seen it so many times and I've seen other people do it too. They have to melt. But it has to be sincere. Now that's the difficult part. That takes practice.

The next one is pratyahara – sense withdrawal. What does this mean – sense withdrawal? You see a nice car and think you must have it. You see a nice dress and you really want it and the dress would be on your mind all day long until you buy it and you are happy. Until days later you see another dress that you just have to have! It's like an addiction. We can do that with chocolate. We can do that with food. We can do it with people. You know this obsession with people? So many marriages are ruined today because people want to own their partners, they want to own their children. They want to possess them. It seems that we have lost our freedom to our sensual desires which keep us running around in circles!.

Pratyahara is sense control. Learning to control the senses. How do you practise this? When you give up something for Lent that's the practice of pratyahara. What do you give up? Something you love the most. I went to a Catholic school and every Lent I gave up chocolates. I really loved chocolate and I used to feel so good after the forty days. When you give up something, when you control your senses, don't you feel good?

Don't you think, "*Oh I can control my mind. I can do it.*" And, of course, the moment you decide to give it up, everybody will come with chocolate cakes or buy you chocolates. But as soon as you can say "*No thank you, I can do without this*", it gets really easy.

In the beginning I used to have an obsession with books. I love books so much. So I used to practise giving away my favourite books. Still today I have one that I love the most of all, *'To Know Yourself'*, and I don't have one copy in the house. I've ordered maybe fifteen copies, but I've always given that book away.

Now I give them happily but the first one or two was not so easy. You know how when you give something and your senses are not controlled and you think, *"Why did I give it away? I could have done with it, now I will have to order another one. It's going to cost me that much again."* What a headache! But now every time it comes, it goes out. It's really nice. You feel so free because you don't think those thoughts, you're just free.

My daughter used to laugh at me. I'd give her anything I had. I would tell her to take anything she wanted, my designer clothes, etc., But she would worry and say *"Mummy, what if I spill tea on it?"* But I wasn't worried. However, I used to have long hair and I used to have an elastic band – the same one for ten years. And she would borrow it and take it away and I'd say, *"Shani, where's my elastic band?"* And she would say, *"Mummy, I cannot understand why you are so attached to your elastic band."* From that day, I understood that it's not the size of the thing. Such a silly thing as an elastic band; can you believe it? And she taught me that lesson – I thought I had sense control and I didn't. So I told her to keep the band and I cut my hair short so I don't have to think about that. It's funny how we get attached to little things.

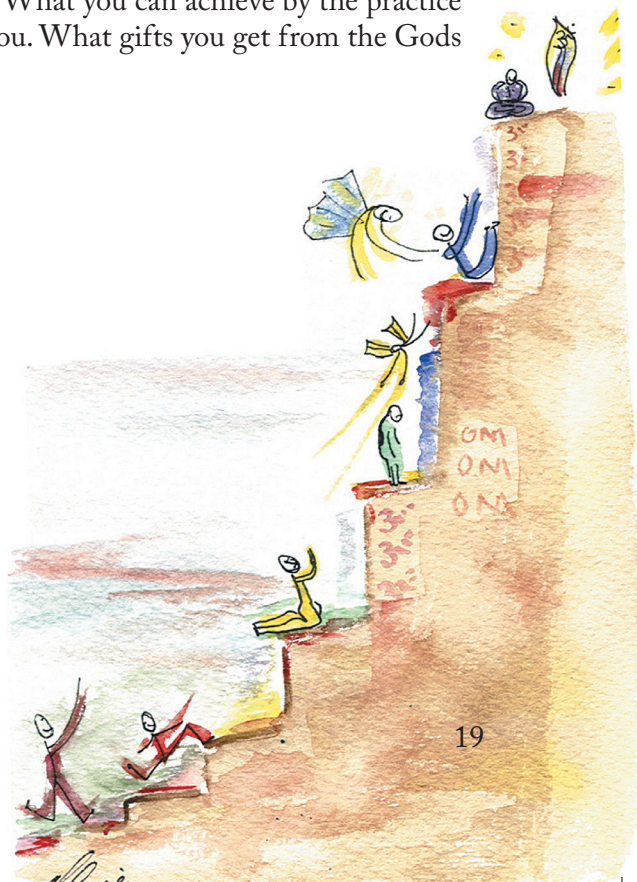
The next step is dharana – concentration. We have to learn how to concentrate and focus the mind. What is the problem with our lives? We are thinking of so many things at one time. So we need to focus the mind on the job at hand. With too many things to do, we are bound to get into a panic sooner or later. We are bound to. You are bound to get tired. How many people today suffer from apathy and lethargy? So many. *"I can't get up to work, Nalanie. I really can't!"* Because there are so many things in the head, they are already exhausted before they woke up. The mind is so tired. So we need to concentrate and train the mind to focus.

And then the next one is dhyana, meditation. From concentration we get to meditation. Becoming one with the object e.g. you look at the candle flame, look and look and look and look, and after a while you don't see a flame anymore; you only see space. It's really weird. And then you think, *'Wow!'* It is illusion. It's like a veil –maya and you start to understand. All the different colours! Have you stared at a candle flame? Have you seen the innermost colours? And when you really stare, you watch the flame go up. You try that tonight or tomorrow. Have fun. Just look and focus on the candle flame. You will see the flame will go up with your energy. It's fun. It's just fun. This is just to make you – this is not for any other reason but to make you realise how powerful the mind is. And when it's focused, it can do so much. It's like a laser beam; you just focus on that. That's what it is.

And, finally, from that stage, you suddenly get into the state of samadhi, self-realization, enlightenment. It happens by itself, you can't push it. You just do this every day and by itself, one day you will know, *'I am spirit. I am spirit. Wow, so I can have fun in this person. I can have fun in this body. I can have suffering in this body but, guess what, it's only temporary and I'll go away.'* You will understand who you really are! And then you can love everybody because when you realise that, just as the flame disappears, so do the divisions between us.

We are all one. When you really feel in your heart, really in your heart, (and this is not just saying it), *"You are all my brothers and my sisters. Really I know you are all my brothers and sisters! Come on, let's all know it too and then we won't gossip and talk nonsense."* And that is the truth. That is the difference. And then you learn to interact in the world like a play. So when you deal with negative people, you sometimes may pretend to be angry, but you're not really angry. But you have to pretend because otherwise, people won't respect you. And then it's so much fun. It's like you're playing a play all day long. It's really fun once you get to do that. It's like you're acting all the time and you can watch yourself. I'm sitting here but I can watch myself talk. It's really fun. And then you just enjoy life and love everyone?

Those are the steps to self-realization. Next week I'm going to go through each one and tell you, by the practice of them, what you can achieve as an individual. What you can achieve by the practice of them. What happens to you. What gifts you get from the Gods or consciousness.



The Eight Limbs of Yoga

Yama – Abstinence

Niyama – Observance

Asana – Posture

Pranayama – Breath Control

Pratyahara – Sense withdrawal

Dharana – Concentration

Dhyana – Meditation

Samadhi

Yamas

Ahimsa – Non-violence

Satya – Truthfulness

Asteya – Non stealing

Brahmacharya – Continence

Aparigraha – Non-greed

Niyama

Saucha – Purity

Santosha – Contentment

Tapas – Accepting but not causing pain

Svadyaya – Study of spiritual books

Isvarapranidhanam – Self surrender

The Branches of Yoga

Integral Yoga is the synthesis of the various branches of Yoga. It is a scientific system for the harmonious development of every aspect of the individual. The following are some of its' different branches.

Raja Yoga The path of concentration and meditation. Based on ethical perfection and control of the mind, Raja Yoga leads ultimately to the state of samadhi, or super-consciousness.

Japa Yoga The concentrated repetition of a mantram, a sound vibration representing an aspect of the Divine, leading to awareness of and attunement to this vibration.

Hatha Yoga Postures (asanas), breath control (pranayama), relaxation, and cleansing practices (kriyas) to purify and strengthen the body and mind.

Karma Yoga The path of selfless service. By performing duties without attachment to the fruits of the action, the Karma Yogi becomes a conscious instrument of the Divine Will.

Bhakti Yoga The path of love and devotion to God, to an incarnation of the Divine or to a spiritual teacher. By transcending the limited personality, one attains union with the Divine.

Jnana Yoga The path of wisdom. By study, self-analysis and awareness, the Jnana Yogi ceases to identify with the body and mind and realizes the Oneness.

Sri Swami Satchidananda





Steps to Enlightenment

By Nalanie Chellaram

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