

Advanced Yoga Practices

Easy Lessons for Ecstatic Living

(eBook)

The Original Internet Lessons with Additions by the Author

Yogani

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Also by the Author

Yogani is an American spiritual scientist who, for nearly forty years, has been integrating ancient techniques from around the world which cultivate human spiritual transformation. The approach is non-sectarian, and open to all. His books include:

Advanced Yoga Practices – Easy Lessons for Ecstatic Living (Two Volumes)

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For up-to-date information on the writings of Yogani, and the free AYP Support Forums, please visit:

www.advancedyogapractices.com

This is dedicated to you who seek the truth within...

Introduction

The theory of yoga is simple. It states that there is an outer reality and an inner one, and that the human nervous system is the doorway between them. To engage in the practices of yoga is to promote the opening of that doorway. The fascinating thing about this is that when we do yoga practices such as meditation, breathing techniques (pranayama) and bodily maneuvers (asanas, mudras and bandhas) in a coordinated way on a regular basis, something happens. We can observe changes inside us. As these inner changes occur, our experience of everyday living is changed in positive ways. So voga is about much more than theory. It is about practice. It is about cause and effect. Over time, the quality of our life can be dramatically transformed by doing yoga practices. We become filled with lasting inner peace and happiness. We come to know that the possibility of achieving "enlightenment" is real – the ultimate destination of every human being. That is what happens as the doorway of our nervous system gradually opens and there is less and less division between our outer and inner realities. In the end, they merge to become one glorious reality of unending joy, and then we know that we are home. This is the journey recorded by saints and sages in every culture throughout history. It is the journey we can all take by choosing to engage in daily yoga practices.

What is the essence of effective yoga practice? Are there ways to optimize our practices to maximize our progress? This is the perennial question. It is a question that calls for a scientific investigative approach. As we survey the landscape, we find that the field of yoga often appears complex, confusing and mysterious. In every direction we turn, something seems to be missing. The purpose of this book is to try and clear some of that up, fill in the gaps, simplify things, and help make the application of yoga practices a more practical and self-directed endeavor than it has been in the past. As part of this, we will be exploring beyond the limits of what has been publicly available about yoga practices. We will look at the so-called "esoteric" practices, along with those that are well known, and combine them into an optimized routine that anyone can follow every day. We will be integrating together the best methods from the ancient traditions of mantra yoga, kriya yoga, hatha yoga, kundalini yoga, tantra yoga, bhakti yoga and others. If these terms are not familiar to you, don't be concerned. It is the nuts and bolts of practice that really matter, and that is what you will find in this book – in plain English. We will not be dwelling on the many yoga traditions and philosophies – only touching on them enough to clarify what is going on during and after our daily practices. The yoga methods in this book act directly through heart, mind, body, breath and sexuality. So you can be sure we will be dealing with your personal experiences in yoga, rather than abstract philosophical concepts.

These lessons can be used as a stand-alone teaching, or to supplement any other path. This is a non-sectarian resource that is open to everyone, and makes a claim on no one. If you are looking for a hands-on instruction manual covering all levels of yoga practice, from the beginning to the most advanced, you have come to the right place. Because so many powerful methods of practice are discussed in these lessons, everyone is strongly encouraged to go at their own safe pace. Much attention in the lessons is devoted to developing skills in "self-pacing," with the aim of assisting every practitioner to become self-sufficient in applying yoga practices for achieving maximum progress while maintaining good safety. Each is responsible for their own progress, and for the means applied.

Most of what is in these lessons was first written on the Internet. The author, an American, is a long time spiritual scientist who, over a lifetime, has developed an integrated system of yoga practices which has proven to be highly effective and easily incorporated into the modern lifestyle. It is a flexible, scientific approach, rather than a rigid, arbitrary one. Wanting to leave something useful behind, he started posting lessons in an open online forum in 2003. Before long,

thousands of yoga enthusiasts from all over the world joined the forum, with hundreds submitting comments and questions via email. Numerous correspondences resulted between the author and readers, and many of the questions and answers (Q&As) were posted in the forum, becoming an integral part of the lessons. Because the questions in the Q&As come from yoga practitioners in many countries around the globe, you will see variations in writing style. The original writing is edited only minimally to preserve the energy and spirit of the interactions. Because the lessons originated in an online forum/group, they contain terms such as "members," "group," and so on. You will also notice that the numbering of the lessons is a little unusual. That is explained on a separate page.

This book is a preservation of the original online lessons of Advanced Yoga Practices, with significant additions by the author. The additions can be found at the end of many of the lessons, and are indicated by asterisks (*) in the table of contents and lesson titles. A summary of the additions is provided after the table of contents.

The <u>online Internet lessons</u> include an extensive "links section" with over 100 yoga-related web sites. Because this is a dynamic list, subject to ongoing revision, it has not been included in this book. Instead, the links section can easily be accessed by going to the Advanced Yoga Practices <u>web site</u> provided at beginning of the book. The "<u>AYP links section</u>" is referred to in several lessons to provide supplementary information, as necessary.

We owe our everlasting gratitude to all of the great spiritual masters and teachers who have researched, exemplified and generously shared the knowledge of spiritual practices with humanity for thousands of years. It is on their shoulders that we stand today as we reach for the heights of ecstatic bliss and outpouring divine love – our destiny as human beings. We also owe our heartfelt thanks to the many yoga practitioners around the world who have stepped forward and contributed to the development of these lessons through their sincere sharing of experiences and questions. Because of them, these lessons are far more comprehensive than would have been possible otherwise. Finally, without the wonder of instant worldwide communications through the Internet, this in-depth exploration of the methods of human spiritual transformation could not have happened. A much deserved thank you goes to all those who provide the technology that has enabled this book to become a reality.

It is hoped you will find the Advanced Yoga Practices lessons to be a useful resource as you travel along your chosen spiritual path. Practice wisely, and enjoy!

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Summary of Additions and Illustrations

The following list provides a summary of the additions that have been included at the end of the designated lessons. These are also indicated by asterisks (*) in the table of contents and in the lesson titles. If you are already familiar with the AYP online lessons, this page identifies what has been added in the book.

- <u>Lesson 13</u> Clarifications on mantra, language and meaning.
- <u>Lesson 29</u> Discussion on alcoholism, addiction and yoga.
- Lesson 41 Discussion on nadi shodana (alternate nostril breathing) and spinal breathing.
- <u>Lesson 44</u> Additional discussion on visualization of spinal nerve during spinal breathing.
- <u>Lesson 47</u> Descriptions for the seven major chakras.
- <u>Lesson 71</u> An "Asana Starter Kit," including instructions and illustrations for postures.
- <u>Lesson 80</u> Instructions for a routine of aerobic and muscle toning exercises in support of yoga.
- <u>Lesson 91</u> Discussion on risks of external kumbhaka (retaining the breath outside).
- Lesson 108 Introduction to kechari stage 5, and illustrations of kechari stages 1-5.
- Lesson 114 Additional discussion on kechari stages 1 and 2.
- Lesson 135 Discussion on hand mudra (jnana or chin mudra).
- <u>Lesson 140</u> Discussion on chin pump and automatic movements.
- Lesson 173 Discussion on spinal bastrika and the sequencing of pranayamas.
- <u>Lesson 182</u> Explaining spinal breathing and meditation to a skeptic.
- Lesson 188 The third enhancement to the mantra.
- Lesson 200 Additional follow-up with a sensitive meditator.
- <u>Lesson 204</u> Summary of sequence and times for a complete yoga routine.
- <u>Lesson 229</u> Instructions for brahmari ("bee sound") pranayama with spinal breathing.
- <u>Lesson 230</u> On allowing crown experiences to evolve safely and naturally with practices.
- Lesson T13 On higher frequency of urination during kundalini awakening.
- Lesson T25 Existing lesson on Sri Vidya is expanded, and a Sri Yantra diagram is included.
- Lesson T28 Additional discussion on advanced siddhasana.
- Lesson T30 Additional discussion on vajroli mudra.
- Lesson T32 Instructions for amaroli practice.
- Lesson T34 Discussion on the kechari "secret spot" from female and male points of view.

The following lessons have clarifying notes added at the end $-\underline{12}$, $\underline{30}$, $\underline{33}$, $\underline{39}$, $\underline{55}$, $\underline{56}$, $\underline{85}$, $\underline{132}$, $\underline{160}$, $\underline{166}$ and $\underline{235}$.

A Glossary of Sanskrit Terms is included in the Additional Resources at the back of the book.

Illustrations:

<u>Lesson 33</u> – Cross-legged Sitting with Back Support

<u>Lesson 71</u> – Asanas (postures) for the "Asana Starter Kit"

Lesson 108 – Kechari Mudra Stages 1-5

Lesson T25 – Sri Yantra

About Those Unused Lesson Numbers

You will notice in the table of contents, and throughout this book, that certain lesson numbers are unused. There are two reasons for this. A mysterious numerology is not one of them.

First, in the original online forum, the format was not designed for editing of already posted messages. A posting needing correction could be deleted and then re-posted after editing, leaving an unused number in the overall series. Because some editing did occur using this method, especially in the early lessons, there are some unused numbers in the lesson sequence, and they are marked "not used" in the table of contents.

The second reason for unused lesson numbers occurs only in this book. These were online postings pertaining to administrative matters relating only to the Internet lessons, and having no bearing on the actual content of the Advanced Yoga Practices lessons. They have been left out of this book, and those numbers are marked "omitted" in the table of contents.

The question arises, "Why didn't you just renumber the lessons from scratch in this book, starting with the number "1," and go straight through without skipping any numbers? The reason this has not been done is because it is important to maintain consistency in numbering between the several versions of the lessons. So, lesson #13 on meditation will be lesson #13 no matter which source of the lessons you are looking at. This is true of the actual content in the lessons also. The content is nearly the same in all venues, except that this book includes "fine-tuning" of the original lessons, plus substantial new instructional material added to many of the lessons (see list on previous page), going well beyond what is available in the online lessons.

The numbering of the lessons is the same in this book as it is on the Advanced Yoga Practices web site, in the online forums, and also in the several translations of the lessons to other languages that are underway. So, while the lesson numbering looks a bit unusual, it is practical. The lesson numbers will always be the same, no matter where you happen to be reading them.

When all of the unused and omitted lesson numbers are subtracted from the total, there are 242 lessons in all in this volume.

If you go to the AYP web site or online forums, you will find that the lessons are continuing there. This book goes to #235 in the main lessons, and to #35 in the tantra lessons. So anything you see beyond that on the Internet is new material. Feel free to partake, both here and there!

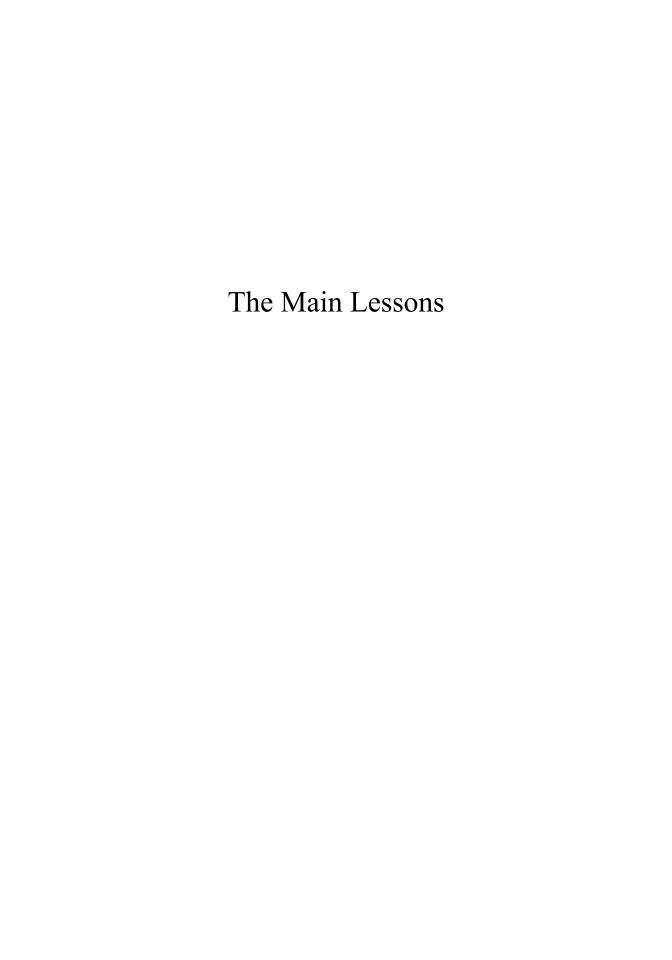
Disclaimer

"Each is responsible for his or her own spiritual progress, and for the methods applied. What you do with the information in these lessons is your call."

This is what is posted in the introduction to the online Advanced Yoga Practices lessons. It applies to this book also. There is no one who can be responsible for the conduct of your yoga practices but you. All efforts have been made to render an accurate presentation and effective integration of the ancient methods of yoga. Additionally, safety measures (the methods of "self-pacing") are discussed throughout the lessons for the purpose of facilitating good progress while maintaining stability. However, none of the methods in this book are guaranteed. You engage in these practices at your own risk.

The remarkable capabilities for higher functioning inherent in every human being are the touchstone for all the lessons in this book. The lessons are therefore experience-based. The practices discussed herein are intended to be applied in a flexible manner according to observed causes and effects, and managed responsibly by each individual practitioner.

These lessons do not represent the teachings of any other organization, school, or person, and should not be construed as such. They are the author's best effort to integrate yogic knowledge from a variety of ancient traditions in a scientific manner. To that end, certain traditions and teachers of yoga are sometimes mentioned in the lessons to add perspective. While it is common for modern teachings to claim a connection to one tradition or another, these lessons claim no such connection. The lessons are an integrated approach to yoga, and must stand on their own merit. It is you, the reader, who will decide their value by how they resonate in both theory and practice.



Lesson 10 – Why This Discussion?

(This is the first lesson)

Everyone knows they are special, that there is something more than this birth, life and death. It resonates somewhere deep inside all of us. We spend our lifetime trying to reach beyond what we are to be more in one way or another. Sometimes we make a mess of it. Sometimes we make progress. But too often we drift along hoping someone will open a door for us. If only they would, we'd run right through. Or would we?

This is the first crucial step, wanting to run through to that something more in us. Being willing to do it. Craving it. Being desperate for it. I am here because I have been one of those for many years, and I know there must be others. I want to throw out some methods, some methods that work. Tools, you know. They are for your consideration. The rest is up to you.

We will talk about philosophy, but not too much. Mostly we will talk about yoga practices, how they work, what they do, and how to do them. And how they can blend together and leverage each other like magic. That is why you will be hearing the phrase "integrated practice" a lot here. It is not a new idea. The *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali lay out an eight-limbed path of practice. Most traditions lean toward one limb or another. It is natural enough. How many balls can anyone keep in the air? But if you want to really make progress in this life, you must multi-channel your efforts in the direction you want to go. It is like that in all things. Spiritual practice is no different.

We will be talking about many inward ways here – the ways into the divine you. How to really open things up. Are you ready for that? Do you long for it? Not everyone does. But everyone will sooner or later. In fact, a little practice fans the fire of divine longing. Just a little bit of practice opens the door enough so the divine desire wells up. Then we are on fire and want more practice and more powerful ways in. It is a kind of addiction – a divine addiction. I confess to being an addict for this spiritual practice game. It is an ecstatic spiral that pulls us out of our limited earth perception. Everything will look different, first just a little, and, later on, a lot different. So if you do not want to become divinely inspired or divinely addicted, better stay away – because the best means are here. If you set your heart and mind to it, you can do it. Honest. And then nothing will ever be the same. You will laugh and laugh when you see how it really is.

This discussion is for wise souls, those who are ready to do what it takes for as long as it takes. Were the sages of old less committed than this? Of course not. We marvel at their remarkable stories in the scriptures. It is just the same now. You will get out of your practices what you put in. It has always been like that.

Why bother with all this? To be honest, it is the greatest high we can have. The pleasure is beyond anything on earth. Really. The essence of divine experience is unending devastating bliss and an unshakable silent peace. It seems contradictory, doesn't it? That's how it is. But don't take my word for it. Try some of these methods and see for yourself. It's all waiting in you. Take a few baby steps, and soon you can be opening by leaps and bounds. That is assuming you are ready, and choose each day to go for more. Remember, it is the one thing we can take with us when we move on from this life.

Some of the practices we will be discussing include:

- Cultivating permanent inner silence through deep meditation.
- Opening the subtle nerves through pranayama (breath control).
- Stimulating divine energy through advanced physical postures and maneuvers.

- Cultivating divine desire and conduct.
- Cultivating sexual energy to a new purpose.
- Cultivating silent inner awareness outward in powerful ways.

Some of these practices will seem familiar. Others will seem radical. Combined together in particular ways, they comprise a powerful system of yoga. These means are too useful to be reserved for the few. They belong to the many. So indulge yourself. If you long for the knowledge of human spiritual transformation, you are worthy, and you have come to the right place.

Lesson 11 – What is Yoga? What is Religion?

Yoga. Religion. These two words conjure up so many images, don't they? Not all of them clear. Not all of them good. Let's not get into the foibles of humanity right now. Let's stick to the basics. For spiritual practice is best seen in terms of the basics, and often is clouded by the cultural coloring of these two simple words.

Yoga means, "to join." Religion means, "to bind back together." Hmmm ... similar meanings. But to join or bind back together what? Ah ... this is the essence of it. We are, or seem to be, two things that are to be put back together. On the one hand we are in the world of space and time, a world we perceive through our senses. On the other hand we are observers of the world, something behind it all, within it all. We are conscious. Aware. We are both subject (observer) and object (observed). And these two things are separate. But must they be? Are they really? Yoga and religion say, "No." So the putting together process starts there. No matter what else you may have heard, that is what yoga and religion are really about.

But why the separation in the first place? If the two are really one, why are there two? Think about yourself for a minute. Who are you? Most of us point to our body and say, "This is me." We all sense something more, but the best we can do is observe our body and say, "This is me. This is my body. My name is Joe Schmo. I can think and feel, and that is part of me too."

If you were to say to someone, "I am something behind all this that you see, and behind all this that I think and feel. I am consciousness," might it seem a bit strange? Why strange? Because we are identified with our perceptions of our body/minds and this world. It is a habit, a deep biologically and neurologically ingrained habit. Not only that. Because we habitually imprint our sense of self on our body/mind, we see our physical surroundings as separate from ourselves. So the world becomes a stranger to itself. Through our process of identified perception the one has become many.

Yoga and religion are about clearing up the identification of awareness that has led to the one becoming many. Not that the world will go away. It is only to be seen for what it really is, a flow of the one, the real you. Then it becomes a much friendlier place. That's the whole point, to find happiness in our lives in the world. Even as the whole thing keeps lurching forward through the shadows of apparent separateness, we don't have to go on seeing it that way. This is the promise of yoga and religion. This is the promise of spiritual practices. It's a good promise. It is up to us to fulfill the promise of yoga and religion, using the best means we can find.

The joining is not just about an intellectual understanding of the situation, though that can't hurt. It is about changing our deepest functioning, biologically and neurologically. Then does our experience change. From that, our thoughts, feelings and actions change, becoming full of love and purpose. We could all use more of that. The identification gradually dissolves, and something stupendous comes up from within us.

Yoga is not just an intellectual process. It is physical, as anyone who has taken a yoga class knows. Yoga practices operate on many levels – physical, mental, emotional, neurological – and in galaxies of inner ecstatic energy!

The process of joining begins with making direct contact with our inner self, our consciousness. Once we have established a foothold in consciousness, we can proceed from there with many other things. Becoming aware of our deepest consciousness on a regular basis is peaceful and pleasant and can bring immediate relief to a hectic, busy life. It is accomplished with meditation. A very particular kind of meditation called deep meditation. This is the first advanced yoga practice we will learn on our road to union, on the way to binding ourselves back together. It is a good first step that brings a big return for a small daily effort.

"Daily effort?" you say. This is what we will talk about next. For without a commitment to a
daily effort, you will be wasting your time here, and anywhere else.

Lesson 12 – The Essential Ingredient – Desire

It is common knowledge that if we want to be successful at something, at anything, we must desire it continuously, and be willing to act to fulfill that desire every day. Think of the most successful people you know. Isn't this what they have in common? If we look at their lives, we see that they have worked long and hard to achieve excellence in their chosen field. Behind that, an insatiable desire to succeed in their efforts kept them driving forward, overcoming obstacles, working for years toward their objective. It is like that in yoga, which is working toward divine union.

Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." He also said, "Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will open to you."

This is the magic formula – desire toward a goal, which spawns action toward that goal. Continuous desire is the fuel. Daily action is the fire. The word "continuous" is important, as is the word "goal." Without these two operative functions, desires are scattered, actions are unfocused, and not much happens. With them, anything is achievable.

If we cultivate our desire to become continuously focused on a particular goal, such as the achievement of divine union, we are cultivating a special kind of desire. It is called "devotion." Devotion is the continuous flow of desire toward an object or goal. We are all familiar with the concept of devotion. It is how we explain the success of great achievers: "Oh, she is so devoted to her work." Or of great mystics: "Oh, she is so devoted to God." It is no coincidence that devotion and greatness are found in the same place. The first invariably leads to the second. The second cannot happen without the first.

Whatever your concept of enlightenment may be, whatever tradition or creed you hail from, whatever inspires you in the direction of spiritual unfoldment, cultivate that. It is the engine of practice. It is what enables us to sustain daily spiritual practice for as long as it takes. As we practice, our divine experience grows, and, with that, devotion grows. Increased devotion intensifies our commitment to practice, and more dedicated practice yields more divine experience which in turn increases devotion further. This is how it progresses – devotion yielding practice ... yielding divine experience ... yielding more devotion ... and so on. Devotion sustained at a fever pitch by every means possible is the spiritual aspirant's best friend. It is not always an easy life being constantly consumed by spiritual "hunger and thirst," but it puts us on the royal road to enlightenment. Intense devotion to transforming our lives through yoga practices assures that what must be done will be done.

Speaking of what must be done, now let's talk about the next step – developing the habit of cultivating our eternal silent depths on a daily basis. Let's talk about meditation.

The guru is in you.

Note: This lesson points out the importance of desire in the overall process of yoga. In later lessons the role of desire is discussed further as "bhakti," which means, "love of Truth" or "love of God." This is much more than an emotional indulgence. Bhakti is one of the most powerful of all spiritual practices. Emotional energy has a huge influence on the process of human spiritual transformation, and on the course of all our endeavors in yoga. So, the principles and practical methods of bhakti are returned to again and again in the lessons.

Lesson 13* – Meditation – Awakening the Silent Seed

Your mind has a natural ability to be quiet. When it becomes quiet, you are in touch with your genius. Albert Einstein said the ideas that led him to the theory of relativity came during moments of quiet reflection. Mozart heard sonatas and symphonies resonating through the silent reaches of his mind. All he had to do was write them down. We know that Isaac Newton came up with laws of motion and gravity while relaxing under an apple tree. Whether he actually got hit in the head by that apple or not, no one knows, but there is no doubt that his quiet mind yielded a treasure of knowledge. We could cite more examples, but you get the point. Silent mind has great creativity. But this is not all. Silent mind is peaceful, blissful and healthy, and radiates these qualities out through the person to the surroundings. People who know how to cultivate quiet mind not only are in touch with their inner creativity; they also radiate a youthfulness and optimism that effects everyone nearby. They have "good vibrations."

Earlier we spoke of consciousness (awareness – the observer), and the objective world (the observed). The essential nature of our consciousness is blissful silence. It is what is behind the mind, what is experienced when the mind becomes still. It is an infinite storehouse of the qualities just mentioned – the realm of what we know as God, always right here within us. This is why it is proclaimed in the *Psalms*, "Be still and know I am God." To access the divine all we have to do is know how to be still.

Meditation is the process of systematically allowing the mind to become still for specific periods of time each day. In doing this daily over weeks, months and years, quietness, consciousness, gradually becomes more evident when the mind is active while we are not meditating, and worldly life is enriched. Through meditation, the relationship between consciousness and the world gradually changes. This is a process of yoga, the joining. It is the first step. Once blissful silence is coming on in daily experience, many other things can be done to enhance and expand it. But first we have to establish a base in consciousness, awaken the silent inner seed of who we are, so to speak.

It was mentioned that your mind has a natural ability to become quiet. In the deep meditation method we will practice here, we will harness that natural ability. In fact, all of the practices which will be taught here (and there are quite a few), we will be harnessing your natural abilities. The idea is to show you how to utilize the gifts you have already. We will just be adding special levers here and there to activate your natural abilities. The rest will be up to you. If you apply what you learn, and keep at it, one day you will know that you are a perpetual bliss machine, capable of experience far beyond the imaginings of the mind. Oh yes, you really are. Meditation is the first step.

Thoughts are coming up in the mind from the minute we wake up in the morning until the minute we fall asleep at night, and then more are coming during dreaming. Yet we say the mind has a natural ability to be quiet. How?

We will use a thought to do it. Not just any thought. A special thought called a "mantra." We will use a particular method of thinking this mantra that allows the mind to do what it can easily do if given the opportunity, settle down.

Actually, any thought can be used to meditate, as been amply demonstrated by researchers over the past thirty years. But we'd like to use a particular thought, one that has certain vibratory qualities, one that produces a certain effect in the nervous system. It is also one we can enhance as our practice advances, but more about that later. The mantra we will begin with here is:

... I AM ...

Also by the Author

Yogani is an American spiritual scientist who, for nearly forty years, has been integrating ancient techniques from around the world which cultivate human spiritual transformation. The approach is non-sectarian, and open to all. His books include:

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