

Enlightenment Engineering

A Scientific Approach for Innovative Independent-minded Seekers

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Dedication

To my parents
Chaya and Dinakar Immaneni

Acknowledgements

To the editors and reviewers of this book
**Kris Shankar, Suchithra Raman,
Jayashree Ashok, Bonnie Olson,
Desikachari Nadadur and Srikanth Dakshinamoorthy**

Foreword

According to the Vedic scriptures, we are embodiments of “*sat-chit-ananda*”, “eternal-consciousness-bliss” or pure intelligence. This Intelligence is the source of all creation and experience.

In this book, I propose to demystify enlightenment (the state of bliss) and the process of attaining it. I explain the goal and the process using simple, scientific terms and a model based on engineering principles. I have studied yoga techniques from several teachers, practiced them rigorously and realized that I am pure intelligence projecting through a human embodiment. Being an engineer and an open-minded scientist, I have analyzed every spiritual experience in my life and have formulated a scientific explanation for each experience.

Just as you can pursue a degree in science or art, you can pursue and complete a degree in Enlightenment by taking personal responsibility for your own progress. I am sharing my perceptions and experiences with the intent of inspiring you to pursue the latter. There are two differences though. A college degree typically takes four years and you do not have much control over the duration. In contrast, you can choose the time required to complete your enlightenment degree. It could be seconds, days, months, years or decades. A college degree is issued by a university, whereas the enlightenment degree is issued by your own self. Only you will know whether you have completed it or not.

I hope I have piqued your curiosity. In case you are wondering, yes, I have completed the enlightenment degree. Otherwise I would not be writing this book.

I hope you will enjoy reading this book!

Blissfully yours,
Immaneni Ashok

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1 Introduction

I grew up with the idea that enlightenment is for a gifted few and the attainment of this state requires lot of hard work and sacrifice. To pursue enlightenment, one must give up all material desires, and despite doing so, enlightenment may not even be guaranteed. Of course, those ideas didn't stop me. Like a mad man, I went around learning so many forms of Yoga, studying with so many teachers and associating with so many orange-robed gurus.

Something must have worked, since I reached the goal. Only to find out that the state is very simple and down-to-earth. There is nothing esoteric about it. It is just like hiking up a deeply wooded mountain and reaching the top. The peak of the mountain is a point. There is nothing there. However, from the peak, one has a clear perspective of everything that is around, below and above. The enlightened state is very similar. It is like looking at the four-dimensional material world (three dimensions of space plus time) from the fifth dimension or higher.

Enlightenment gives a deep feeling of joy, freedom and immense power. IT IS WORTH IT!

While hiking up a mountain, if you follow the trail and pay attention to the instructions posted along the way, you are guaranteed to eventually reach the top. My own path to enlightenment was unorthodox and hence a little rough, but I reached the goal quickly since I had wonderful inner guidance. My journey is described in chapter 4.

Based on my experience, I have created a new path to enlightenment that is simple and efficient. The purpose of this book is to share this creation. This path is suitable only for innovative, independent-minded seekers. You must be innovative because the concepts used here are new and may conflict with your current beliefs. You must be willing to drop all your old ideas. You must be independent-minded because there is no one giving you directions and there is no one providing you security. You must be willing to walk the path on your own and understand the instructions using your own intelligence.

If you would prefer to stay at the bottom of the mountain and keep praying to your guru with the hope that your guru brings a helicopter and takes you to the top of the mountain, then this book is not for you.

This book is organized as follows. The second chapter introduces the new scientific model of the brain, defines enlightenment using new concepts, and provides an updated spiritual dictionary. The third chapter forms the core of this book – it describes the process. The fourth chapter describes my journey.

2 A Scientific Life Model

2.1 Terrestrial and Celestial Brains

The brain is the source of all human experiences (including sensory perceptions, feelings and emotions). Every single experience has a trigger point in the physical brain. I have categorized the brain into two parts, based on the quality of experience.

The Terrestrial Brain is the source of intelligence related to constrictive feelings – either limiting concepts (programmed ideas or conditioning) or negative emotional reactions. This brain has a few hundred switches (a small number), each corresponding to a constrictive feeling. If one of these switches is turned on, then you are experiencing the associated intelligence that makes you feel small, caged and stressed.

The Celestial Brain is the source of intelligence related to celestial experiences – overflowing creativity and expansive feelings such as joy, freedom, lightness, ecstasy, tranquility, confidence, love and passion. This brain has trillions of switches (very large number). If one of these switches is turned on, then you are experiencing the associated intelligence that makes you feel expansive, free and powerful.

2.2 Definition of Enlightenment

Enlightenment means complete mastery over one's own experiences:

- Realization that you are the sole owner of your brain and your experiences
- Ability to operate your Terrestrial Brain switches at will
- Ability to operate your Celestial Brain switches at will

Sounds too simple? Yes, the concept is simple. How complex you make the enlightenment process is your choice.

Perhaps you feel, "Da! I am already enlightened."
Congratulations!

Perhaps you feel, "Wow! I am pretty close."
Cool! Finish it quickly!

Perhaps you feel, "Wow! I can do it."
Yes, go for it!

Or, perhaps you feel, "It doesn't make sense" or "It can't be that simple."
Yeah, your Terrestrial Brain is ruling your life. Wake up, dear friend, and awaken your Celestial Brain.

2.3 An Updated Spiritual Dictionary

Consciousness: Pure intelligence, the source of all creation and experiences.

God (ultimate/supreme): Same as consciousness.

God (deity): An aspect of pure intelligence that expresses specific qualities. In our model, each deity corresponds to a set of celestial brain switches. For details, refer to another book by the author, titled "Celestial Mantras: Cosmic Intelligence through Naada Kriya Yoga."

Guru: An entity that inspires you to pursue enlightenment and teaches you techniques to activate your celestial brain switches. The entity can be a human, dead or alive, or something else. For example, a mountain or an elephant can be a Guru, in which case the technique is implicit. Refer to section 3.7.

Sat-guru: The true guru who is your own inner guide, the ultimate teacher.

Guru's grace: Your life will flow effortlessly when you listen to your own inner guide. This is grace. No grace comes from external sources.

Devotee: One who worships God or Guru and believes in a spiritual hierarchy.

Disciple: One who desires to become a master (of one's own self) and steadfastly walks on the path of enlightenment.

Self-realization or Liberation (moksha): Same as enlightenment.

States of enlightenment: Every combination of active celestial brain switches results in a specific celestial experience. Given the large number of celestial brain switches, enormous number of combinations can be created. Enlightened beings cannot be compared. They have their own unique experiences.

Samadhi: A state of enlightenment. As described above, each Samadhi state is unique and cannot be compared with another state.

Chakras: One can produce silent sound vibrations from the body to stimulate the celestial brain and activate its switches rapidly. The chakras correspond to specific bones and resonating chambers that can produce these subtle sounds. The chakras from the popular seven-chakra-model correspond to the following bones (bottom to top): pubis, sacrum, lumbar L1, thoracic T4, and cervical C7, sphenoid and parietal. For details, refer to another book by the author, titled "Celestial Mantras: Cosmic Intelligence through Naada Kriya Yoga."

Mantra: Silent sound vibration that has the power to stimulate the celestial brain.

Kundalini: The potential inner stimulus for activating celestial brain switches. Note that this doesn't represent real energy or a snake.

Kundalini awakening: A sudden activation of a large number of celestial brain switches, all at once. This feels like an explosion and can be overwhelming. However, it is a desirable change, since you take a quantum jump towards enlightenment.

Yoga of "the object": A scientific process of activating celestial brain switches through one-pointed focus on "the object". Here are some examples of types of yoga, and "the object" of focus of each:

- Hatha: Focus on balancing complimentary parts of the physical body.
- Prana: Focus on movement of breath.
- Mantra: Focus on subtle sounds.
- Dhyana: Focus on visualizations.
- Jnana: Focus on contemplation.

Desire is an aspect of pure intelligence that propels human action. Desires bring aliveness and enjoyment to a human embodiment. There is no meaning to human existence if there are no desires. Instead of attempting to drop desires or suppressing desires, we can use them as tools to stimulate the celestial brain. Refer to chapter 3.

Soul: A unique expression of pure intelligence. By its very definition, there is no re-birth for the soul, because it is unique and because it is an expression of the one and only real one (pure intelligence).

Doesn't make sense? Okay, do this experiment in your kitchen. Take a big jug of water and three empty glasses that look exactly the same – A, B and C. Pour water from the jug into the glass A. This represents the birth of human A. Pour the water back into the jug, emptying glass A. This represents the death of human A. Pour water from the jug into the glass B. This represents the birth of human B. Pour the water back into the jug, emptying glass B. This represents the death of human B. Pour water from the jug into the glass C. This represents the birth of human C. Pour the water back into the jug, emptying glass C. This represents the death of human C. Here water represents the pure intelligence and glasses A, B and C represent the human forms.

Where is the soul? There isn't. So dear friend, there is no truth in the past life or future life. Every life is unique and new. Focus on this life and this moment. Just accept you're the current state of your Terrestrial and Celestial Brains and figure out how to alter the state, taking ownership of your own brain.

Karma: The experience of bondage created when there is an association with an identity. There is no karma for an enlightened person.

EGO

Ego is an identity created by the active switches of the Terrestrial Brain. In contrast, the underlying experience created by the Celestial Brain is pure intelligence. Thus, there is no sense of identity when the Terrestrial Brain is completely inactive. An identity is necessary to interact with other humans on this planet. All relationships are based on identities. Note that your identity is not constant – it is a function of the switches that are currently active in your Terrestrial Brain. What this means is that your perception of yourself is constantly changing when your Terrestrial Brain is active. For example, you may project one identity while at work, and another at home. Some people vehemently hold on to a specific identity or self-image by attempting to keep the same Terrestrial Brain switches active all the time, and they experience tremendous stress and suffering.

An enlightened person is consciously aware of the various identities that get created when he/she interacts with other people and the absence of identity when there is no need for interaction. Since an enlightened person doesn't associate with the temporary identities that get created dynamically, he/she experiences joy / freedom even while projecting an identity.

You may have come across some seekers who don't react to anything. They may be in a mechanical state where the terrestrial brain is inactive and no identity is projected. I have seen some gurus promoting this state among their disciples just to get lot of free work extracted from them in order to build their estates. I call these gurus spiritual businessmen¹. They are very intelligent, and very likely enlightened. They know what they are doing. Their disciples enjoy the security provided by the guru and the sense of belonging derived from belonging to a community of like devotees. They believe that their guru will liberate them at the time of their death. It is unlikely that they will get enlightened because they do not take personal responsibility for their experiences.

An enlightened person does react emotionally when interacting with other people. Emotional reaction is a basic characteristic of human embodiment. However, an enlightened person is not caught up with the reaction created by the terrestrial brain (which is activated in process of creating an identity) and is very aware of the reaction. It is very important to understand that the goal is not to become emotionless, but to be in a state that allows the dissolution of the identity that caused the emotional experience. In the latter case, the emotional reaction is like a wave that comes up, but dissolves back into the ocean forever. The identity projected by an enlightened person is like such a wave. Every wave is newly created, and dissolves immediately thereafter.

¹ In my perception they are no different from the CEOs of consumer corporations. They are offering products called "security", "community", "peace" and "enlightenment."

3 Enlightenment Engineering

3.1 Overview of the Process

When you enroll for an engineering degree at a college, you do so being aware of your interests, the time frame, the process and the end goal. You must approach the enlightenment degree in the same manner. The end goal must excite you. You must make a firm decision to follow through with the process and complete it. You must take responsibility of every step in this process. Only then can you achieve the end result of becoming your own master.

The following are the four requirements for completing the enlightenment degree:

- Your belief that you can become the master of your own experiences
- Your commitment to follow a process with complete involvement
- Your openness to allow new experiences created by your celestial brain
- Your willingness to disassociate from limiting identities created by your terrestrial brain

Do you need a “human guru” for enlightenment? No, you don’t, just like you don’t need a guru for your engineering degree. All you need is a good process. Here I am suggesting a process that flows naturally with your existing life style.

The enlightenment engineering process uses six basic, natural human desires as tools to stimulate the celestial brain:

- Laughter: The desire to experience and express joy
- Music and Dance: The desire to experience and express joy
- Breath: The desire to sustain the body with air
- Food: The desire to sustain the body with solid and liquid foods
- Comfort: The desire to relax in the company of other beings and in pleasant surroundings
- Nature: The desire to enjoy the beauty of nature and be in harmony with it

The process involves repeating the following cycle each month:

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• EVERYDAY: Practice the Yoga of Laughter and the Yoga of Music and Dance• First week: Practice the Yoga of Breath• Second week: Practice the Yoga of Food• Third week: Practice the Yoga of Comfort• Fourth week: Practice the Yoga of Nature |
|--|

How long will it take to reach the goal?

If you get deeply immersed in the enlightenment process, you can expect to complete it in 3-5 years. Yes, it is also possible to complete it in less than three years. If you fail to finish it in five years, then be honest and admit that you don't really want to get enlightened. As I mentioned earlier, working towards enlightenment is like hiking to the top of a mountain. If a clear, safe path is provided, and you follow this path and keep walking, how can you not reach the top?

How long should you follow this process?

It is best to stick to the enlightenment engineering process until you make a connection with your inner guide, the intelligence that already exists within you. Then your inner guide will re-direct you, perhaps to study techniques from a different teacher. If you follow your inner direction, you will take the most efficient and effortless path - one that is custom-made for you. It is like finding a guide who is willing to be with you and lead you through all the short cuts to the top of a mountain. You just need to trust your guide.

How do you know you are progressing?

Once you get deeply involved with the process, you will start noticing "shifts". You will experience sporadic activation of your celestial brain switches. This will alter your perception towards life. It is very important to allow yourself to change, instead of holding on to your old ideas and concepts about life. Otherwise you will create a conflict within yourself. As you change, you will naturally invite new friendships and relationships. Be prepared to embrace the new. The symptoms of progress are (1) more intense and more frequent experiences of freedom, joy, love, creativity and effortlessness and (2) less intense and less frequent experiences of agitation, fear, insecurity, anger, greed and jealousy.

How do you know you are enlightened?

You will, when you reach the top of the mountain. How can you not know?

The six forms of Yoga are described in the following six sections.

3.2 Stimulating the Celestial Brain through the Yoga of Laughter

Technique

Laugh in any of the ways listed below:

- Become like a kid, innocent, curious and silly
- Look at anything and everything with awe and excitement
- Get tickled by anything and everything
- Just laugh naturally and freely
- Find giggling friends
- Play with little kids – they will teach you how to laugh and be silly
- Just loosen up
- Organize weekly 60 min group laughing meditation with your giggling friends
- Record your own voice, play the audio and laugh along with it
- Watch funny movies/shows
- Read jokes
- Master the nine varieties of laughter described further below
- Create some more varieties
- Just have fun this moment

While laughing,

- Focus inside your body
- Observe which bones are vibrating
- Observe the quality of the sound being produced
- Observe how you feel in response to this sound

Go deep inside this feeling and experience it fully

The nine varieties of laughter:

- **Heavy laughter:** Focus on your pubic bone. Using a very low pitch, utter the word “hue” stretching the ending vowel and pushing the sound down into the earth. Laugh with heavy feeling, vibrating the base of your body.
- **Spooky laughter:** Focus on your sacrum. Using a very low pitch, utter the sound “hee” stretching the ending vowel and swirling the sound at your pelvic base like a whirlpool. Laugh with spooky feeling, vibrating the sacrum and pelvis.
- **Cave laughter:** Focus on your navel. Produce deep “ho” sound (create a resonating sound as if inside a cave) from the belly and laugh, moving your diaphragm and abdominal muscles vigorously and vibrating your lumbar vertebrae.
- **Buzzing laughter:** Focus on your sternum (breastbone). Produce a buzzing “mm” sound from the chest and laugh with your mouth closed, vibrating your ribcage and thoracic vertebrae.
- **Booming laughter:** Open the back of your throat visualizing that you are hiding an apple inside your mouth. Laugh with a “ha” sound, producing a booming sound from the throat and vibrating your cervical vertebrae.
- **Silly laughter:** Gaze at the tip of your nose and make a silly face. Utter “hee” sound from your nose and laugh with irritating sound, vibrating your maxilla (cheekbone).
- **Loud laughter:** Place your hands behind your ears, palms facing forward. Utter a loud “yaa” sound that resonates in your ears and laugh loudly, vibrating your temporal bones.
- **Shrill laughter:** Place your index fingers on your temples. Focus on the sphenoid bone. Laugh with a very thin, high-pitched sound, visualizing the sound going upward, towards the sky.
- **Silent laughter:** Apply the cave laughter technique without producing any audible sound.

3.3 Stimulating the Celestial Brain through the Yoga of Music and Dance

Technique

- Listen to any variety of music, sing along and dance using spontaneous body movements
- Focus inside your body
- Observe which bones are vibrating and moving
- Observe how you feel in response to the music and dance
- Go deep inside this feeling and experience it fully

Include a variety of music sources:

- Harmonic and melodic vocals
- Ethnic and synthetic drums
- Stringed instruments
- Wind instruments
- Reed instruments

3.4 Stimulating the Celestial Brain through the Yoga of Breath

Four simple belly-breathing techniques are described below. Do not practice these techniques soon after a heavy meal or if you have had a recent surgery in the thoracic or abdominal region.

3.4.1 Natural belly breathing in lying-down position

This is the natural breathing that happens in the deep sleep state. Watch little kids – they breathe like this all the time.

Technique

- Lay down on your back.
- Place a moderately heavy book on your belly.
- As you inhale, lift the book by directing the air into your lower lungs.
- As you exhale, allow the book to move down.

3.4.2 Belly breathing with hold in lying-down position

This technique is similar to the previous technique with two changes: (1) You inhale extra air using a pumping action, and (2) After inhalation, you hold the breath for a few seconds before starting to exhale.

Technique

- Lay down on your back.
- Place a moderately heavy book on your belly.
- As you inhale, lift the book by directing the air into your lower lungs.
- Inhale extra air using a pumping action, moving the book even higher.
- Hold the breath for a few seconds, not allowing the book to move down.
- As you exhale, allow the book to move down.

3.4.3 Belly breathing with hold in standing position

This technique is similar to the previous technique with three changes: (1) You are in a standing position, (2) You do not use a book, and (3) You perform a beating action during the holding phase.

Technique

- Stand with feet 1-2 feet apart and with toes facing the front.
- Engage your inner thigh and quadriceps, by pulling your kneecaps up, to maintain a stable posture.
- Visualize that there is a balloon in your abdomen with a long neck all the way down from your nose.
- As you inhale through your nose, direct all the air to the bottom, front part of your lungs. Allow your tailbone to move back and lumbar spine to arch inward. Make sure your stomach bulges as you breathe in air.
- Inhale extra air using a pumping action, allowing the stomach to bulge even more.
- Hold your breath for a few seconds while pushing the air down to prevent air from leaking out of your nose.
- While holding your breath, make fists with both your hands and gently beat on the top part of your belly just below your rib cage, covering the left, center and right sides.
- Stop beating and start exhaling slowly, contracting your side and center abdominal muscles strongly to squeeze all the air out.

3.4.4 Belly breathing with hold in sitting position

This technique is similar to the previous technique with one change: You either sit on the floor (with padding, if necessary) in any comfortable, stable position or on a chair (if you are unable to sit on the floor). Use the instructions from the previous section, skipping the first two steps that pertain only to the standing position.

3.5 Stimulating the Celestial Brain through the Yoga of Food

Apply this technique whenever you have any solid or liquid food, including water. The basic idea is to engage all the five senses and go deep into the enjoyment of these senses through the awareness of breath.

Technique

- Focus on your breath
- Observe the form, color and texture of the food
- Close your eyes and smell the food while taking a deep inhalation
- Start taking in the food
- If it is a liquid, observe the taste and texture and follow the sound as the liquid flows down your food pipe
- If it is a solid, start chewing, observing the taste and texture, listening to the sound inside your mouth and follow the sound as the chewed food flows down your food pipe
- Observe how you feel in response to each bite of food
- Go deep inside this feeling and experience it fully
- Focus on your breath before taking the next bite

3.6 Stimulating the Celestial Brain through the Yoga of Comfort

Apply this technique whenever you are resting alone or with someone else. The basic idea is to engage the senses of smell, sight, touch and sound, and go deep into the enjoyment of these senses through the awareness of breath.

Technique (when you are resting alone)

- Focus on your breath
- Observe the form, color and texture of the surface you are on
- Feel the sensation and allow your body to relax into the surface
- Observe the parts of the body that are tensed
- For each of these tensed parts, do the following: inhale deeply into your belly; exhaling, focus on the part and say "relax", then "haa" with a sigh.
- Smell the surroundings
- Listen to the sound of your breath along with the external sounds
- Observe how you feel in response to the above steps
- Go deep inside this feeling and experience it fully

Ideas

- Recline on a couch in an earthy-colored living room
- Swing in a patio with colorful flowering plants
- Lay on a woolen carpet next to a fireplace on a cold day
- Lay on a velvety bed
- Relax with a cool shower after a vigorous workout
- Relax with a hot shower after a busy workday

Technique (when you relaxing with another person)

- Start with the previous technique and come into harmony with the resting surface
- Observe each other's the form
- Explore each other with touch and allow your bodies to relax into each other
- Smell the surroundings
- Listen to the sound of each other's breath
- Allow your bodies to relax with each breath
- Observe how you feel in response to the above steps
- Go deep inside this feeling and experience it fully

Ideas

- Comfort a child
- Comfort a friend
- Comfort a partner
- Give/receive a relaxing massage
- Give/receive cranio-sacral therapy
- Give/receive foot reflexology
- Intimacy with a partner (this can involve the sense of taste as well ☺)

3.7 Stimulating the Celestial Brain through the Yoga of Nature

Apply this technique whenever you are walking or resting in nature. The basic idea is to engage the senses of smell, sight, touch and sound, and to go deep into the enjoyment of these senses through the awareness of breath.

Technique

- Focus on your breath
- Observe the form, color and texture of each element of nature surrounding you
- Look up, look down, look on all sides – there is so much to see
- Smell your surroundings
- Touch your surroundings
- Listen to the sound of your breath along with any external sounds you hear
- Observe how you feel in response these steps
- Go deep inside this feeling and experience it fully
- Pick an element of nature that stands out at this moment
- Enjoy the beauty of this element more deeply
- Visualize that you are this nature element and experience the qualities of this element
- When you feel satisfied, pick another natural element and repeat the visualization

3.7.1 *Learning from the nature gurus*

The elements of Nature are very powerful. They are symbols of celestial qualities. They are the perfect gurus – each of them provides inspiration and implicitly teaches a technique. The technique is as follows:

- Contemplate on the celestial qualities being radiated by this nature element
- Visualize you are this element of nature and experience those qualities within
- At this point, this element is your guru and you are absorbing the experience of your guru

Here is a small list of natural elements and their celestial qualities:

- Universe: Expansiveness and Abundance
- Sun: Energy and Passion
- Sky: Expansiveness and Freedom
- Clouds: Lightness and Freedom
- Mountain: Tranquility, Majesty and Stability
- River: Flow and Energy
- Ocean: Magnificence and Abundance
- Tornado: Immense Power
- Erupting volcano: Immense Power
- Pond: Peace and Tranquility
- Pine tree: Majesty and Restfulness

You can also use animal and bird symbols of your choice and come up with your own interpretations of the symbols.

4 The Author's Journey towards Enlightenment

4.1 Peaceful Childhood

Each of us comes into this world with a few active Terrestrial Brain switches (which correspond to the basic survival needs) and a reasonably large number of active Celestial Brain switches. Little kids have almost no sense of identity. They are always joyful and learn at incredible speed. The learning happens by direct absorption of the intelligence of people surrounding them. In the first few years, they are exposed primarily to their parents' intelligence. Later on, little kids imbibe intelligence from other family members, teachers and friends.

Depending on the surrounding environment, kids can quickly evolve in either direction – towards ordinariness and programmed behavior (high terrestrial brain activity and low celestial brain activity) or towards extraordinariness and genius-like behavior (low terrestrial brain activity and high celestial brain activity).

I was born to extraordinary parents who radiated excellence in their respective fields. My mother would run our household efficiently and effortlessly, preparing three square meals a day and taking care of her children and her in-laws. Amidst all this work, she found the time to pursue her passion in painting. She taught herself oil painting and started painting large landscapes and portraits. In a few years she had a portfolio large enough to have her own painting exhibitions. She also took a leadership role in a local women's group. In addition, she also picked up the Carnatic violin. Her focus and persistence was amazing!

My father was a neurosurgeon, teacher and researcher. Unlike the other doctors in my neighborhood who were focused on minting money, my father took a different approach to life. He devoted his energies to research and publishing papers. He used to relax by discussing spiritual topics with like-minded friends, and playing bridge at a neighborhood club. Although our life style was simple, I always experienced abundance at home.

I became enchanted by music by the age of two. I am eternally grateful to my parents for recognizing this interest, acknowledging my passion and providing me an opportunity to learn Carnatic vocal music from the age of five. In the modern age where most parents emphasize an education geared towards the goal of financial success, my parents took a radically different approach. Instead of sending me to private schools where they grind students down with hours of homework, my parents allowed me to study at public schools so I might have sufficient free time to pursue my passions in arts.

The impact of the rigorous musical training I received early in life was profound. I developed the ability to concentrate for long periods of time. I became naturally calm, and was mentally able to deal with a series of respiratory illnesses such as bronchitis and asthma while growing up. The process of learning complex music orally with absolutely no access to audio or written material resulted in the activation of large portions of my celestial brain. Supplementary activities such as painting, bridge and the study of various languages further enhanced the activity of my celestial brain.

As a result, public school was a breeze and my academic performance was outstanding. I distinctly remember relaxing for an hour with vocal music practice and an hour at the beach every single day while I was preparing for my engineering entrance exam. A passion for music and nature can do wonders for one's mental acuity!

Until age sixteen, I was in an enlightened state, without conscious effort and without really being aware of it. I was calm and peaceful. I experienced effortless in every walk of my life. The effortless continued, but a feeling of limitedness started to creep into my life, layer by layer.

4.2 The Conditioned Software Engineer

I commenced on a bachelor's degree program in computer science only because I was told that it was a hot field that offered numerous career opportunities. This was the beginning of the "out-of-tune" phase of my life. In retrospect, with the right guidance, I would have enrolled in an architecture program, which would have best suited to my natural talents.

However, I had a great time living in the hostel at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Chennai, surrounded by wonderful, intelligent friends. I used to practice vocal music every morning, even on exam days. I breezed through the curriculum and managed to finish near the top of my class. Recognizing that I had a natural interest for research and teaching, I decided to pursue a doctorate degree in computer science.

When I was twenty, I landed in the United States. I spent a year at SUNY, Stony Brook, in Long Island, east of Manhattan. This was the first stressful year of my life. I felt out of tune with the place. The cold weather drove me nuts. Above all, I couldn't find a thesis advisor of my liking. I decided to move to a better place.

I landed in Seattle in 1989. What a beautiful place! I felt so comfortable there. I liked the University of Washington and found an excellent thesis advisor. However, from deep inside, I had the nagging feeling that Computer Science was not right for me. I suppressed this feeling and distracted myself by taking courses in Sanskrit and by collaborating on projects with researchers from the chemistry and material science departments.

I had already charted out my life. I was going to publish a few research papers, graduate in a few years, find a faculty position at a good university, get married, have kids, make money, buy a nice home, make more money, send my kids to the best universities, make even more money, then retire and lead a happy life ever after. It is amazing how easily I had been influenced by the norms of society! This is the price I had to pay for being unconscious.

The reality of academics hit me when it took me two years to publish my first research paper, partly because of my poor English writing skills and partly because of the subjectivity inherent in the review process. After presenting a few conference papers and mingling with the academic crowd, I realized that I did not fit in this milieu.

The frustration started to build up inside me. The only saving grace was the natural beauty of the Seattle area. I saved all my money to buy a car, just so that I could drive to Snoqualmie falls (which was 45 miles away) whenever I felt like it. I used to cry out of joy, during every trip into the countryside. I was drawn to the celestial qualities radiated by nature – abundance, aliveness, expansiveness, power, beauty and harmony. Nature is the best guru² I had in my life.

4.3 Dazzling Clues about Reality

I was twenty-five years old. It was a typical day at the university. It was mid morning and time for a break. I came out of my room and started walking down the corridor. There were a lot of students walking in and out of the classrooms. Suddenly I felt a sensation of lightness. I was literally weightless floating freely in the air. I couldn't see my physical body. Instead I experienced an all-encompassing dazzling bright white light. No trace of matter. I could see everyone else around me in his or her physical form with big smiles. Possibly they saw a clueless person strolling around with a bewildered look. I walked out of the building into the garden. It is hard to describe my feelings at that time, but the words such as ecstasy, bliss and joy come to my mind. This experience lasted for about fifteen seconds. My mind was empty of thoughts. I walked back home. I sat down staring at the ceiling. I was very calm. No worries, no doubts, just immense happiness. Once in a while I would drink or eat a little. Two days passed by in this manner. Bong! My previous state of mind returned with a vengeance. I was thrown out from a zone of peaceful vibrations back into the zone of stressful matter.

Analysis: Such an experience is typically called “Kundalini awakening”, a spontaneous activation of a large set of celestial brain switches. One's perception of life and reality changes dramatically when such a transition occurs.

All my life plans fell apart. I just wanted to be in that zone again, forever. Alas, I had no clue how to invite that experience again. I went into a depression. I didn't want to continue my graduate studies because I no longer saw any meaning to it. I couldn't digest any food. I was a nervous wreck. In desperation, I prayed deeply for help. That was the first time I really prayed from my heart. My desire to transform was intense.

As if in answer to my prayers, I received guidance from my music teacher, Sreevidhya Chandramouli, to incorporate breath into my singing so that I could produce perfect tones and enjoy music at a deeper level. For a couple of months I practiced breath control exercises and started to work on perfecting the note positions. One night, as I was exploring a note, I heard a deep, loud booming sound and my body started to vibrate. I was very scared. I thought it was an earthquake. I stopped the drone instrument to figure out what was going on. Nothing! Everything around was quiet. Perplexed, I resumed my music practice and the same experience repeated. After the third time, I realized that this vibration was originating from within my own body. The power of the musical note

² **Guru:** An entity that inspires you to pursue enlightenment and teaches you techniques to activate your celestial brain switches. The entity can be a human, dead or alive, or something else. For example, a mountain or an elephant can be a Guru, in which case the technique is implicit. Refer to section 3.7.

started to reveal itself. It felt expansive. On another occasion, as I was singing, I felt my body expanding. After a while my throat became so large that I could not produce any more sound. I entered a blissful state similar to my first celestial experience.

Analysis: By producing celestial sound, I had activated some celestial brain switches.

A friend of mine interpreted my experiences and gave me the classic book, Paramahansa Yogananda's "Autobiography of a Yogi" to read. I read the book intensely for a week. Tears continuously flowed through my eyes throughout the day. I desperately wanted to learn Kriya Yoga, the set of techniques that Yogananda practiced. Two months passed. On my 26th birthday I noticed a flyer in a grocery shop. Wow! A Kriya Yoga teacher from the lineage of Yogananda's teacher would be in town the following day to teach Kriya Yoga.

Analysis: This book gave me hope that I would experience Enlightenment, but also programmed me into believing that I need to have such a guru-disciple relationship in order to get enlightened. This programming made my enlightenment process hard and slow. I was misled by the attractions of orange-robed gurus and their organizations.

I learnt the first set of Kriya Yoga techniques and started to practice them regularly, for one to two hours every day. My mind started to calm down. As a side effect, the efficiency with which I performed other activities increased tremendously. I completed my Ph.D. thesis in six months and set a record for the shortest and smoothest defense in the history of the department, with just one typo to correct in my thesis. I graduated and moved to Boston to start my first job in the software industry.

A couple of months after my 28th birthday, I was invited to a friend's home for a party. I sat down and was offered some food. As I was placing the first bite in my mouth, I noticed the picture of a beautiful woman on top of the fireplace. Her dazzling eyes transported me into another world. I lost track of time. After an hour my friend gently brought to my attention that I haven't eaten any of the snacks on my plate. I didn't realize that I had been staring at the picture for over an hour with food in my hand. Upon enquiry, my friend told me that it was the picture of his spiritual teacher, Gurumayi Chidvilasananda. He gave me the classic book "Play of Consciousness" written by Gurumayi's Guru, Swami Muktananda. I started reading about Muktananda's spiritual journey and the greatness of his Guru, Bhagawan Nityananda, founder of the Siddha Yoga tradition.

Analysis: Did that picture really have the power to transfix me? No. This was merely my perception. I had a deep desire to be taken care of by a Guru. This desire manifested this experience.

That night I had a dream. Bhagawan Nityananda was beating me up with a stick and shouting, “wake up, you fool!” I woke up petrified. It was so real. My body was sweating profusely; my clothes were clearly wet. I ran to the mirror to check if I had any marks on my body. Obviously, I didn’t find any. I couldn’t sleep the rest of the night. The same dream repeated the next two nights, with greater and greater intensity. I sought the help of my Siddha Yoga friend. He told me that this experience was a clear indication of receiving Shaktipat, a powerful initiation from a Siddha, an enlightened master. This event initiated a rapid expansion process. I stopped practicing Kriya Yoga and started to follow the Siddha Yoga tradition of meditating on the Guru’s form. I moved back to Seattle a couple of years later.

Analysis: The deep desire to get enlightened manifested this experience. The form of Bhagawan Nityananda represented my own inner guide. It was a greatly inspiring symbol for me. Whenever I felt disturbed for any reason, I would just visualize that form and I would instantly become still. Again, forms and images of gurus have no inherent power. I had created a strong internal association between certain forms and images and the eternal stillness inside me, and when I looked at these images, they would trigger that state of stillness in me.

4.4 The Husband and Employee Hells

Very interestingly, my marriage and my employment (as a software engineer) happened at the same time, when I was twenty-six years old. They also ended at the same time, eight and a half years later. This was the most stressful period of my life.

I chose to get married because all my friends were going through that phase. Unable to find a bride in USA, I came up with a big list of requirements and requested my parents to find a match. After one and a half years of searching, my parents found a perfect match – a beautiful super-talented woman who surpasses me in artistic abilities. Wow! What a miracle!

The third day after the marriage ceremony, I got the feeling that ours was a completely incompatible match. I could not understand why, but my feeling was very strong. I cried in my mother’s lap, saying that I didn’t feel right about it. What could my mother do? She consoled me saying that everything would be all right. The reality was that there were underlying issues that could not be resolved. Both of us suffered in the marriage. We couldn’t really make it work.

Now I am able to understand why it didn’t work. It was like red-colored rose water and red-colored rose oil coming together. Can water and oil mix with each other? No. You can keep shaking them up, but as soon as you stop the process, they will separate. It is their very nature. It cannot be changed. The superficial resemblance in color and fragrance doesn’t alter the underlying immiscibility of water and oil.

4.5 Awakening of Musical Intelligence

One day my five-year old son asked me, "Daddy, what happens after death?" I was shocked for a moment. I looked into his eyes and sensed the depth from which that question was arising. "Simple! Just like your body changes clothes every day, your 'true self' changes bodies every lifetime that starts with birth and ends with death." My son pondered for a few moments and said "Oh! I understand".

A few days later: "Daddy, how many times does this happen, million times? Is there an end?" "The cycle ends when you merge with the source of this creation." "What do you mean by merging?" I took my son into the kitchen, showed him a vessel filled with water, let a drop of water fall into the vessel, and asked him, "What happened to that drop of water?" With eyes watering in excitement, my son said, "I understand! How can I merge with my source?" "Through the practice of yoga." "Teach me, daddy! "

Note: The concept of soul as used here is different from the one listed in Section 2.3.

That was a turning point of my life. I stopped programming my son to become like me. Instead, I started learning from him. When I started respecting him as a teacher, our relationship transformed into a beautiful partnership.

My daughter taught me about the power of music. She was born with an extreme condition of eczema. She was allergic to most foods, including mother's milk. Since birth, her entire skin had been covered with rashes, as if she was always uncomfortable in her body. She could not sleep on her own. Only music combined with touch and movement would relax her. Night after night, I would hold her in my arms walking around and singing.

This two-year routine of waking up at night and singing to my daughter took a major toll on my physical health. However, this intense process triggered another Kundalini awakening. This time the experience was not that of light, but of musical intelligence.

One day I heard a voice within me "What kind of a music teacher are you?" I used to teach music as a hobby. I used to have a qualifier for enrollment and would typically reject 80% of the prospective students because they were not "talented" enough. When I heard this question in an authoritative tone, I was perplexed. I didn't have an answer. This silent inner dialogue followed.

"How dare you reject my children?" the voice asked.
"Who are your children?"

"The students who came to learn music – you refused to teach them!"
"Oh! They are not talented."

"Music forms the core of this creation and exists within every being."
"Okay, but I do not know how to teach non-talented students."

"Then learn how to teach."

"I am listening."

"Teach Hatha Yoga."

"I am not an expert. How can I teach it?"

"Your understanding is good enough."

"Okay, will do."

"Teach breathing techniques."

"Okay, will do."

"Teach mantras."

"I don't know any."

"The names of the deities are mantras."

"I don't know which one to pick."

"Start with Narayana."

"Why?"

"You will understand once you practice yourself."

"Okay, will do."

"Teach geometric art, especially to kids."

"Why?"

"You will understand once you practice yourself."

"Okay, will do."

"I want you to start right away."

"Yes, next month."

I had no idea whose voice it was, but I knew it was coming from a powerful source. I sat down and designed a beginner level course in just a matter of minutes. I advertised the new course and within two weeks twenty new students signed up. Hmm! Where did they come from? This doubled the enrollment of my music school. I was wondering how to teach so many students while working at a full-time software job, which consumed a lot of my energy. Well, I didn't have to work out that problem. A much bigger problem manifested.

4.6 Flowering of Sound Intelligence

A month later, my work-stress related symptoms became worse. I was experiencing eye strain and anxiety for about six months. It felt as though all my learning related to software has been erased from my memory. I just could not understand anything. I felt really stupid and frustrated. I applied for medical leave. I was fatigued. However, I managed to continue teaching music and yoga. A month passed.

One day, while I was walking around my house, I perceived something projecting out of my third-eye (center of the forehead). Out came a three dimensional form, a radiant being surrounded by bright white light. His eyes were intense, emitting laser beams of white light. I recognized the form immediately. It was Mahavatar Babaji, the founder of the kriya yoga that I used to practice seven years ago. He was trying to communicate with me. But I was not paying attention. I was getting absorbed in that white light. I kept seeing him on and off for two days. Finally, I heard his message. He asked me to search on the Internet for "Babaji". So I did.

I found out that there is an emerging group of Kriya Yoga teachers (lead by Govindan M. Satchidananda) offering training in the "authentic" Kriya Yoga that they call "Babaji's Kriya Yoga". This system, developed by Babaji, consists of 144 kriyas (techniques) that are taught in three levels. I understood that Babaji was directing me to learn these techniques. After I planned my trip to California to take the level-1 training from Rudra Sivananda (a teacher from Satchidananda's organization), Babaji stopped appearing.

Two months later I was enrolled in the level-1 training program. I came to know that Babaji's Kriya Yoga consists of techniques from Hatha Yoga, Pranayama (breath control), Dhyana (meditation) and Mantra. Ding! That was a light bulb moment! Six months back, it was Babaji's voice instructing me how to teach music to non-talented students.

Analysis: Babaji is my own inner guide, the pure intelligence directing me towards itself. I gave this voice a form and a name, just so that I could relate with that intelligence and receive guidance to complete the enlightenment process.
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A couple of months later, I went to California again to receive the level-2 training. The hallmark of the level-2 training is a fire ceremony in which the teacher imparts a mantra of choice. I really welcomed the idea of choosing a mantra based on what was important at that point of time. By that time, my medical leave was almost used up. I knew that my career as a software engineer had come to an end. There was money, but no joy. It was very clear that my contribution to society in this lifetime was to teach music and yoga. Amidst my financial insecurities and warnings from "well-wishers", I decided to say goodbye to my software job. I started developing my hobby of teaching music into a business. I needed some "energetic" help to move in this new direction.

I chose the “Muruga/Subrahmanya” mantra, which is a “warrior” mantra. Since my cells were already in a very receptive state due to the regular practice of Hatha Yoga, Pranayama and Music, the power of the mantra started to unfold in just a matter of weeks. My health improved, moving me from a fatigued state to an energized state. I started looking more my age rather than looking ten years older. The mantra brought out my passion. I decided to pursue my interest in learning about my body, so I enrolled in an eight-month massage therapy certification program. I started to feel even younger when I started attending these classes.

The mantra brought out my creativity. I redesigned my entire music curriculum and made Hatha Yoga, Pranayama and Mantra mandatory for all levels of students. I threw away the traditional teaching methods and created my own. Although it was financially burdensome, I decided to lease an office space in a prime neighborhood, setting up the ground for a major research institution. Throughout the process I never had any doubts or fears. The mantra seemed to have erased all my doubts and fears.

Analysis: This mantra triggered another Kundalini awakening. This time it was business intelligence. I instantly knew how to run a business effortlessly and profitably.

Two years later, I attended Babaji’s Kriya yoga Level-3 training given by Govindan M. Satchidananda. As part of the training, I received a mantra to connect to Siddhar Thirumoolar. (Babaji’s Kriya yoga is a synthesis of the teachings of 18 siddhas and Thirumoolar is one of them.) As soon as I received the Thirumoolar mantra and started chanting it, I felt an explosion in my body. My whole head felt like fire. From the fire emerged the face of Siddhar Thirumoolar with a big smile. The rest of that day I received detailed instructions from him while I was practicing Hatha yoga. I felt as though he was next to me, whispering instructions into my ears. He was an incredible teacher.

After couple of weeks, while chanting the Thirumoolar mantra, I had a similar experience. This time, Siddhar Thirumoolar said, “I know your intense desire to learn the secrets of Naada (sound). I will teach you everything you are capable of learning. But first you have to accept me as your teacher and be prepared to follow my instructions. Are you ready to be my disciple?” With great excitement I said, “Yes!”

I started to receive new Naada Kriya Yoga techniques that I began to teach at my school. I also received an advanced Pranayama technique. Every time I practice this technique, I feel lighter and more energetic. I was inspired by Thirumoolar to start teaching Naada Kriya Yoga to little kids.

Analysis: The Thirumoolar mantra triggered another Kundalini awakening. This time it was sound intelligence and the intelligence to teach little kids.

4.7 The Climax of the Enlightenment Process

I was very attracted to the young spiritual teacher, Paramahansa Nithyananda, whose message came like a big wave, creating enormous interest in the local community. His interpretations of the spiritual texts were novel and crystal clear. He had designed very interesting techniques and courses for novice seekers. I explored his courses. A few people from my community left the town to join his newly created ashram in Los Angeles. I was very confused. Should I do the same? This desire (which was artificially created as a result of reading the "Autobiography of a Yogi" book) welled up strongly and started haunting me. A part of me wanted to join the ashram. A part of me was resisting it. Oh! It was torture. Then came the final lesson.

One day I was conducting a session on the power of mantras. At the end of the two-hour session, I noticed a major transformation in the audience. People's eyes were expressing tranquility and inner peace. There was no trace of stress. Lot of them had tears in their eyes. Their voices had become resonant and powerful. Awestruck by the impact of this session, I returned home.

My inner guru started the dialogue: "So, dear, who caused the transformation?" After pondering for a few moments, I replied confidently: "The sound of music."

"You produced the music, didn't you? So you caused the transformation, right?"
"No! I didn't, because my identity dissolved into the sound vibration. There was just vibration, an expression of pure intelligence. It so happened that the audience was receptive to that vibration."

"Then what is the big deal you are making about external human gurus? If one is receptive, pure intelligence manifests gurus everywhere."

I understood! My desire for an external guru just dropped dead.

A few months later, I was on a visit to the Himalayas.

"I know I am. Therefore I am."

These are the words that echoed in the mountains on the way to Gangotri. When I heard this statement I froze for several minutes. Then I contemplated on what this means. I realized that this is the ultimate truth and a most powerful statement. From this, I extrapolated a series of powerful statements.

"I know I am healthy. Therefore I am."

"I know I am rich. Therefore I am."

"I know I am creative. Therefore I am."

"I know I am a celestial musician. Therefore I am."

"I know I am consciousness. Therefore I am."

"I know I am bliss. Therefore I am."

The highlight of this trip was Gangotri. I spent the whole day watching the roaring Ganga River and the still mountains (Himachalas means “snow-capped still beings”). I understood the profoundest truth. The river cannot be created without the mountains. However the mountains are not creating the river – just by their standing still, the river is getting created. In the same way, my actions cannot occur without me. However I am not really performing these actions – just by my being still, these actions are occurring. This realization moved me into a new zone of awareness.

A few months later, on Oct 2, 2006, the day of the Vijayadasami festival, I realized that I am already the master of my own self and declared myself enlightened.

How can I prove that I am enlightened? I cannot. How do you know that I am enlightened? You do not. Only I know that I am enlightened, because it is my inner experience. Just like waves arising from and dissolving in the ocean, I watch as the numerous identities projected by me are created and destroyed. My awareness is at the depth of the ocean, not at the surface. From outside, I will continue to look the same. You can either choose to believe this or not. Your perception about me is irrelevant to your own enlightenment process. Your enlightenment process is affected by your belief in your own self.

Do I have miraculous powers? No, I don't. Actually I had only one power, but I lost it as a result of enlightenment. I had the power to cage myself ... infinite pure intelligence that is contained and finite is indeed a miracle!

Enlightenment marked the end of my unconscious journey and started me on a new, conscious journey. I consider myself new every moment.

4.8 Author's Expression

Just around the time I started practicing Babaji's Kriya Yoga, I enrolled in a “Professional Coach” certification program. The most important part of this program is a course called “Living Your Vision.” The highlight of this course was to create a vision statement and a purpose statement. The following statements emerged from me, and they accurately describe the expression of pure intelligence through my human embodiment. I choose to play the role of a researcher, teacher and a musician.

I am the
Eternally free spirit,
Whirlpool of stillness,
Laser beam of resonating sound, and
Gracefully flowing ocean of joy

My purpose is to be a quiet storm,
Permeating all with awareness, aliveness and joy