It is good to plant trees for many reasons. Of course, trees protect the earth. They offer us humans fresh pure oxygen in exchange for our poisonous carbon dioxide. They give us luscious fruits and often themselves as material to construct our dwellings. But for me planting trees is an exercise in understanding the evolutionary process.

Modern life creates a mind set which demands “quick fixes”. Instant coffee. Fast Food!" Samadhi at the touch of the Guru’s hand or with the glance of his eyes. Trees that grow and fruit in a day. The motto seems to be: Faster is better! About ten years ago I planted my first mango tree, and in that, a whole new vista opened on the evolutionary process.

First of all, thought it was presented as a sapling, just to protect it I kept it in a pot for more than nine months. I waited for monsoon and the new moon of the waxing phase. We meanwhile had nourished the ground for months into which it had been placed. Timing, preparation, the planting! A long, tedious process! Then, nothing! For months, even years, nothing is seen to change! The plant stays almost the same. But! It is busy! Busy building its roots! Well! Even then many years must pass, even a decade, before even a small fruit will appear!

So! Nature moves very slowly! Yet, Yoga is the science of living harmoniously with nature. Skillful living! So, at every step the spirit is nurtured! Still, it takes time! Still it demanded patience! Daily we wait for efforts to fruitful.

There is no pushing and shoving in this process!

Many years scriptures describe the stages of spiritual unfolding. Traditionally, especially in regard to Pranayama, but the same idea could be used in other Sadhana as well, there are four stages of Attainment.

1. **Arambha Avastha**: At the beginning, the Sadhana is practiced to destroy all obstacles and sins. This is **Arambha Avastha**, beginning or the first stage. At this stage, during the practice the body of the yogi begins to perspire. When it perspires one should rub it well with the hands. Physical trembling also occurs.

2. **Ghata Avastha**: Ghata Avastha is the second stage, which is acquired by practice. When perfect union takes place between Prana and Apana, Manas and Buddhi or Jivatman and Paramatman without opposition, it is called **Ghata Avastha. Pratyahara** is natural in this stage. This is described as: “Whatever he sees with this eyes, let him consider as atman. Whatever he hears with his ears, let him consider as atman. Whatever he smells with his nose, let him consider as atman. Whatever he tastes with his tongue, let him consider as atman. Whatever the Yogi touches with his skin, let him consider a s atman.”

3. **Parichaya Avastha**: Then by such constant practice, the third state is gained. In the **parichaya avastha**, the kundalini is pierced by along breath and agni through thought, and enters the sushumna along with prana. It reaches the Sushumna. The practitioner then acquires the power of action, **Kriya Shakti**, and pierces through the six chakras and reaches the secure condition of Parichaya. The multitude of Karmas are destroyed by the Pranava (Aum). Five **Tattwa Dharanas** or five forms of concentration by which command over the five elements is gained is possible in this stage.

4. **Nishpatti Avastha**: **Nishpatti Avastha** is the fourth stage. This state of consummation is reached through graduated practice. All the seeds of Karma are destroyed. The Yogi needs any Yogic technical practice for is in Samadhi.

This is a very brief description of the slow, gradual stages of the unfolding of consciousness. The growth, like that of a mango tree, is slow and much of it occurs unseen, like the roots under the ground. But, one will understand that growth is occurring by measuring oneself against these four guidelines land down by the ancients.