

## **An Experience of Bliss**

From *Home at Last; a Journey Toward Higher Consciousness*

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On a hot summer's day I was sitting under my favorite meditation tree in my backyard in Princeton, New Jersey. I was comfortable on my familiar bamboo stool like those used in India, because I've never enjoyed twisting myself into the so-called lotus position, cross-legged on a bare floor, during long hours of meditation. Indeed, I disliked meditating on a floor at all, preferring to sit outdoors as often as possible, even in the chill New Jersey winters, because of my intense connection with nature that extends back as far as I can remember into early childhood. Being in nature always helps me gain entry to a state of relaxed tranquility, at one with sun and sky, grass and trees. Usually it's cool enough in my yard during summer, but on this particular day it was excruciatingly hot—at least 90 degrees, with very high humidity. Such intense humidity can be so unpleasant that it's nearly impossible to carry on outdoor activities, although I'm not sure that meditation qualifies as an "activity."

Although I had been debating whether or not to stay indoors on such a blistering day, I finally chose to go outside under my tree despite the uncomfortable weather. And no sooner had I sat down than I felt a cool breeze passing through the yard that continued to blow over me during my entire meditation. This puzzled me, because I could not see even one leaf or branch moving on any of the surrounding trees or bushes, which remained as still as could be. Even as I sank into my quietude, I could not tell where that breeze came from, but I was feeling blessed and happy on my small bamboo stool.

My daily meditations had been progressing rapidly, to the point where I could now feel surplus energy rushing through my body and being drawn upward by the equivalent of a powerful magnet. When this had started happening a few weeks prior, I was rendered so absolutely still that I felt as though I'd been incapacitated. As I had entered into a deeper realm of consciousness than ever before, I experienced a heaviness that was different from my earlier meditative states. The heaviness in my head signaled that the vital energy of my entire system was finally reaching its destination at the crown chakra. The ancient Sanskrit

name of this energy center means “thousand-petaled,” describing the multicolored fountains of light said to shoot from the cranium at the moment the inner energy completes its long journey upward from the base of the spine.

Today as I continued sitting, I felt like a conscious spectator watching the flow of energy, my awareness increasing and expanding exponentially in all directions. My normal field of vision disappeared, and yet everything looked as clear as if I were seeing through what we call the third eye between the two brows. I felt an intense vibration and steady pressure and my mind became quiet—but not through any effort of mine. Instead, “it” quieted itself and moved to a different dimension all on its own, and I felt as though I were in a plane that was being flown on automatic pilot. The subjective stillness I experienced was aware of itself and alive, yet without any conscious thoughts that I could verbalize. In a sense, my mind—by which I mean the accustomed flow of cognitive, rational processes—no longer existed as I had known it. It had simply stepped back and was playing no role beyond observing and understanding wordlessly.

Along with a new, deeper sense of clarity and focus, I felt a distinct relaxation of the whole system; something inside had finally freed itself from carrying a heavy burden and was being released. In that moment the realization came that I am not my body, that I am never actually *in* the body, and that what I was calling the body was merely the densest form of materialized consciousness. I could perceive it as nothingness, emptiness, void, or infinite space—names that I had read often but until now had never really comprehended.

After some time in this state I experienced a profound sense of quiet and stability, as if a huge storm had at last calmed down. The internal visual field I perceived with my eyes closed looked soothing, like the sky at dusk. Immediately after this, the clear light of a bright golden sphere displayed itself surrounding a smaller, opal-blue sphere, each sphere appearing in sequence. This double sphere of light did not remain fixed at first, but seemed to waver. With continued meditation practice in the months to come it would last longer and its clarity would become sharper, the distinct bright gold encircling a glorious dark blue sphere. But even at this early stage I had no doubt that the spheres represented our inner Divinity revealing itself to me.

I had read that meditation properly done tends to compel a normally silent region in the brain into an astonishing level of activity that galvanizes the nervous system like an

electric current. The result is said to be something that we can never experience in ordinary consciousness, and surely the vision I was having was so full of life that I couldn't compare it to any visual experience from the past. As I focused more and more intently and my concentration grew deeper, the light disappeared, and immediately the unmistakable color of the sky at dusk spread in all directions. This back-and-forth fluctuation went on until the field became homogeneous and I felt as if I were staring at the sky itself—as though I had merged into this expansion of energy, as though we are all nothing *but* energy. I had become completely submerged in the natural, primordial state, where I was sure of the Divinity and felt the presence of universal consciousness appearing as one continuous spectrum.

At that point I recalled the Tibetan Buddhist view that consciousness is composed of multiple shades, bands, or levels—not separate layers but more like mutually interpenetrating forms of energy, from the finest all-radiating, all-pervading, luminous consciousness down to the densest form of materialized awareness, which appears to us as our physical body. Once we reach this higher field, nothing disturbs it. Obstacles or outside forces of nature such as wind, rain, heat, and snow do not have any impact on the field, and it remains calm and unchanging. The deep inner peace and tranquility that results is not affected after we have entered the void, and so I felt I could stay there for any length of time, liberated from the bondage of my outer form. The freedom and peace that emanated from this dimension made me indifferent to my own body and my sense organs. Once I achieved this state of utter stillness, absolutely nothing bothered me.

And so, throughout several hours in the 90-degree heat and high humidity, I remained comfortable the whole time. And at the end of my meditation I felt refreshed and looked down to see not even a drop of sweat anywhere on my body or clothing. I thanked the Divine for creating the breeze that seemed to keep me cool and refreshed under my tree, even though I still could not see a single leaf in the adjoining trees move in the air. I thanked the tree that I sat under, because I believe that when we are in tune with nature, it helps us whenever we need help. It is simply a matter of believing that we are all one.

After being immersed in the peace and energy of utmost silence for a long time, I stood, picked up my bamboo stool, and returned to the noisy outer life in which I continued to play my given role. Walking back into my home, I grabbed a few oranges to squeeze my daily fresh juice and a ripe banana from the kitchen table—the first things I feed my system

to start the day. But on this day after drinking my juice, and as I was still eating the banana, I was suddenly transported back to a time when I was six years old and living with my parents in a small town in India near New Delhi.

I saw a small girl sitting on the front fender of a bicycle (the only form of transportation there) being peddled by her father. He picked her up every day from a nearby English medium convent school, a private Catholic school run by nuns and the only school where English was taught. The students came from different religious backgrounds, and so the nuns emphasized teaching English rather than Catholicism. Every day the girl's father dropped her off and picked her up from the school on his bicycle, and as he was peddling home, the first thing she would ask was whether she could have a banana from one of the many small stores along the way. Bananas were her favorite treat, and the variety was astonishing, so she immensely enjoyed choosing a different type each day during her ride home. The wide diversity of bananas may seem odd to anyone who has grown up in the West, especially in North America and Europe, which are usually limited to the yellow and occasionally red varieties that all taste pretty much the same. But in India bananas were available with different textures to both the skin and the flesh, and great variation in the thickness of the peel itself. Some of the smaller bananas had skins resembling onions; some tasted sweeter than others and had a unique flavor. So perhaps it wasn't so strange that the girl always asked for a banana instead of the other snacks that were available from the shops along the way. Fruits had always been her favorite food anyway, and it was such a simple request that no father could say no, and he stopped each day to buy a few bananas from a shop and give one to his daughter.

This book is about that little girl who loves bananas and enjoyed the simple routine life she had led in India until she came to the United States to rejoin her parents. It is also about the inner journey that eventually brings us all to the ultimate understanding of life and its purpose. *Home At Last* explains in plain language how an average individual can reach the ultimate state of union with all of life. That union is the purpose and the ultimate goal of human existence. We are all in the same boat; it is as simple as that.

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Some readers may feel that the account with which this chapter began describes an extraordinary state of consciousness that they would never be able to achieve. Yet I urge you

not to stop here. Reaching higher states of consciousness is a long process that does require a strong commitment, but anything is possible when you persist, and it is definitely worth the effort. After more than nine years of practicing, I have come to believe that intensive meditation is the truest path to realization or enlightenment. However, my purpose in writing this book is to show that anyone who is ready and has reached a certain point in their evolutionary growth certainly would be able to open the door toward higher states of consciousness.

As I say this, I'm aware that some people may question my remarks, insisting that other paths can also be effective. I would agree, although I do feel that meditation is the most direct path to Self-realization. Other routes, such as the path of love and devotion for God, known as Bhakti Yoga, or the way to God through selfless actions and service called Karma Yoga, will eventually bring you to realization. Yet I believe that those paths will take much longer, perhaps many lifetimes, before you can experience Enlightenment. When I discuss meditation in more depth in a subsequent chapter, I will note that all of the world's great spiritual masters practiced some form of meditation, whether or not they taught it explicitly to their followers. And it is likely that the meditation derived from traditions such as Buddhism, Christianity, Sufism, and Kabbalah also lead to realization. But because I have not practiced those traditions I can't speak from that experience. I can speak only about the form and method of meditation that I have practiced that brought me to my own realization.

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One thing I believe without question is that by wholeheartedly implementing some simple guidelines in your daily life, you will greatly increase your progress on your spiritual journey. Everything I describe throughout this book I have practiced meticulously during my own journey, and each of these principles and techniques became habit-forming over time. The guidelines I'll provide below will help you build the awareness and stamina you need to reach higher states while maintaining a daily life that may consist of holding a job or profession, raising a family, and struggling through all the normal trials of life that most people endure.

After implementing these easy, effective guidelines, which have been practiced by many great sages and saints, your meditations will progress and you will be able to shift your

consciousness to higher levels. This in turn will lead to more subtle perceptions and help you to achieve physical, mental, and emotional harmony.

### **Simple tips for Your Progress**

1. Keep your body clean and healthy by nourishing it with proper food and exercise. For most people this means eating less meat and more fruits and vegetables, and consuming more liquids, especially water. This way you will expend less energy in digestion, which will help you to conserve your inner energy for the goal you have set out to accomplish.
2. Get restful sleep that will allow your body to heal itself of any ailments and leave you refreshed with plenty of energy for the spiritual work ahead of you. Sufficient sleep is just as important as proper food and exercise as your system becomes rejuvenated.
3. Try to spend more time with outdoor activities so that you are exposed to sun daily. This is the best way to keep your body supplied with essential Vitamin D as well as the cosmic energy that the sun provides.
4. Decrease inessential activities and overall busyness. You may need to carry out the household chores associated with raising a family, as well as the work associated with your job, but you can cut down on unnecessary time spent watching TV, surfing the Web, sending e-mail, and other electronic activities. Some of these may be essential for your work, but it's surprising how many hours we spend with inessential entertainment.
5. Involve yourself with some kind of spiritual activity daily, such as reading spiritual books or scriptures, doing yoga, praying, listening to spiritual discourses, and even attending retreats and spiritual workshops. This will open the door toward higher dimension of your consciousness.
6. Complete all your daily tasks prior to meditation. Do not give your mind a chance to be distracted by all the tasks that still need to be done.

7. Create a location to sit quietly each day even if only for a few minutes. It is preferable to meditate at the *same time and in the same place*, which allows you to increase the amount of time you can spend sitting in meditation each day. Some people meditate for a few minutes when they first wake up and just before they go to sleep at night.
8. Increase your vital energy, also called *prana*, by doing deep breathing at least 5 minutes before starting to meditate. This calms the mind and prepares the way for meditation. (I'll give detailed guidance on deep breathing techniques in a subsequent chapter.)
9. Find a Guru or a teacher who resonates with you, and stick to that one without constantly shopping around. Use the tools your teacher gives you on a steady basis.
10. Never let yourself get disappointed or frustrated with your efforts to the extent that you want to give up. Be patient and understand that the process will take time and can't be achieved overnight.

In following all of the tips I have just laid out for you, focus above all on your desire to know the Truth. The intensity of your longing for Divine union is the propelling force that moves you forward. I cannot emphasize enough how determined I was to continue my daily meditations despite the difficulties. This determination will help you move forward more rapidly on your path.

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