

The Light Breaks Forth

August 17

The ineffable transition came, about ten days ago.

We had just returned to our Southern California home after a few weeks' stay in a small town in the Mother Lode country in the northern part of the State, and I was resting from the fatigue induced by the all-night driving of the automobile. At the time, I was engaged in the reading of portions of "The System of the Vedanta" by Paul Deussen, as I had been doing more or less systematically during the preceding three weeks. This work is an interpretation in western philosophic form of the Vedanta as it is developed in the commentaries of Shankara on the Brahmasutras. I had been led to this specific program of reading through the realization that Shankara's words had peculiar power, at least in my own experience. For some time I had spontaneously looked to him as to a Guru* with whom I was in complete sympathetic accord. I had found him always clear and convincing, at least in all matters relative to the analysis of consciousness, while with the other Sages I either found obscurities or emphases with which I could not feel complete sympathy. For some months I had resolved to delve more deeply into the thought of Shankara, in so far as it was available in translated form. It was in pursuance of this purpose that I was slowly reading and meditating upon "The System of the Vedanta."

I had been following this course while completing a cross-cut in a gold-prospect near the small town of Michigan Bluff. Much of this time I was completely alone and was more than usually successful in penetrating the meaning and following the logic of what I was reading. One day, after the evening meal and while still sitting at the table, I found that, by gradual transition, I had passed into a very delightful state of contemplation. The actual content of the thought of that period is forgotten, but as I made careful note of the state I was in and submitted it to close scrutiny, the quality of the state was well impressed upon my memory. My breath had changed, but not in the sense of stopping or becoming extremely

*'Guru' is a Sanskrit term carrying the meaning of spiritual Teacher.

slow or rapid. It was, perhaps, just a little slower than normal. The notable change was in a subtle quality associated with the air breathed. Over and above the physical gases of the air there seemed to be an impalpable substance of indescribable sweetness which, in turn, was associated with a general sense of well-being, embracing even the physical man. It was like happiness or joy, but these words are inadequate. It was of a very gentle quality, yet far transcended the value of any of the more familiar forms of happiness. It was quite independent of the beauty or comfort of the environment. At that time the latter was, to say the least, austere and not in any sense attractive. This quality, associated with the air, I had, in a smaller measure, previously experienced at high altitudes in the mountains, but in the present instance the altitude was only 1800 feet and the air was far from invigorating, due to the period being exceptionally warm. However, introspective analysis revealed the fact that the elixir-like quality was most marked during the exhalation, thus indicating that it was not derived from the surrounding air. Further, the exhaled breath was not simply air expelled into the outer atmosphere, but seemed to penetrate down through the whole organism like a gentle caress, leaving throughout a quiet sense of delight. It seemed to me like a nectar. Since that time I have learned that it is the true Ambrosia.

It is, perhaps, pertinent to note in passing that a few days previously, as a result of thought stimulated by my readings, I had developed an interpretation of the nature of ponderable matter that seemed to me to clear away certain logical difficulties which always have seemed to persist in the efforts to reconcile Transcendent Being with the physical universe. The idea is that ponderable matter—meaning by that term all things sensed whether gross or subtle—is, in fact, a relative absence of substance, a sort of partial vacuum. At the present time I shall not develop the evidence and logic supporting this idea, though this was outlined in my consciousness during the days following the origin of it. The significant point in connection with the present record is the effect this idea had upon my own consciousness. It seems to have had a vital part in clearing the way for the Illumination that came later. This effect was produced in the following manner: Habitually we regard the material filling of sensation as being substantial. To offset this, we may have been theoretically convinced that so-called empty space is not only filled, but actually more substantial than the portions of it occupied by ponderable matter. This idea is not new to metaphysics, and much in the literature of modern physics is not incompatible with it. But I have found that ideas

received from outer sources, even though in convincing form, lack the power over consciousness possessed by an original idea.* *The effect of this idea with me was a far more effective acceptance of substantial reality where the senses reported emptiness, and a greater capacity to realize unreality—or merely dependent and derivative reality—in the material given through the senses.*

There are further prior pertinent factors which, it seems, should be noted. About eighteen months ago there began a series of conversations with one whom I recognized as a Sage. I checked the validity of my recognition of this One in every way that I could and proved His genuineness to my complete satisfaction. I acted on His word when I could not see clearly and found that clarity gradually unfolded. Acting upon His suggestions, Sherifa—my wife—and I undertook a phase of public work not hitherto attempted. Both of us found as we progressed in the work a gradual growth of understanding that has steadily brought Light where there had been obscurity. Among other things this Sage suggested my correlation with a previous incarnation of special importance. He advised me that He was not, and could not be, my personal Guru, as that relationship was dependent upon alignments that are not arbitrary.

In the past, two important Recognitions have come to me. First, nearly fourteen years ago, in a setting which it is not necessary to delineate, I suddenly recognized “I am Atman.” This effected important changes of outlook that persisted. Second, less than one year ago, while engaged in the public work mentioned above, and while deeply interested in a book giving a report of a living Indian Sage, I also suddenly recognized that Nirvana is not a field, or space, or world which one entered and that contained one as space might contain an external object, but rather that “I am identical with Nirvana, and always have been and always will be so.” This Recognition likewise had its persistent effects upon the personal consciousness.

We are now ready to return to the Recognition of ten days ago. I say “Recognition” rather than “experience” for a very definite reason. Properly it was not a case of experiential knowledge, which is knowledge from the senses whether gross or subtle, nor knowledge from deduction, though both forms, particularly the latter, have helped in a subsidiary sense. It was an Awakening to a Knowledge which I can best

*By ‘original’ I do not mean an idea that has never been thought before, but one which, for the individual, has been produced with a creative effort from himself.

represent by calling it Knowledge through Identity and thus the process—in so far as we can speak of process in this connection at all—is best expressed by the word “Recognition.”

I had been sitting in a porch swing, reading as previously stated. Ahead of the sequence in the book, I turned to the section devoted to “Liberation,” as I seemed to feel an especial hunger for this. I covered the material quickly and it all seemed very clear and satisfactory. Then, as I sat afterward dwelling in thought upon the subject just read, suddenly it dawned upon me that a common mistake made in the higher meditation—i.e., meditation for Liberation—is the seeking for a subtle object of Recognition, in other words, something that could be experienced. Of course, I had long known the falseness of this position theoretically, yet had failed to recognize it. (Here is a subtle but very important distinction.) At once, I dropped expectation of having anything happen. Then, with eyes open and no sense stopped in functioning—hence no trance—I abstracted the subjective moment—the “I AM” or “Atman” element—from the totality of the objective consciousness manifold. Upon this I focused. Naturally, I found what, from the relative point of view, is Darkness and Emptiness. *But I Realized It as Absolute Light and Fullness and that I was That.* Of course, I cannot tell what IT was in Its own nature. The relative forms of consciousness inevitably distort non-relative Consciousness. Not only can I not tell this to others, I cannot even contain it within my own relative consciousness, whether of sensation, feeling, or thought. Every metaphysical thinker will see this impossibility at once. I was even prepared not to have the personal consciousness share in this Recognition in any way. But in this I was happily disappointed. Presently I felt the Ambrosia-quality in the breath with the purifying benediction that it casts over the whole personality, even including the physical body. I found myself above the universe, not in the sense of leaving the physical body and being taken out in space, but in the sense of being above space, time, and causality. My karma seemed to drop away from me as an individual responsibility. I felt intangibly, yet wonderfully, free. I sustained this universe and was not bound by it. Desires and ambitions grew perceptibly more and more shadowy. All worldly honors were without power to exalt me. Physical life seemed undesirable. Repeatedly, through the days that followed, I was in a state of deep brooding, thinking thoughts that were so abstract that there were no concepts to represent them. I seemed to comprehend a veritable library of Knowledge, all less concrete than the most abstract mathematics. The personality rested in a gentle glow of happiness, but while it was

very gentle, yet it was so potent as to dull the keenest sensuous delight. Likewise the sense of world-pain was absorbed. I looked, as it were, over the world, asking: "What is there of interest here? What is there worth doing?" I found but one interest: the desire that other souls should also realize this that I had realized, for in it lay the one effective key for the solving of their problems. The little tragedies of men left me indifferent. I saw one great Tragedy, the cause of all the rest, the failure of man to realize his own Divinity. I saw but one solution, the Realization of this Divinity.

Since that day I have been repeatedly in the Current of Ambrosia. Often I turn to It with the ease of a subtle movement of thought. Sometimes It breaks out spontaneously. Thought and bodily action can be continued in It, provided a subtle kind of inner concentration is not broken. But consciousness focused in action, whether intellectual or physical, stops the Current. The presence of some people affects It adversely, while that of others does not. The effect on the body is interesting. The after-effect of this surprisingly gentle Current, with all Its exquisite delight, is a feeling of intangible tiredness in the body, somewhat like that which would be experienced after a period of protracted pain. Physical effort is difficult. The reason for this seems to be evident. One effect of the Current is clearly purifying, and this action upon the matter of the body is something of an ordeal. There is no emotional nor intellectual discomfort, save that without the Current the world seems barren.

I am studying the effect of the Current upon others. Sherifa is immediately responsive to It and recognizes Its presence, at times even before I do. It will grip an audience, but those who have heretofore given recognition to a consciousness of substantially lower quality do not seem to be aware of the Ambrosia.* Perhaps It is too subtle.

August 20

On the evening of the 17th we attended a musical concert at the Hollywood Bowl. The audience was extremely large. During the early part of the program I had a sense of the crowd as an enormous weight upon

*At the present date, almost two and one-half years after writing the above, this statement must be strongly modified. After two intervening seasons on the lecture platform combined with several personal contacts, it has been clearly determined that a surprising number of individuals are susceptible to the Current. In some natures it is quite readily induced.

consciousness. It was so heavy I could not pierce through it. Later, during the performance of certain Bach selections there was a distinct easing up of the weight and a mild tingling along the spine. Consciousness did rise in some measure, but not to the level of the Current.

On the 19th we returned home. I felt deeply tired and was unable to rise in consciousness. It seems that the inward penetration does make some demand upon the body. Life without the Elixir has become more empty than it was before the Current was first experienced. Mere external affairs utterly fail to hold my interest.

The conditions of town life seem definitely adverse to holding consciousness within the Current of Bliss. Driving an automobile in traffic is particularly inimical. The reason seems quite clearly to be that under these conditions it is much more difficult to hold the inner concentration unbroken. To steer a way through the outer confusion requires objective concentration. I, at least, cannot yet move through these conditions with safety by giving only a peripheral attention to them. Perhaps it may be possible to establish the correlation so that it will hold under these adverse conditions, but the demand upon the vital strength is severe.

August 22

Late yesterday afternoon I awakened again to the deeper Consciousness, though not so profoundly as upon the first occasion. The immediate inducing cause was the reading of a portion of Shankara's "Direct Realization." The inciting occasion each time seems to be a new turn in Recognition, combined with a certain creative act of the relative consciousness. The moment of creative discovery is the crucial one. There is then a deepening of consciousness, a sort of retreat of the relative world, in a subtle sense, and then the quality of Bliss flows over the personality. From a profound level thought is stimulated, or, perhaps more correctly, fed.

Throughout this whole period I am engaged in thought of a degree of profundity unprecedented in my previous experience. While, in one sense, the "I AM" is the uttermost of simplicity, yet there is invoked along with the direct presence of It a new view of the universe that requires to be thought through and the elaborations in this thought are greater than those that I have known heretofore. There is so much to be made clear in thought that there is hardly time to give it expression. There is also a difference in the thought-level. In the past, I seemed, in

general, to reach deeper when putting forth the effort to express myself, particularly in writing. Now expression seems more a reaching downward into forms that are inadequate. My inward thought seems clearer in its relative formlessness than when I give it formulation, yet formerly it seemed to me that I could express myself almost beyond my genuine understanding. I have to resist a certain boredom in the effort to give expression. I can understand why the plans of learned men to compose systems sometimes fail to materialize when they break through to Liberation. The objective effort seems too poor in its results. However, the expression is needed, and it is necessary that the work be done.

I find that there is a decided intellectual enrichment, but the outer sensuous life is poorer, at the present time. Does this latter fact constitute a danger to the body? The tide of physical life does run perceptibly lower. How is physical interest, never strong with me, to be cultivated so that the body will take on more virility? Disgust with the external world does help toward Liberation, but it is a barrier to the assertion of the continued will-to-live. Yet this is necessary if one is to carry on among men. I foresee the possibility that will without desire may prove to be an overly severe asceticism.

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We have been practicing meditation each evening. I have aimed at the segregation of the subjective factor in consciousness. I have allowed meditation with the eyes closed. S. reported heavy sleepiness and L. nodded in her chair. I think we will have to work with the eyes open. The reason for this is becoming clear. The sensory field of the eye is stronger than that of any of the other senses. With the eyes open, waking consciousness continues stronger than otherwise. Permitting the objective consciousness to continue through its own automatism, the point will be to concentrate on the subjective moment. It would seem that this should correlate Realization more effectively with the personal consciousness. It is not enough to reach the Self in sleep.

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I seem to be dreaming more than I have in a long time. Much of this dreaming seems to be a reviewing of events connected with the past, although the scenes and the events are transformed so that they are not photographic reproductions of the physical originals. There also seems

to be a continuation of the trains of thought that were started during the waking state. The dreams are quite lacking in sensual intrigue, but are more the nature of a dispassionate reviewing of events, scenes, and ideas.

Night before last the outline of a plan for another book or two developed in my consciousness. The principal one* of these would be on the subject of "Recognition," the plan to be a development of the process of knowledge, tied in with the present philosophic thought, and then to have the emphasis placed upon the extraction of the subjective moment in consciousness. The theoretical part would not be new, but along with this there would be a new value afforded by reason of its being written from the perspective of an actual Recognition. It would aim to show that "Recognition" is the practical end implicit in our own best philosophy. It could be shown that to *Realize* the "pure apperception" of Kant is to attain Recognition and Liberation.

August 26

The force of physical life is running higher today, but it is far from being really vigorous.

I am exploring a new world. There is so much which requires to be thought into clarity that there seems not to be time enough for the writing, setting aside all more external activities. But it is necessary that a record should be kept as far as the inner events and ideas can be captured. My thought is extraordinarily clear. An increasing amount of it is now within the range of formulation, but my actual thought is in the form of a sort of shorthand which takes much less time than the completed expression on paper or the spoken word. The writing process seems so slow! I shall place down what I can in this record as the material comes to the foreground, leaving systematic formulation to the future.

* Several ideas that are properly a part of such a proposed work subsequently became incorporated in this volume. They are introduced here in the sequence in which they were actually born into formulation.