

CHAPTER EXCERPTS

Our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lay potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence, but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch, they are there in their completeness. No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded.

William James

CHAPTER ONE THE ASHRAM, 1989

.....this new pace of expansion and comprehension was almost unbelievable, and I remember feeling very excited about it. For after so many years of study, experience, small tastes, false leads, and hopes for a permanent-concrete experience of the divine, I began to realize that if things kept going the way they were going, I was going to arrive at something very big before the month was over. I still wasn't sure what that might be. But referring back to my previous experiences, readings, and studies and cross-referencing all that information with these experiences, it was impossible not to realize that something unique was starting to unfold in my practice.

It was beginning to feel as if I were in the daily process of compressing a year's worth of experience, learning, and psychological growth into one day. Imagine, learning everything you learned in your tenth, twentieth, or fortieth year of existence in a single day! Then imagine that entire process of perception and learning expanding and speeding up at a breathtaking pace into previously unimagined levels of intelligence and wisdom.

I was amazed not only by what I was experiencing but by the speed it was unfolding. I had planned this merely as a time of rest and rejuvenation, but now, due to all that I was doing, I was finding myself in a world that was expanding, accelerating, and changing at a maddening pace. It excited me, it soothed me, it charmed me, and day-by-day it lured me further into a new world of exciting possibilities.

With every meditation now, I completely left this relative world behind, diving deep down into previously unexplored states of consciousness, entering a whole new world of information and experience. It felt as if I were some sort of “spiritual miner” going down a long, dark mine shaft, past normal thought and awareness into the unexplored bowels of the earth (my unexplored soul, unconscious mind, and beyond).

Once there, I discovered incredible hidden kingdoms, not rooms or shafts, but broad, vast, brilliant kingdoms of unexpected great light, peace, soul expansion, and intuitive sacred knowledge. And it all lay within me! In fact, it had always been there silently waiting but unexplored due to my ignorance of its existence and the lack of a proper method of exploration. But now that I had the knowledge of its existence and a way to explore it, I was not going to miss the precious opportunity that was being presented to me.

Another good analogy of what was happening would be that of living in a seemingly flat city your entire life and one day coming upon a gigantic skyscraper. Getting into the elevator and going up to the second or third floor, one would get a completely new perspective of the city in which they lived. If one went up to the sixth floor the next day and the twentieth floor the day after that, one’s perspective would become much broader, much fuller still. But not only regarding one’s own city, but also everything that was beyond that city that had never been known to exist. It was the very concrete experience of moving beyond mere horizontal information, knowledge, and its structure, as we know it, and into a new vertical source of direct realization and intuitive knowledge, merging with it and returning to a brand-new world!

As the hand held before the eye conceals the greatest mountain, so the little earthly life hides from the glance the enormous lights and mysteries of which the world is full. And he, who can draw it away from before his eyes, as one draws a hand, beholds the great shining of inner worlds.

Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav

CHAPTER TWO CHIAPAS, MEXICO, 1998

I am in a small *colectivo* (public transportation) surrounded by diminutive, quiet, dark-skinned, Spanish-speaking Mayan Indians. There are about twelve of us crammed into the *colectivo*, and we are slowly climbing up a pine-covered mountain as we weave back and forth, in and out of a cool, thick fog. Every fifteen minutes, we pass a group of twenty or so Indigenous pilgrims in traditional dress carrying lit torches, carrying banners, carrying portraits of the Holy Virgin. They are running up the mountain barefoot, confident in their faith. A light breeze sneaks in through the partially opened window. I close my eyes; I try to sleep, I try to forget.

One hour later we arrive in the town of San Cristobal de Las Casas, colonial gem of Mexico's most southern state of Chiapas. Founded almost 500 years ago, it is now home to 90,000 Mayan, *Mestizo*, (people of combined European and Native American descent) and various wandering souls. Two hours north of the Guatemalan border, it sits elegantly perched 7,500 feet high in a deep, green bowl surrounded by the steep, pine-clad Southern Sierra Mountains. It is mid-morning, the fog has lifted, the sun is shining, and all is infused with a high mountain vitality, freshness, and purity.

At the bus station on the outskirts of town, I flag down one of the numerous darting taxis and ease into the front seat as we weave through the tight corridors and colonial architecture of San Cristobal. We travel twelve blocks towards the center of town and then arrive at number fifty-two, Calle Real de Guadalupe.

Exiting the taxi with my bag, I step into a kaleidoscope of swirling color, noise, and activity. Without knowing it, I have landed in the middle of the once-a-year Virgin de Guadalupe *Fiesta*. Streamers, banners, and flags flutter and fly overhead leading the six blocks eastward to the church of the Virgin of Guadalupe while the street itself is jammed with Mayan Indians, Mexicans, and international tourists. Skyrockets explode above, firecrackers sizzle and crackle at every turn and the music from more than half a dozen nearby super-sound systems combine to create a never-ending, ever-increasing wall of noise.

All around confetti is falling like rain, while down below dogs are barking, and *mariachi* bands are parading up and down the street blasting out traditional songs and anthems as the bells of half a dozen nearby churches ring without end. Mexicans, Europeans, Americans, and Mayan Indians from the villages surrounding San Cristobal all mix and mingle together amidst the music, drinking, and dancing to create a lively, bubbling, pulsating scene of color, laughter, and excitement. To me, it all seems like a homecoming, a grand *fiesta* to celebrate my humble arrival in this ancient city of conquistadors.

Crossing the street, I weave my way through the crowd and enter La Posada Casa Real, where I rent a modest room for thirty *pesos*. This *posada*, (guest house) constructed more than 200 years ago, used to be an elegant colonial home. But time, business and economy have forced it to its knees and transformed it into a mere tourist hotel. Four rooms on the first floor, five more upstairs, each level supporting its own plant covered, sun-drenched terrace with a view of the surrounding mountains, it still holds its head up high. I find my room, stow my gear, and then retreat down the stairs and out into the wild street scene once again.

The street is now even more packed than it was when I first arrived. The combined volume of music, rockets, and bells ringing has increased as well. It is almost impossible to pass but somehow, I manage to squeeze, dart, and duck my way westward through the crowd and away from the *fiesta*. Four blocks later, the crowd greatly thinned, I arrive at the *Zōcalo* (town square) and a diminished level of hoopla. Turning right at the *Zōcalo*,

I find and follow Avenue General Urtrilla northward to another church, the *fiesta* now but a faint rumble in the distance. Four blocks later, I arrive at the Santa Domingo church and convent complex.

There are no unnatural or supernatural phenomena, only very large gaps in our knowledge of what is natural...we should strive to fill those gaps of ignorance.

Edgar Mitchell, Apollo astronaut

CHAPTER THREE THE ASHRAM, 1989

.....and those about me began to notice the difference too! Daily, as I went about my normal interactions with the other members of the ashram, people began to say they noticed a certain glow or radiance coming from me, something far beyond the normal range.

I simply could not believe that I, Eric Bullard, from Portland, Oregon, was realizing such lofty heights of awareness so suddenly. What was happening to me was usually reserved for great seers and sages hidden away in remote Himalayan caves, not for young sales executives on a one-month retreat. I was humbled, honored, amazed, and to tell the truth, a little bit scared. Was I ready for all of this? Was I going too fast? Should I really be going this far? Was all this safe to be experiencing?

But by that time, it was too late to turn back. In fact, nothing was further from my mind. The light force I was receiving through the base of my spine had grown to such a degree that I was now completely charmed, overwhelmed, and dominated by it. I had become its servant, a willing servant yes, but still a servant.

Doors and channels were being thrown open inside of me now as the light force pleasantly roared into me and then raced out again through my solar plexus and facial area as still more energy poured into me at the base of my spine. It was an overwhelming flood of rapture, excitement and at the same time, deep peace that was racing through me, removing all obstacles and then flowing out again. It simply would not be denied.

That feeling of sacredness I had begun to experience during the first week of the course continued to expand, and I began to feel on an incredibly deep, intimate, personal level the complete sacredness of all life: everyone and everything. I realized that this thing that we were all living together, this thing called “life,” in all its variety, suffering, boredom, struggle, sometimes happy, sometimes sad, sometimes good, sometimes bad, was absolutely sacred on a scale of gigantic proportions. And in realizing that, every single thing, act, and word now began to be seen and realized as part of the sacred, hallowed journey of being a human being: wholeness becoming the fragmentation of human experience and the mistake of the intellect and then the process of fighting, learning, and struggling to get back to that same wholeness.

It was that sense of “I” as an individual that was the root cause of all my problems, anxieties, insecurities, and fears; that sense of “I” as a separate entity that led to unending desire, feelings of incompleteness and constant inner yearning. But now, due to the amazing transformation that was taking place within me, “I” was transcending the little, individual “I” that “I” had been all my life and becoming a very connected part of the gigantic wholeness, oneness of everything that “I” was experiencing more and more every day through my meditations.

Sometime around the end of week two, I finally admitted to myself that I was on the threshold of discovering something so incredibly large and fantastic that I dared not try to put a name or definition to it. I didn’t know if it was by accident that I had carelessly stumbled onto this new level of consciousness and experience that I was entering; but this thing that was happening was big, bigger than big, and no mere everyday experience. Even with more than six years of serious study and profound experience in the field of meditation, even with over thirteen years of voracious reading, experience, and study in affiliated topics, I had never come close to what I was experiencing now.

The Divine Power, Kundalini, shines like the stem of a young lotus; like a snake, coiled round upon herself, she holds her tail in her mouth and lies resting half asleep at the base of the body.

Yoga Kundalini Upanishad (1.82)

CHAPTER FOUR CHIAPAS, MEXICO, 1998

I awake two weeks later to bright blue skies, exit my room at the Posada Casa Real, enter the sun-drenched courtyard, and fall into a labyrinth of activity. Seated around a table are two young women from Argentina drinking extremely strong tea out of a tall silver cup that suspiciously resembles a Persian hookah. Sitting in the corner is a full-blooded Aztec Indian reading a copy of Homer's *Odyssey* translated into Spanish. Out on the terrace, a young Parisian couple is playing bawdy cabaret tunes; she flails away on a beat up, old accordion, Gauloise haphazardly dangling from her lips, and he, in a battered beret, manically switches back and forth between guitar and trumpet.

At the top of the stairs, four Germans (or are they Swiss?) are attempting to funnel their bicycles down the stairway and off to the ancient Mayan ruins of Palenque. In the kitchen, the radio is turned up full blast, and a reporter in rapid-fire Spanish is giving the latest details of the five-year-old Zapatista uprising. Today's news: forty-three innocent Indigenous villagers gunned down by a paramilitary group in the hamlet of Acteal, one hour north of San Cristobal.

La Señora, the owner of the *posada*, climbs the stairs, weaves her way through the departing cyclists, flips the radio dial until she finds Julio Iglesias and then begins washing the day's dirty linen. *Sombrero* perched precariously upon her head, she hums along out of tune with Julio, happy in the fact that the *posada* is almost full, and money is coming in. Suddenly the front bell rings, and she is off to greet more new arrivals.

I shower, shave, take a few sips of mate tea from the big silver hookah then descend the stairs and hit the streets of San Cristobal. Once again, the streets are packed, and Calle Real de Guadalupe is humming with activity. For in the two weeks since the Virgin de Guadalupe celebration there has been a steady influx of tourists arriving for the holidays. In fact, it is Christmas Eve day, and it appears as if the entire world has descended upon San Cristobal to celebrate.

Indians and Nationals from all over Mexico are bartering, trading, visiting, and seeing the sights. Mongrel mobs of European hippies in dreadlocks and faded, Guatemalan multi-colored clothing search for cheap drugs and the international party scene. *Tzotzil* women, half-running, half-walking, dart through the crowd, live chickens in their hands while others are hawking everything from wool *chamarras* to *rebozos* to hand woven belts and bracelets.

There are also Americans in Levi's and baseball hats, Italians in Gucci's and designer sunglasses, and Germans in group tour formation marching down the sidewalk; as well as French tourists, Dutch tourists, and Japanese tourists taking pictures of everything. They're all here clogging the narrow sidewalks and turning San Cristobal into one giant international Christmas party. Slowly I work my way through the crowd aiming myself towards the *Mercado principal* (large, outdoor market) and breakfast.

After fifteen minutes of swimming my way through the international crowd of partygoers, I finally arrive at the *Mercado* and direct myself towards my favorite food stall and the cheapest, most flavorful breakfast in San Cristobal. But here the congestion has reached mammoth proportions. It is absolutely insane and totally impassable! Taxis, buses, cars, carts, and people all jam the narrow lanes leading into the *Mercado*, pushing, honking and screaming in unison.

Once again, I slowly and meticulously work my way through the crowd and then finally enter the *Mercado*. But entering, I am assaulted by an even thicker, more impregnated mass of humanity buying, selling, pushing, and shoving. It is the ultimate, orgasmic, holiday shopping spree.

