

Enlightenment.

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In the religious literature of the world Knowledge or Wisdom is symbolized by Light. 'The Sun of Knowledge', the 'Fire of Wisdom' are common phrases. In the Vedic Mythology Fire is full of knowledge, the Divine Priest and the Messenger of gods. The sun is the eye of the *Puruṣa* (God). Every twice-born Hindu daily prays to the Sun in order to stimulate his intellect. The Goddess of Wisdom, Saraswatī, is seated on a white lotus and she flies on the wings of a white swan. The fire of Zoroaster is proverbial. The wings of Sophia are fiery. The angels and gods are luminous beings, bearing radiant haloes round them.

But Light is not merely an abstract symbol; it is a vital realization. The entire progress of humanity is based on Light. All the material civilization has evolved by bringing to light the secrets of Nature, who

hides her treasures from the ignorant eyes. In the laboratories, the scientists, under the strict discipline of scientific experiment, are seeking after Light. Their every revelation radiates new light to the world outside.

What is true of the physical world is also true in the mental and spiritual life of man. Every religious aspirant who is in search of Truth and Bliss is seeking Light. An earnest and sincere seeker, at a certain stage of his life, feels that Light has dawned upon him, he has found the Truth and is in possession of Bliss. This momentous spiritual incident is called in the religious terminology 'Enlightenment' or 'Bodha'.

In order to remove any misconception about enlightenment we should at the outset, note that light is not an external thing that comes from without. Really speaking, it is seated in the innermost corner of our being; there

it is lying dormant. When we reach the bottom of our existence, it is awakened, and with reference to its unfoldment our eyes open to an All-pervading Light. "The Logos is embodied into the physical. This mystery is manifested in each man, in each incarnated spirit. 'God breathed eternity into the heart of each man.' The range of Light is eternal, immortal through all incarnations. And it shall cognize the Light; for it is the very source of Light itself." The same Light that penetrates our being is dynamic and its sparks imbue the whole space. It should also be observed that at the source of Light there is no mist but radiance; it is our own vision that has become defective through its contact with crude matter. What we have to do is to lift the weight of matter from our vision and sharpen and clarify the latter by constant exercise to reach the surface of Light.

Just as there are different approaches to the same Truth, so there are different types of realization or enlightenment, too.

In most natural cases the attainment of the Light is so gradual, calm and quiet that the seeker receives it as unconsciously as he breathes air, and no shock of electrocution is rendered either to him or to his atmosphere. His rise in the spiritual life is like that of small steps that lead to the summit of the giddy heights. There is no electric lift but a slow, gradual and steady progress. This reception of Light is a matter of course. Leaving the ignorant and lustful,

who, closing their eyes from the Light, grope and take delight in darkness, the majority of people receive a portion of Light which is their guide. But even the highest kind of Light is attainable by this process. It is a question of patient watchfulness and open-mindedness. There have been seers and sages, who were not shocked by dazzling Light, who were not visited by visions and angels; yet they were highly illumined souls, they penetrated the deepest mystery of the universe, radiated immense light and led the humanity of their times. Their greatness cannot be undervalued by our love for the extraordinary and the miraculous.

The process of receiving Light, however, is not always smooth and easy. As in the universe, so in the individual, there are so many irregularities, distractions, interruptions, obstructions and obstacles. The human soul, before it reaches the source of Light, has, at times, to pass through rugged hills, thick rocks, dense forests of its own making or presented by society. The method of its overcoming these difficulties and the speed of its progress cannot be mathematically determined. There are abnormal cases also. There have been persons, prophets and mystics, admittedly great and sincere, who, under their special circumstances, received Light in the most extraordinary ways. Their tradition and training were not conducive to the realization of Truth and their society obstructed their path. But they were sincere and earnest seekers after Light. They plunged into the search. They staked

their life, to accomplish or to die. They dashed forward and intensely strained their vitals. The tension now reaches the breaking-point. The Light in the universe is quite sympathetic towards the inner Light. But how to kindle it? The difficulties are great and deep-rooted. They cannot be easily removed. They require violent eradication. So the volcanic eruption from within and thunder and storm without. The Light presents a dazzling and absorbing appearance. At the first sight of it the aspirant is overawed, his unprepared system shakes, his senses are paralysed; he swoons, heaves and creaks. Fatigue and Exhaustion ! The atmosphere calms down. He opens his eyes; he beholds but cannot see the dazzling Light face to face. Calmness follows the storm. He gazes, sees and receives the Light, though he cannot explain the process. The Light is perfect. He finds the unexpected Truth; he embraces the long-awaited Bliss.

This flaming ecstasy of lofty spirits is interpreted by many as "Hysteria Magna with high temperature". The interpretation simply betrays their ignorance about the power of thought. It is a matter of common knowledge that the weight of an article differs after its dissolution. Every sincere chemist admits that every reaction is attended by some unaccountable condition. The bodily changes that take place at the time when the thought-power is in the furnace of crystallization, are the outer symptoms of the inner process.

We should not be frightened away by the change, though we should try to make the path of Light smooth, to see that its fury is softened and scars removed from the receiving system.

Though we have broadly divided the process of attaining the Light under two heads, it can be received in myriad ways by people of different Samskāras. Now we should see how one can qualify himself for the reception of the Light.

The first and foremost qualification of an aspirant should be his spiritual courage. Light never dawns upon the timid. Truth shuns the cowardly. Indomitable courage to march forward and a firm determination to overcome the obstacles make the way easy and the difficulties inviting. With the burden of weaknesses on our back we cannot walk over the narrow path, we cannot complete the uphill journey. So long as we lack the courage of conviction to proclaim the truth even at the cost of life, we are not entitled to get a grain of Truth. The Truth will fly from us as a fugitive light.

The firm resolve to eradicate ignorance—physical, mental and spiritual—root and branch with strict watchfulness is the second qualification of the seeker after Light. Ignorance is the mist that hovers over the source of knowledge. It is the darkness that clouds our vision. It poisons the very fountain of our life. This ignorance should become intolerable, if we aspire at all for Light. "Many a time the frightened Bird of Bliss

fluttered with its white wings against closed windows. But we fear everything that assaults our ignorance and we depend upon door-bolts. Even when the eye perceives we call it an 'accident'. Even when ear hears, we say 'coincidence'. So ignorance should be banished with all the force at one's command.

The next qualification is the freedom of method. Light can be approached in different ways. Hence there should be no obstinate insistence on a particular method. Method is an instrument that helps the soul from without. Its selection should entirely depend on the temperament and circumstances of the aspirant. Sometimes traditional methods, not adapted to a particular case, prove great obstacles and delay the attainment of Light. The historic instance of Lord Buddha is highly instructive. For years together he insisted on the traditional method of self-torture with distressing failure. But the moment he gave it up and relieved his system, the Light dawned upon him automatically.

Sincerity of purpose and clarity of vision is another qualification. The spiritual aspirant never indulges in self-delusion, nor does he try to delude the world. He, with open eyes, accepts what comes to him and never tries to show more than what he is. Though hypocrisy is the homage of falsehood to Truth, it is an enemy hidden in one's own house that closes the doors against the Light. The Light-seeker also keeps his mind free from all prejudices. So

long as the mind is pre-occupied with self-conceited notions, Light cannot penetrate the heart. The sooner one rids oneself of presumptions the nearer is the dawn of Light.

Patient perseverance is equally necessary. One should not avoid labour and covet ease in the spiritual aspiration. Love of ease forces man to forget the higher. Bodily comforts should not become the ruling factor in life. If one subordinates his higher aspirations to his stomach, he will feed fat his stomach but starve the soul.

The last but not the least qualification is the purity of life. So long as the mirror of the heart is covered with dust and dirt, it cannot reflect the sun of Wisdom. Every seeker after truth has to purge himself of all impurities—lust, anger, greed, etc. No doubt the battle is very keen, but it has got to be fought. The passions become stronger and alluring just before the fight. The attack of *Māra*, Cupid, on Lord Buddha aptly illustrates the desperate attempts of our hidden weaknesses at the time of purge. But the very determination to attain the light dispels the strongest army of passions. When one is pure in heart, he becomes the reservoir of Light. "The pure heart of him, who has affirmed himself in full consciousness, is transformed into a mental sky with its own sun, moon and stars. Such a pure heart becomes a receptacle of the inconceivable God through the mysterious vision and exaltation of mind,"