

Chapter Ten

Letting the Being Within You Thrive

After finishing training in psychiatry, I moved to New Jersey for my first job. I remember driving to work, taking the same route every morning and evening, and on my way mulling over my life purpose. *What does this job really offer? How will it prepare me for what I want to do? How do I see my career unfolding? What am I doing here?*

One day, waiting at a red light, I looked up at the street sign just ahead: HOPE ROAD.

Ah, that's what I do, I thought. I lead people to hope and the will to go on. I encourage them to not give up; I show them how to push through the dark to a better day. And, for several years, that touchstone was all I needed.

Finally, however, I needed another boost to move me forward, something more than that street sign that seemed to answer my question. I needed something very powerful to engage me spiritually, to offer greater self-understanding, and to add a fresh dimension to my hopes as well. The answer sprang from splitting the atoms of my daily routine and coming to grips with my life purpose. It struck me that most definitions of *spiritual* point to some immaterial reality, like the fundamental force at the heart of the atom and the force that keeps the limitless Universe together against the opposing forces that would allow it to fly apart.

Although my roots go back to India, which people often think of as a fount of spirituality, the word lacked weight for me, not to mention proof. Yes, I was well aware of the brain's power to unlock moments of great spirit and even a powerful sense of rebirth. But that's just chemistry, it seemed to me — a euphoria ignited by chemicals brightening the brain's pathways. I needed a new path to spiritual discovery, something that would speak meaningfully to me as a scientist as well as a seeker after larger truths.

Then on July 4, 2012, scientists announced an astonishing discovery. Back in 1964, Peter Higgs, a British physicist, and five of his colleagues had hypothesized that if current scientific theories of the Universe were to be true, there needed to be a particle that accounted for the mass of things, a sort of glue that would hold them together. In other

words, they were saying that there were extremely small particles — and when I say small, I mean a hundredth of a billionth of a billionth of the size of an atomic nucleus — that were the building blocks of every element on the periodic table. This table is a display of all of the known chemical elements, either found in nature or synthesized in a laboratory, that exist in the Universe. These elements in turn are the building blocks of everything — you, me, the air, my desk and chair . . . all matter as we know it.