



A Life Sketch of U.G. Krishnamurti

Body, Mind, And Soul — do they exist?

The Enigma of the Natural State

Anti-teaching: Calling It like It Is

Laughing with UG

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The Search, the Calamity and the Birth of a New Human Being: A Life Sketch Of U.G. Krishnamurti

Two months before the completion of his forty-ninth year, UG and Valentine happened to be in Paris. J. Krishnamurti was also there, giving his public talks. One evening, friends suggested that they go and listen to JK's talk. Since the majority, including Valentine, was in favour of the idea, UG relented and joined them. But when they got there, and realized that they had to pay two francs each to get in, UG thought it was ridiculous to pay money to listen to a talk however profound or spiritual. Instead, he suggested, 'Let's do something foolish. Let's go to Casino de Paris.'

And to Casino de Paris they went. What happened to UG at the casino may sound stranger than fiction. Sitting with his friends and among the fun-lovers watching the cabaret, UG says: 'I didn't know whether the dancer was dancing on the stage or I was doing the dancing. There was a peculiar kind of movement inside of me. There was no division there. There was nobody who was looking at the dancer.' Eventually, after his thymus gland was fully activated, this was to become his everyday 'normal' experience; for instance, while travelling in a car, he would feel the oncoming car or any vehicle as if passing through his body.

A week after this experience, one night in a hotel room in Geneva, he had a dream. He saw himself bitten by a cobra and die instantly. He saw his body being carried on a bamboo stretcher and placed on a funeral pyre at some nameless cremation ground. And as the pyre and his own body went up in flames, he was awakened.

It was a prelude to his 'clinical death' on his forty-ninth birthday, and the beginning of the most incredible bodily changes and experiences that would catapult him into a state that is difficult to understand within the framework of our hitherto known mystical or enlightenment traditions. His experiences were not the blissful or transcendental experiences most mystics speak of, but a 'physical torture' triggered by an explosion of energy in his body that eventually left him in what he calls the 'natural state'.

For seven days, UG's body underwent tremendous changes. The whole chemistry of the body, including the five senses, was transformed. His eyes stopped blinking; his skin turned soft; and when he rubbed any part of his body with his palm it produced a sort of ash. He developed a female breast on his left-hand side. His senses started functioning independently and at their peak of sensitivity. And the thymus gland which, according to doctors is active throughout childhood and then becomes dormant at puberty, was reactivated. All the thoughts of man from time immemorial, all experiences, whether good or bad, blissful or miserable, terrific or terrible, mystical or commonplace, experienced by humanity from primordial times (the whole 'collective consciousness') were flushed out of his system, and on the seventh day, he 'died' but only to be reborn in 'undivided consciousness'. It was a terrific journey and a sudden great leap into the primordial state untouched by thought.

UG insists that this is not the state of a self-realized or god-realized man. It is neither the 'Satori' of Zen Buddhism nor 'Brahmanubhava' of the Upanishads. It is neither 'emptiness' nor 'void'. It is simply a state of 'non-experience', but the inevitable

sensations are still functioning. The reactivation of the thymus gland seems to enable him to ‘feel’ these sensations without translating or interpreting them as good or bad, for the interpreter, the self, ‘I’ doesn’t exist.

UG says, ‘People call me an “enlightened man”—I detest that term— they can’t find any other word to describe the way I am functioning. At the same time, I point out that there is no such thing as enlightenment at all. I say that because all my life I’ve searched and wanted to be an enlightened man, and I discovered that there is no such thing as enlightenment at all, and so the question whether a particular person is enlightened or not doesn’t arise....There is no power outside of man. Man has created God out of fear. So the problem is fear and not God.’

Further, he says, ‘I am not a saviour of mankind. I am not in the holy business. I am only interested in describing this state (the natural state), in clearing away the occultation and mystification in which those people in the business have shrouded the whole thing. Maybe I can convince you not to waste a lot of time and energy looking for a state which does not exist except in your imagination.’

With his long, flowing silver-grey hair, deep-set eyes, Buddha-like long ears showing through his thinning hair, and fair complexion, UG looked a strange pigeon from another world. Speaking in non-technical language in a simple conversational style, informal and intimate, at times abusive, serene or explosive, his hands rising and moving in striking *mudras*, he carried the ‘authority’ of one who had literally seen it all.

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Uppaluri Gopala Krishnamurti was born on 9 July 1918 in Masulipatnam, a small town in the state of Andhra Pradesh. His mother, who died seven days after he was born, is believed to have told her father, T.G. Krishnamurti, that her son was born with a high spiritual destiny. T.G. Krishnamurti was a prosperous lawyer and quite an influential person in the town of Gudivada. Taking his daughter’s prophecy seriously, he gave up his lucrative career to bring up his grandson. He was a great believer in the theosophical movement and contributed huge sums of money for its various activities. The walls of his house were adorned with pictures of theosophical leaders, including one of Jiddu Krishnamurti, who was then looked upon as the ‘World Teacher’. But this theosophist was also a firm believer in the Hindu Brahminical tradition. He was a ‘mixed-up man’ in the words of UG. And so UG grew up in a peculiar milieu of both theosophy and Hindu religious beliefs and practices. Hindu gurus visited the house frequently and chanting and readings from the scriptures were held on a regular basis. There were days when readings from the Upanishads, Panchadasi, Naishkarmya Siddhi and other such religious texts would start in the early morning hours and go on until late in the evening. By the age of eight, UG knew some of these texts by heart.

With all this religious practice and exposure to theosophy at quite an early age, UG grew to be a passionate yet rebellious character. Brilliant and sensitive as he was, he could see through the games the elders played. They spoke of high ideals and principles, but their lives were in direct contradiction to what they spoke. One day, he saw his grandfather rush out of his meditation room in fury and thrash a two-year-old child because she was crying. The supposedly deeply religious grandfather’s behaviour was quite upsetting to the young boy. Once, when he was hardly five years old, his

grandfather, infuriated by his misbehaviour, had hit him with a belt. Livid with anger, the boy had grabbed the belt from his grandfather and hit him back, shouting, ‘Who do you think you are? How can you beat me?’ The grandfather never again dared to raise his hand against the boy.

A sense of disgust with religious rituals came early to UG. This happened when he was fourteen, during the death anniversary of his mother. He was in a rage at the hypocrisy of the priests who performed the rituals. He was expected to fast the whole day, as were also the Brahmin priests who performed the death memorial rituals. After a while into the chanting of mantras and rituals, UG saw a couple of priests get up and go out. Out of curiosity he followed them and noticed the priests, who were also expected to fast, sneak into a restaurant. Rushing back home, UG removed his sacred thread and threw it away, then went and announced to his grandfather that he was leaving home and needed some money.

‘You are a minor. You cannot have the money,’ replied the grandfather harshly.

‘I don’t want your money. I want my mother’s money,’ demanded the grandson.

‘If you go on this way, I’ll disown you,’ the old man tried to scare the little boy.

The little boy, whose mind had grown much beyond the boys of his age, said coolly, ‘You don’t own me. So how can you disown me?’

If UG was difficult for his grandparents to handle, he was kind and affectionate to his school friends and servants at home. As a boy he detested the caste discrimination practised at home. He observed that the domestic workers, who came from the lower caste, were fed with the leftovers of the food cooked the previous day. When his protest against such a practice had no effect on his grandmother, he went and sat with the workers one mealtime and insisted upon being served the same cold food. He was also quite sensitive to the problems of those of his school friends who came from poor families. With the pocket money he received or the money he occasionally stole from his grandfather, he would pay their tuition fees, and at times, even buy them school textbooks and shoes.

Perhaps the grandparents put up with his eccentricities because they knew he was precocious and believed that he was destined for higher things. In fact, UG says that he used to be constantly reminded about his great spiritual destiny by his grandfather. It is quite possible that UG also took his mother’s prediction quite seriously and looked upon himself as a great guru in the making.

When he was about fourteen years of age, a well-known Sankaracharya of the famous Sivaganga Math visited T.G. Krishnamurti’s house. The young boy was quite fascinated by the pomp and glory that surrounded the pontiff, and the great reverence he commanded from his disciples and admirers. He decided he wanted to be like the pontiff when he grew up. He was ready to throw away all his little desires, quit his studies, bid goodbye to his grandparents and follow in the footsteps of the pontiff, and hopefully become the head of the famous Math. He even dared to express his wish to join the pontiff. The pontiff only smiled and politely turned down his request. He was too young for the hard life of a sannyasi, and leaving home at his tender age would only cause unnecessary unhappiness to his grandparents, he said. However, he gave UG a Shiva

mantra. UG took the pontiff's advice seriously and chanted the mantra 3000 times everyday for the next seven years. Keen on achieving spiritual success and greatness, the boy chanted the mantra anywhere and everywhere, even in his classroom while the teacher chugged on with the lessons. What spiritual benefit the chanting had on him is not known, but it certainly did affect his studies and in the final exams of his SSLC, he failed in the Telugu language paper.

UG's grandmother, Durgamma, played as important a role as the grandfather in his upbringing, although she remains on the margins of UG's story. She was a woman of strong feelings, and made no secret of her likes and dislikes. She was illiterate, but a virtual repository of mythical stories and native intelligence. Giving an instance of it, UG says that it was from her he learnt the original or the etymological meaning of the concept of *maya* and other such Hindu concepts. But as a boy, it seems that he often used to be quite irritated and angry with her. He never called her 'grandma'. The more she pleaded with him to at least once call her 'Ammamma-Grandma', the more stubborn he would become and even refuse to speak to her. Exasperated, once she is believed to have said that he had 'the heart of a butcher'. True enough, one day he got so irritated with her begging and cajoling that he screamed at her, letting fly a string of abusive words in English he had picked up at school. A stunned grandfather later sighed thus with relief: 'Thank god she doesn't understand English!'

In the story of UG, it is the grandfather who stands out as an imposing, formidable figure, who had to be demolished and reduced to nothing. But, in point of fact, he was a man of great strength and determination. If he had not taken his daughter's prediction seriously, if he had not loved his grandson, he couldn't have abandoned his lucrative career and devoted himself to the upbringing of this little maverick. He threw open his house to holy people not merely for his own satisfaction or spiritual pleasure, but because he must have believed that an early exposure to things spiritual would have a positive effect on the boy. Further, he not only took UG along with him every time he visited the Theosophical Society at Adyar, he also took young UG to various holy places, ashrams and centres of learning in India. He was a wealthy man all right, but he was no miser and spent generously on his grandson.

It was surely because of his encouragement and support that for seven summers, and a few more times in between, UG could travel to the Himalayas to learn classical yoga from the famous guru Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh. Ultimately the old man's efforts might not have led to the result he expected. That is a different matter. But, in hindsight, one can say that he did play an important role in the life of his grandson, in providing him with the necessary financial support and social security so that the young UG could pursue his interests without any encumbrance.

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It is not through the study of religious texts, nor through contemplation, but through a series of 'shocks' that UG, as a young man, developed disgust for rituals and philosophies, and decided to strike out on his own and find things out for himself. The words or teachings of the religious masters he had met, including those of his grandfather, did not correspond with their actions. Their beliefs and philosophies did not operate in their lives. They all spoke well, but theirs were all empty words. Still, the boy wanted to test the validity or otherwise of these ideas and beliefs before rejecting them.

He had to find out, to use UG's own words, 'y myself and for myself, if there was anything to these teachings.' Talking about that period and his own search and struggles, UG says quite candidly: 'I did not know how to go about, I did not know then that wanting to be free of everything was also a want, a desire.'

After UG completed his schooling in Gudivada, he moved to Madras so that he could pursue his higher studies without any bother. By then UG had developed a fairly cordial relationship with Arundale and Jinarajadasa, the then president and vice-president of the Theosophical Society, and had no difficulty in finding a place to live in the headquarters of the Theosophical Society. He lived there until his marriage in 1944.

UG took up a BA Honours course in philosophy and psychology at Madras University. But the study of the various philosophical systems and of Freud, Jung and Adler made very little impression on him. In fact, it didn't seem to have much bearing on the way he experienced life, or on the way he was 'functioning'. 'Where is this mind these chaps have been talking about?' he asked himself. One day, he asked his psychology teacher, 'We are talking about the mind all the time. Do you know for yourself what the mind is? All the stuff I know about the mind is from these books of Freud, Jung, Adler and so on that I have studied. Apart from these descriptions and definitions that are there in the books, do you know anything about the mind?' It was an extraordinary and original question from a boy hardly twenty years old. The professor was naturally taken aback and perhaps a little intimidated too; nevertheless, he is reported to have advised UG to take his exams and just write the answers he had been taught if he wanted a degree. 'At least he was honest,' recalls UG.

It was during this three-year degree course at the university that UG made several trips to Sivananda's ashram at Rishikesh, both to learn yoga and to perform his *tapas* in the caves there. There were several caves in Rishikesh. Spiritual seekers or *sadhakas* would live in these caves to perform rigorous penance for years. UG had a little cave to himself, where, sitting cross-legged, he would meditate, at times, for ten to seventeen hours at a stretch. At that time, young though he was, UG experimented with his body by going without food or water for several days, pushing the body to the limits of its endurance. Once, he even tried to live on grass. This was the time he also came upon certain mystical states. These mystical experiences came and went, says UG, but deep within him there was no transformation; they did not touch the core of his being. It was indeed a period of great learning, excitement, and frustration too.

By then UG was in his twenties, a period of extreme restlessness and change. The study of philosophy and psychology had only added to his confusion and he had quit the university in great frustration. The training in yoga had left him high and dry. He had found that Swami Sivananda (eating hot pickles behind closed doors) was no different from several other yogis he had met. To make matters worse he became aware that he was in no way different from the others either. He had meditated and performed penance to no avail. He had come upon several mystical states, but to his horror he found himself still caught up in conflict, in greed. He found himself burning with anger all the time. And sex remained a nagging problem.

UG's own description of his situation at the time is telling. 'I arrived at a point, when I was twenty-one, where I felt very strongly that all teachers—Buddha, Jesus, Sri

Ramakrishna, everybody—kidded themselves, deluded themselves and deluded everybody. This, you see, could not be the thing at all—where is the state that these people talk about and describe? That description seems to have no relation to me, to the way I am functioning. Everybody says “Don’t get angry”—I am angry all the time. I am full of brutal activities inside, so that is false. What these people are telling me I should be is something false, and because it is false it will falsify me. I don’t want to live the life of a false person. I am greedy, and non-greed is what they are talking about. There is something wrong somewhere. This greed is something real, something natural to me; what they are talking about is unnatural. So, something is wrong somewhere. But I am not ready to change myself, to falsify myself, for the sake of being in a state of non-greed; my greed is a reality to me... I lived in the midst of people who talked of these things everlastingly—everybody was false, I can tell you. So, somehow, what you call “existentialist nausea” (I didn’t use those words at the time, but now I happen to know these terms), revulsion against everything sacred and everything holy, crept into my system and threw everything out: No more slokas, no more religion, no more practices—there isn’t anything there; but what is here is something natural. I am a brute, I am a monster, I am full of violence—this is reality. I am full of desire. Desirelessness, non-greed, non-anger—those things have no meaning to me; they are false, and they are not only false, they are falsifying me. So I said to myself I’m finished with the whole business.’

UG did not ‘shop’ around much, but, though briefly, he did shop around seriously. He was not only frustrated with swamijis such as Sivananda Saraswati, he was disgusted with himself too. His own sadhana and mystical experiences had led him nowhere. There seemed truly no way out and he became ‘sceptical of everything, heretical to my boots’. Studying UG’s cynical state of mind and his intense agony, his friend, Swami Ramanapadananda, suggested that he should go and see Sri Ramana Maharshi who was then considered to be an enlightened soul, and an embodiment of the Hindu mystical tradition.

UG was not sure if it would be of any help to him. He thought he was finished with holy men; they only said, ‘Do more and more and you will get it.’ He believed he had performed the required sadhana; whatever he had done was enough. In fact there was nothing to these sadhanas, for they left you only in greater conflict and confusion. He was finished. For he had realized that the solutions offered were no solutions, and that the solutions themselves were the problem. Still, on Ramanapadananda’s suggestion, he read Paul Brunton’s *Search in Secret India*, particularly the chapters related to Sri Ramana Maharshi. He was not convinced, yet, ‘reluctantly, hesitatingly, and unwillingly’, he agreed to go and meet the great sage.

Devotees and truth-seekers believed that it was enough to sit there bathed in the enveloping silence, and feel the presence of the sage in one’s heart. And now, UG sat there on the tiled floor and wondered:

‘How can he help me?’ Ramanapadananda had assured him that like hundreds of truth-seekers before, he too would experience a penetrating silence and all his questions would drop away, and a mere look from the Master would change him completely.

At last the sage looked up and their eyes met briefly. But nothing happened. The clock on the wall registered the passage of time. An hour had passed. The questions had remained and there was no sign of UG's distress coming to an end. Two hours passed, and then UG thought:

'All right, let me ask him some questions.' He wanted nothing less than the ultimate freedom, nothing less than moksha. But he asked, 'Is there anything like moksha?'

The sage answered in the affirmative.

'Can one be free sometimes and not free sometimes?'

'Either you are free, or you are not free at all.'

'Are there any levels to it?'

'No, no levels are possible, it is all one thing. Either you are there or not there at all.'

And then UG shot his final question. 'This thing called moksha, can you give it to me?'

Ramana answered with a counter-question: 'I can give it, but can you take it?'

No guru before had given such an answer. They had only advised him to do more of sadhana, more of what he had already done and finished with. But here was a guru, who was supposed to be an enlightened man, asking, 'Can you take it?'

The counter-question struck UG like a thunderbolt. It also seemed an extremely arrogant question. But UG's own arrogance was of Himalayan proportions: 'If there is any individual in this world who can take it, it is me.... If I can't take it, who else can take it?' Such was his frame of mind. However, the absolute conviction with which Ramana had fired the question at UG had its effect. He had asked more or less similar questions of many gurus during his seven years of sadhana, and he knew all the traditional answers. He had even stumbled upon certain mystical states, yet the questions had remained unanswered. What was that state that all those people—Buddha, Jesus and the whole gang— were in? Ramana was supposed to be in that state! But then Ramana was like any other man, born of woman, he couldn't be very different, could he? But people said that something had happened to him.

What was that? What was there? He had to find out. And he knew in the very marrow of his bones, as it were, that nobody could give that state to him. 'I am on my own,' he told himself. 'I have to go on this uncharted sea without a compass, without a boat, with not even a raft to take me. I am going to find out for myself what that state is...'

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The war years (1940s) were an extremely restless period for UG Krishnamurti. After quitting his BA Honours course at the Madras University, he was without a sense of direction. The meeting with Ramana had only deepened his anguish. The search, of course, did not end there, but he was going nowhere. The Theosophical Society seemed to be the way out, if only for want of a better option.

Even after leaving the university, UG continued to live in Adyar at the headquarters of the Theosophical Society. But now he worked as the press secretary to the president, Dr Arundale. He would read newspapers, magazines and journals that came to the library

from all over the world and choose reports and articles of interest and importance to be read by Arundale later.

He was nearing twenty-five years of age. Sex had remained a nagging problem, yet he had not rushed into marriage. It was a natural biological urge, but most religious traditions taught one either to deny it or suppress it. Sex was seen as spiritually debilitating, and ultimately an obstacle on the path to moksha. UG, of course, did not believe in the denial of sex, although he had practised abstinence. He wanted to see what happened to the urge if he did not do anything about it. All this only made his situation more difficult, and he was troubled by guilt. He never consciously entertained any thoughts about girls, yet sexual images persisted. Meditation on gods and goddesses only gave him wet dreams. Study of holy books and avoidance of aphrodisiacs were of absolutely no help. The so-called mystical experiences he had had in the caves of Rishikesh had failed to dissolve the sexual urge in him.

It was time to stop fooling himself and reckon with the fact of sex, to come to terms with the body's urge which can never be false. And so, in 1943, he married a beautiful Brahmin girl chosen for him by his grandmother. The very next day after the wedding, however, he realized that he had blundered. In his words: 'I awoke the morning after my wedding night and knew without doubt that I had made the biggest mistake of my life.' But there was no way he could undo the mistake now. He remained married for seventeen years, and fathered four children.

After his marriage, UG moved out of the Theosophical Society headquarters and took a house on a street close to the Theosophical Society and Elliott Beach at Adyar. And he continued to work for the Theosophical Society. In 1946, Jinarajadasa was elected the president of the Theosophical Society, and for three years, UG worked under him as the joint secretary of the Indian section. Later, in recognition of his oratorical gift, he was made a national lecturer. For nearly seven years, he travelled extensively in India and Europe on lecture tours. He spoke on theosophy at practically every college and university in India. Then he went on a long tour to Europe and North America. Going through the lectures he gave in Europe and India, one is surprised to see how a man who was so thoroughly frustrated with his own religious search and experiences, who had grown cynical of all religious endeavours and goals, adapted himself to the philosophy and activities of the Theosophical Society. Did he really take up this work for want of a 'better occupation', as he had said once? Was it like his marriage, with no heart in what he was doing? Was it all inevitable that he had to go through the whole process, that there was very little to choose from, or that it really did not matter one way or another?

However, at the end of the seventh year as a lecturer of theosophy, he grew frustrated with the work. It seemed to him that what he had been doling out in his lecture was just 'second-hand information'. Anybody with some brains could do this work. It was not something true to his experience, true to his real self. And he quit the Theosophical Society.

UG's leaving coincided with J. Krishnamurti's visit to India to give his first talk after the war years, at Adyar. By his own admission, UG listened to JK's talks between 1947 and 1953. And from 1953, UG interacted with JK at a personal level, holding long conversations with him on several occasions. During that time, JK also met UG's wife

and their children, and took a particular interest in the health of UG's eldest son, Vasant, who had been struck with polio.

JK was fifty-eight years old then, and UG running thirty-five. The relationship between UG and Krishnaji cannot exactly be categorized as one between a guru and a disciple, nor as one between two antagonists or rival gurus. But what comes through is that right from the beginning UG seemed to have had problems with JK's image as the World Teacher and his teachings. Often UG would react critically, harshly and scathingly against Krishnaji, exploding with fury like the mythical Shiva in a state of wrath, while Krishnaji would always behave like an English gentleman. But there is no denying the fact that Krishnaji and his teaching had had a great impact on UG, even if, gradually and progressively, he was to reject it all at the end.

Yet, every year for seven years, UG listened to Krishnaji, despite his doubts and troubles with Krishnaji's ideas and 'insights'. There really was something to JK's teachings, yet he felt that they were somehow not true to his own experience, that they were falsifying him. But he was not sure of himself; he was not certain yet if what he had come upon by and for himself was true either. He lacked clarity and conviction; also, there were too many doubts and questions, all of which were to dissolve and disappear in the heat of the explosive experience, or what UG would call the 'Calamity', in 1967.

In 1953, UG planned to go to the USA to get medical treatment for his son, Vasant. On hearing about it, JK offered to try his hand at curing Vasant. On a few occasions, JK had had used his healing hands and is believed to have cured people of what were then considered to be almost incurable ailments. UG was sceptical, and he warned, 'I did hear a lot about your healing work. It doesn't work in this case. The cells in the boy's legs are dead.' Yet, in deference to his wife's wishes, he relented. But JK's healing technique of massaging the boy's legs did not improve the boy's condition. After the experiment failed, UG left for America with his wife and son in 1955, leaving behind their two daughters in the care of Kusuma Kumari's elder sister.

It was indeed, both politically and culturally, an interesting period to be in America. But to UG, America was like a transit camp, a sort of preparatory ground before stripping himself of everything and going adrift in Europe. Meanwhile he tried to be a good father and make himself useful.

The money he had taken with him to the USA was just enough to meet the expenses of his son's medical treatment. But it was worth it, thought UG, for his son couldn't have received better treatment anywhere else. The doctors assured him that Vasant would be able to walk in a year's time. It meant they had to stay in the USA for another year, perhaps longer; so, with his resources diminishing fast, UG had to do something to earn some money. He took up what he was best at— lecturing. Unlike in India where his lectures had been for free, here he was paid one hundred dollars per lecture. He now even had a manager to arrange his lectures.

Vasant's condition did improve considerably with the medical treatment, and he was able to walk, dragging his diseased foot, without using crutches. UG continued to lecture in different parts of America, including four notable lectures on the major religions of the world, at the University of St Louis in Washington State.

On UG's home front at that time, however, there was no major change. His relationship with his wife was as good as it could be between the likes of him and Kusuma Kumari. With all his eccentricities and his spiritual quest, UG was not a bad husband and father. Kusuma Kumari, of course, always remained a devoted wife and mother. The only major problem that erupted now and then in the family was regarding money. UG was never good at managing his financial affairs or in handling money.

He gave around sixty lectures a year and at the end of the second year, he not only felt exhausted but also quite depressed with the whole lecturing business. Two incidents stand out during this period. A couple of days after his lecture on 'The Meaning and Mystery of Pain', he was laid up with mumps. The discomfort was quite unbearable and the pain almost too excruciating, yet he refused to see a doctor. As always he was overcome by a terrific curiosity to see into the structure of pain, as it were; after all, just a couple of days ago, he had given a lecture on the meaning and mystery of pain. This sort of curiosity would again and again drive him to probe and experiment with himself to find things out for himself, the same curiosity that had years ago made him eat grass during his tapas in the caves of Rishikesh, if only to find out whether he could survive on it. The pain, however, became unbearable and he lost consciousness. The story goes that he was rushed to a nearby hospital, but the doctors were not too sure as to the type of treatment he required. He lay there on the hospital bed, his body turning cold, and it seemed he was on the verge of death. Half an hour passed, and then suddenly he regained consciousness. He felt no pain or discomfort now; the body had cured itself of the illness!

A year after this, he began to lose interest in lecturing and began to wonder if there could be some other way of earning his livelihood. His manager, Erma, was shocked. He had become a celebrity of sorts and was in demand everywhere, and there was of course good money to take home after every lecture. But UG refused; suddenly, he no longer had the will to work.

Now the onus of earning money for the family fell on Kusuma Kumari. Since she had degrees both in English and Sanskrit, she found a job as a research assistant with the *World Book Encyclopaedia*. At the time Kusuma Kumari was pregnant with their fourth child, and she was not exactly happy about going out to work for a living. But there was no choice. Her initial fascination with the American lifestyle was gone. In fact, coming from a traditional Indian background, despite her degree in English, she found it difficult to relate to Americans, who to her seemed distant, queer and somewhat intimidating. Now, working with them only added to her misery. Yet, she carried on stoically, and sometimes she would bring her work home. She was required to make notes and answer queries on several aspects of Indian cultural and religious practices. UG, although not a 'good husband' in a traditional way, did help her out in her research work, reading the necessary books and answering these queries for her.

UG now stayed home, attending to the household chores and the needs of their handicapped son, Vasant. Friends would drop in at UG's place and hold discussions with him for hours on theosophy and Indian philosophy. After the birth of their fourth child, Kumar (1958), when Kusuma Kumari resumed work, UG did the babysitting.

After working for about two years, Kusuma Kumari quit her job in frustration and decided to leave America. The thought of her two daughters, who had been left in the

care of her elder sister in India, troubled her all the time. And now, with her fourth child growing up in an ‘alien country’, without the benefit of the love and care of the elders and family members, and with no big change in the condition of Vasant, she worried about the future of her two sons. And to make matters worse, her husband was no longer the man she was married to seventeen years ago. He had changed and changed drastically and now he lived like a stranger at home.

The inevitable happened at the end of the year 1959. Kusuma Kumari decided to leave America with her two sons, even if it meant leaving without her husband. Her imploring that he too must return with them to India had no impact on UG. He bought her the tickets and handed over all of the money that was left with him. Kusuma Kumari and her two sons flew to Madras, and then, somewhere on the way to Pulla, in the train, she lost the box that contained UG’s books, documents and almost all the letters he had received from important people. It was as if all of UG’s past was being systematically erased, and his return made impossible.

Now, with his wife gone back to India, if UG wanted to stay on in the country, he needed sponsorship. The problem was solved when the World University offered him a job. He had been recognized not only as a brilliant speaker, but also as one with a brilliant and well-informed mind. His talents were found to be useful by the university which had planned to open hostels for its students in several parts of the world. UG had no choice; he accepted the offer and made his first trip to India.

When UG first came to Madras to ‘wind up’ his ‘show’ at Adyar, Kusuma Kumari met him and tried to persuade him to join the family. It was to be UG’s last meeting with his wife. She had brought all her children with the hope that UG would, at least for the sake of his children, change his mind. But he was hard as stone; there was no going back. He was finished with his past.

A month later, UG went to Russia, and from there flew to some of the Central European countries he had not visited before. It seems he was getting fed up with his work, and visited various cities in Central Europe, not to do ‘business’, but as a tourist, as one eager to touch and know every important place on the world map. Actually, he had begun to drift. And when finally he landed in London, he was almost finished!

In London, UG began to aimlessly wander about like one who had lost his head. Some describe UG’s phase in London as ‘the dark night of the soul’. UG disagrees, and most vehemently says that there was ‘no heroic struggle with temptation and worldliness, no soul-wrestling with urges, no poetic climaxes, but just a simple withering away of the will’.

His ‘will’ beginning to crack, when UG arrived in England, the winter had set in. With whatever money he had been left with he managed to find a place in Kedagin Square Apartments on Knight Bridge Road. During the day, to escape from the shivering cold and the boredom of staring at the four walls of his room, he would slip into the British Museum and spend the whole day sitting at the table next to the one where Marx had done his research for *Das Kapital*. UG was, of course, not interested in doing any research or reading books. He had in fact stopped reading books on philosophy and religion some years ago. Yet, to pretend that he was there to read something, he would pick up a thesaurus of ‘Underground Slang’ and immerse himself in it for several hours.

In the evenings, he would aimlessly wander the streets of London, reading signboards and the names and telephone numbers of the London call girls written or pasted on the walls, on telephone booths and even on trees.

Winter receded; the air grew warm and the day bright. The summer began and suddenly London had come alive. But nothing helped UG. Nothing changed. To make things worse he was running out of money.

Still, if only to somehow keep himself going, he had to do something. So, whenever an opportunity came his way, he started doing palm-reading for the immigrants (mostly from India and Pakistan), and at times, even giving cooking lessons for a fee. He could have, of course, managed to live on 'the unemployment dole', but he didn't. It was a desperate situation. And he couldn't help asking himself why he had become 'a bum living on the charity of people'. It was quite insane! But he seemed to lack the will even to think of an alternative. He just let himself be blown like a leaf 'here, there and everywhere'.

It was around this time that his wife died in India, the news of which reached UG almost six months late. There was nothing he could do except write to his children expressing his sympathy over the irreparable loss of their mother.

And he drifted along, seeing and not seeing, hearing and not hearing, almost like one who had lost his head. At times, he felt tired, but no hunger. And one day, he realized he had only five pence left in his pocket. He was finished. There was no place to go and there seemed nothing he could do. But, as his luck would have it, help came to him in the form of Swami Ghanananda, the head of the Ramakrishna Mission in London. It was during this time certain changes began to appear in UG's body. In 1953, he had brushed aside the mystical experiences he had undergone in the caves of Rishikesh and his 'near-death experience' at Adyar as of no great consequence. But now, it seems that all these experiences were to converge and build up as it were, and steadily begin to alter his being. From the traditional Hindu perspective it may be interpreted as the awakening of Kundalini energy, the 'serpent power'. One day, while sitting in the meditation room of the Ramakrishna mission, he came upon the following experience. It was only the beginning. In his own words:

I was sitting doing nothing, looking at all those people, pitying them. These people are meditating. Why do they want to go in for samadhi? They are not going to get anything—have been through all that—they are kidding themselves. What can I do to save them from wasting all their lives, doing all that kind of thing? It is not going to lead them anywhere. I was sitting there and in my mind there was nothing—there was only blankness—when I felt something very strange: there was some kind of movement inside of my body. Some energy was coming up from the penis and out through the head, as if there was a hole. It was moving in circles in a clockwise direction and then in a counter clockwise direction. It was like the Wills cigarette advertisement at the airport. It was such a funny thing for me. But I didn't relate it to anything at all. I was a finished man. Somebody was feeding me, somebody was taking care of me, there was no thought of the morrow. Yet inside of me something was happening....

Indeed, the 'new man' was in the making, it was as if he was programmed for it from birth, or some mysterious force was slowly but surely leading him to it. But it was not going to be what he had imagined or thought it would be like. And that is the most mind-boggling, most enigmatic, part of his story.

In any case, his stay in London was over. He quit Ramakrishna Mission, moved on and landed up in Paris. He turned in his airline ticket to India and made a handy 350 dollars. For another three months he let his hair down and stayed at a hotel in Paris. And as he had done before in London, he wandered the streets of Paris and lived on varieties of French cheese, a habit that continues to this day, though it is in very small quantities now.

And again, as it happened in London, at the end of three months he ran out of money. There were no immigrants from India here for him to give cooking lessons to and make some money on the side, and no friends to approach for help either. However, with whatever little money he could scrape up, UG took a chance and reached Geneva. Again, like an amnesiac, he took a room in a hotel, and started wandering about.

Two weeks passed and yet again he found himself without money even to buy his meals, let alone pay the hotel bills. He had reached the end of his tether and there seemed no way out except going to the Indian consulate and requesting the authorities there to send him back to India.

Fortunately, he still had his scrapbook with him which saved him from being thrown out of the consulate. Reading through the praises heaped on UG by the American press, which included the high opinions of the notable Norman Cousins, and Dr S. Radhakrishnan, who was at the time the Indian ambassador to Russia, the vice-consul was quite impressed. But he was helpless, since UG could not be flown back to India at the expense of the government. The only alternative was for UG to write to his people in India and get some money. At that time, the head of Sri Ramakrishna Mission in Geneva, Swami Nityabodhananda, happened to be there in the vice-consul's chamber. The swamiji straightaway offered UG 400 francs to clear all his bills, and then turning to the vice-consul, he advised him not to treat UG as an ordinary person and to see what best he could do to help him. It seems the 'inscrutable power of Sri Ramakrishna' had yet again come to the rescue of UG.

Among the staff of the consulate was a rather unusual woman, Valentine de Kerven. She was sixty-three years old then and UG was seventeen years younger than she. Something about UG touched a deep chord in her. Talking to him a little later, her impulse or sudden resolve to help this strange man from India only grew stronger; she told UG that she could arrange for his stay in Switzerland, and if he really didn't want to go back to India, he shouldn't. For UG it was like a new lease of life and he accepted the offer without a second thought. In point of fact, there was no choice and UG let himself flow with the tide.

A few months later, Valentine gave up her job and the two lived like friends who had been separated for ages but were now reunited on the cusp of a new age. The pension Valentine received was not large but was sufficient to take care of their household expenses and travel. Upon UG's suggestion, she sold almost all her jewellery and antique art pieces she had collected over the years and put the money in the bank. Later, Valentine also set up a separate fund for UG's travels.

Valentine took care of UG, but had no idea of what was to come. The next four years were relatively calm. With all the time in the world and no pressing tasks to attend to, UG and Valentine went travelling outside Geneva. For UG, the search had nearly come to an end. He ate, slept, read *Time* magazine, occasionally travelled, and went for long walks either alone or with Valentine. It was what may be called the period of ‘incubation’. The body was preparing itself for the ‘metamorphosis’ that would challenge the very foundation of human thought built over centuries.

Though all his search for truth, for moksha, was at an end and he was not seeking anything spiritual or mystical, strange, ‘funny’ things had started happening to him. If he rubbed his palms or any part of his body, there was a sparkle, like a phosphorous glow. And when he rolled on his bed with unbearable pain in his head, again there would be sparks. It was electricity. The body had become an electromagnetic field. And he started suffering from constant headaches or from what he calls ‘terrible pain in the brain’. But UG did not discuss what was happening to him with Valentine. However, with all these physical changes and bouts of severe headaches that went on for over three years, UG began to appear much younger than his age. In photographs of him taken at that time, he truly looks like a young man of eighteen or twenty. But this was to change and he would start ageing after the completion of his forty-ninth birthday.

Every summer JK came to Saanen to hold his talks and discussions. With the exception of a few occasions when UG was dragged to these talks by his friends, UG kept a respectful distance from JK and his admirers. But then it so happened that almost every evening, inquisitive seekers would drop in at the chalet (where UG was living) to chat with UG. The chat would invariably turn into a fierce conversation on spiritual matters and UG would debunk the many spiritual concepts thrown at him and generally tear apart JK’s teachings. And then gradually even Krishnamurtiites started to drop in on UG; if some came out of sheer curiosity to see who the ‘other Krishnamurti’ was, the others came either to clarify their doubts or challenge UG with ideas gleaned from JK’s talks. This was to become a pattern every summer. Even JK’s close associates would sometimes amble into the chalet, if only to quench their curiosity, among them Madame Scaravelli and David Bohm. Some, after extended conversations with UG, were to turn their backs on JK and become UG’s close friends.

With all this, ironic and even mysterious as it may seem, on 13 August 1967, UG was dragged to listen to JK’s last talk of the summer. UG sat there, under the huge tent, listening and not listening. At some point JK started saying: ‘... in that silence there is no mind; there is action...’

Stunned, UG listened, and suddenly it all seemed funny. JK was actually describing *his* state of being! How could that be? But it was true. So, ‘I am in that state!’ UG thought to himself. If that was so, then what the hell had he been doing all these thirty-odd years, listening to all these people, struggling, wanting to attain the state of Jesus, of Buddha, when in fact he had already been there! ‘So I am in that state’; the self-assertion, along with a sense of huge wonder, continued for a while. And then it suddenly seemed ridiculous to sit there listening to JK’s description of *his* state of being. He got up and walked out of the tent. But he was not finished. He was in that state, certainly—state of the Buddha and all the enlightened masters. But what exactly was that state? The next moment the question transformed itself into yet another question: ‘How do I know that I

am in that state?’ The question burned through him like a maddening fury. ‘How do I know I am in that state of the Buddha, the state I very much wanted and demanded from everybody? How do I know?’

The next day, still consumed by the question burning through his whole body as it were, he sat on a little wooden bench under a wild chestnut tree overlooking Saanenland with its seven hills and seven valleys bathed in blue light. The question persisted; the whole of his being was possessed by that single question: ‘How do I know?’ In other words, he had become the question. And it went on thus: ‘How do I know that I am in that state? There is some kind of peculiar division inside of me: there is somebody who knows that he is in that state. The knowledge of that state—what I have read, what I have experienced, what they have talked about—it is this knowledge that is looking at that state, so it is only this knowledge that has projected that state. I said to myself: “Look here, old chap, after forty years you have not moved one step; you are there in square number one. It is the same knowledge that projected that state there when you asked this question. You are in the same situation asking the same question, *how do I know?*” Because it is this knowledge, the description of the state by those people, that has created this state for you. You are kidding yourself. You are a damned fool.” But still there was some kind of a peculiar feeling that this was the state. And yet again the question “How do I know that this is the state?”—I didn’t have any answer for that question—it was like a question in a whirlpool—it went on and on and on...’

Then suddenly the question disappeared. He was finished truly and wholly. It was not emptiness, it was not blankness, it was not the void of Buddhism, and it was not the state that all the enlightened persons were supposed to be in. The question just disappeared.

The disappearance of the question marked the extinction of thought—thought crystallized and strengthened over centuries by cultures and religions. The ‘I’ linking up the thoughts, ‘the psychic coordinator collating, comparing and matching all the sensory input so that it could use the body and its relation for its own separative continuity’ was suddenly gone. Now, the link broken, the continuity of thought snapped, exploded, releasing tremendous energy: repairing, cleansing, invigorating, cathartic...

UG deliberately calls it a *Calamity* for he doesn’t want people, particularly the religious kind, to interpret it as something blissful, full of beatitude, love, ecstasy, or even as ‘Enlightenment’. No. It is physical, physiological; a torture. It is a calamity from that point of view.

For the next seven days, seven bewildering changes took place and catapulted him into what he calls the ‘Natural State’. It took another six months for the whole painful process to disappear altogether.

It was a cellular revolution, a full-scale biological mutation. It was the birth of the ‘individual’ in the natural state.

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Towards the end of 1967, UG visited Sringeri in Karnataka and happened to meet the Sankaracharya of Sringeri. Upon hearing of the bewildering physical changes come upon UG, the Sankaracharya, Sri Abhinava Vidya Tirtha Swami, had no doubt that UG was a *jivanmukta* and he is believed to have said, ‘I don’t know of these things in my own

personal experience.... It is very rare that the body survives the shock of such a thoughtless state. According to the scriptures, within three days or seventy-two hours after such an event the body dies. If the body could sustain its vital force and not die off, it must surely be for the sake of saving humanity.'

UG did not think he was a saviour. What had happened to him was not something he had sought, and it had happened despite all his search and sadhana. Now he just wished to stay put in some quiet place and let things be. The peaceful environs of Sringeri, on the banks of the Tunga River, seemed an appropriate place for him to retire. He listened silently to the swamiji for some time and then quietly broached the subject of his retirement. The Sankaracharya is reported to have said, 'I will be responsible for getting you any place around here, if you so wish. But your idea of living alone will never work. Whether you stay in a jungle or in a mountain cave, people won't stop coming to see you.'

It was truly said. One could not hide a sun, nor could the sun choose to go incognito. UG abandoned his resolve to stay away from people. But the question remained: 'What is there to say after a thing like this?' Days passed, and then suddenly it occurred to him:

'I will say it exactly the way it is.'

UG gave his first public talk at the Indian Institute of World Culture in Bangalore, in the month of May 1972. He never again gave any public talk, nor would he accept invitations to speak at universities or institutions. But he could not stop people from meeting and talking to him. He responded to their queries and answered their questions in the way only he could. During his lifetime, UG travelled to practically every country in the world. And this man with 'no message', 'no teaching' probably met and talked to more people than can be counted.

UG usually stayed with friends or in small rented apartments, but never in one place for more than six months. He gave no lectures or discourses. He had no organization, no office, no secretary, and no fixed address. Despite his endless repetition that he had 'no message for mankind', ironically, yet also naturally, thousands of people the world over felt otherwise and flocked to see and listen to his 'anti-teaching'. The 'shop' was kept open from early morning to late evening for people to feel free to come without any prior appointment, and feel free to go whenever they wanted. 'This is how it should be. There should be no special duration, prior appointment, and such,' UG said, and his hosts everywhere maintained the rule without fail.

Wherever he went and stayed, people met him in increasing numbers. There was absolutely no restriction. People could walk in and walk out as in a shopping mall. But there were no wares sold in this shop. People were of course welcome to ask him questions, even questions they dare not ask their parents, their spouses or their intimate friends, let alone their gurus and intellectuals. 'Why do you speak? Where do you get money to travel so much? What do you mean you are neither man nor woman? What is there in your pyjamas? What is love? Do you have sexual urges? Do you have dreams? Why do you criticize and condemn the spiritual gurus? What is moksha? Aren't you an enlightened man? What is your teaching? Do you have a message?' And so on and on. And he answered them all in the way only he could, and in his own inimitable style.

He didn't preach, for there was nothing to preach, nothing there to be changed. The questions thrown at him were often shot down. It was like skeet shooting. As Jeffrey Masson (the author of *Final Analysis: The Making and Unmaking of a Psychoanalyst* and several other popular works) rightly puts it, '...everything he says or does is the mirror-image of what a traditional guru does, in reverse. He discourages you from touching his feet, he questions, subverts and laughs at your so-called spiritual sadhanas, your great ideals, if you have any, and uses every trick possible to stop you speaking further and never go back to him again. If you find him rude, insulting and blasphemous and feel hurt, then you are lost, you have entirely missed the "point", and missed the man. You go to him not to "receive" but to lose, to drop your heavy baggage of ideas, to free yourself from, if you can, non-existing gods and goals. He is a blaze that burns and explodes everything that falsifies the unitary movement of life.'

In the last few years UG had wanted to do something other than answer tiresome questions, for he found all questions (except in the technical area, which is something else) were variations of basically the same question revolving around the ideas of 'being' and 'becoming'. He would curtly yet simply say, 'Becoming something other than what you are is the cause of your misery....You will remain a man of violence as long as you follow some idea of becoming....You can't divide these things into two. The process you adopt to reach what you call being is also a becoming process. You are always in the becoming process, no matter what you call it. If you want to be yourself and not somebody else, that also is a becoming process. There is nothing to do about this. Anything you do to put yourself in that state of being is a becoming process. That is all that I am pointing out,' and that left people with nothing to say.

The conversation comes to an end. He has spoken enough! He has said what he wanted to say a million times. There is utter silence. It is embarrassing; it is also a tremendous relief from the burden of knowing. And UG would start playing his enigmatic little 'games', or invite friends (all are friends, no disciples, no followers) to sing, to dance, and to share jokes. Now, either one drops ones questions and abandons one's 'becoming', or one gets up and leaves. The room explodes with laughter: funny, silly, dark, and apocalyptic! We all mock and laugh at everything, mock heroes and lovers, thinkers and politicians, scientists and thieves, kings and sages, including ourselves, at our own silly yet agonizing struggle for non-existent things. We convulse with laughter. And suddenly, it seems, at last we are delivered from the tyranny of knowledge, beauty, goodness, truth, and God.

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Truly, there was no teaching. A teaching implies a method or a system, a technique or a new way of thinking to be applied in order to bring about a transformation in our way of life. What UG was saying, he insisted, was outside the field of teachability. In point of fact, there was no teacher, no taught and thereby no teaching. There was no symbolism, no metaphysics, no mysticism involved in his words. He meant what he said, literally. There was nothing new in the language of UG. He did not coin any new words like philosophers and scientists do; he used simple, commonplace words, free of metaphysical overtones and spiritual content, to describe life in pure and simple physical and physiological terms so that it was de-psychologized and demystified, and the implication of what came through is quite revolutionary, to say the least.

Generally, in his freewheeling chats he did two things:

First, in physical and physiological terms he described the way he, the body, was functioning. He called it the natural state. It is the state of ‘primordial awareness without primitivism’, or the ‘undivided state of consciousness’, where all desires and fear, and the search for happiness and pleasure, God and truth, have come to an end. He insisted that it is not the state of a God-realized man or ‘enlightenment’. It is not a state of bliss or supreme happiness either. There is only the throb, the pulse, the beat of life. There thoughts emerge in response to stimuli or a question, and then burn themselves up, releasing energy. There is no soul, no atman, only the body, and the body is immortal. It is an acausal state of ‘not-knowing’, of wonder. And this is the way you, UG stated, stripped of the machinations of thought, are also functioning.

Second, he described the way we function, caught in a world of opposites, constantly struggling to become something other than what we are, and in search of non-existent gods and goals. How we all think and function in a ‘thought sphere’ just as we all share the same atmosphere for breathing. How and why we have no freedom of action, unless and until thought comes to an end—but then, it is not in the interest of thought to end itself. Thought is self-protective and fascist in nature, and it’ll use every trick under the sun to give momentum to its own continuity. Thought controls, moulds, and shapes our ideas and actions.

Idea and action—they are one and the same. All our actions are born out of ideas. Our ideas are thoughts passed on to us from generation to generation. And this thought is not the instrument to help us to live in harmony with the life around us. That is why we create all these ecological problems, problems of pollution, and the problem of possibly destroying ourselves with the most destructive weapons that we have invented. There is no way out. The planet is not in danger. We are in danger...

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Who is this UG? What is he? Is it possible to say anything and describe him without making any comparisons, without locating him or his utterances, in the realm of the ‘known’?

It is true that when UG rejects the notion of soul or atman and declares that our search for permanence is the cause of our suffering, he sounds like the Buddha; when he negates all concepts and knowledge systems including his own statements, we may recall the great Buddhist, Nagarjuna, who negated everything including his own act of negation; when he blasts all spiritual discourses as ‘poppycock’ and thrashes the spiritual masters as ‘misguided fools’, we may think of the fiery and abusive words of the great ninth-century mystic of China, Rinzai Gigen, who declared, ‘I have no dharma to give.... There is no Buddha, no dharma, no training and no realization.... If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him!’ When he speaks of ‘affection’ as ‘thuds’ felt in the spot where the thymus gland is located, we may relate it to Sri Ramana’s declaration that the ‘true heart’ is located on the right side of the chest; and when he speaks of ‘wonder’ and the state of ‘not knowing’ we may wonder if this is what the Mother (of Pondicherry) tried to describe in her report of the bodily changes she had experienced between 1962 and 1973. Likewise we may connect some of his radical statements to certain expressions or

declarations in the *Avadhuta Gita*, *Ashtavakra Gita*, the Upanishads and Zen koans, or compare them with the teachings of J. Krishnamurti, Nisargadatta Maharaj and even the postmodern ‘deconstructionists’. Or, persons grounded in nuclear physics may find similarities or parallels between UG’s statements and the observations made in quantum physics. We could go on making such connections and comparisons but still it doesn’t help us to get a handle on the mystery that is UG.

Of course, UG warns us against relating, for instance, his statements about time and space, order and chaos, birth and death to the observations made by scientists since, according to him, they are mere concepts to them and ‘they are observing certain things only through the mirror of their own thinking. The scientist is influencing what he is looking at. Whatever theories he comes up with are only theories; they are not facts to him.’ And as regards the past spiritual masters he said most emphatically, ‘I don’t give a hoot for a sixth-century-BC Buddha, let alone all the other claimants we have in our midst. Do not compare what I am saying with what he, or other religious authorities, has said. If you give what I am saying any spiritual overtones, any religious flavour at all, you are missing the point.’

Does it mean that UG is utterly unique, without a parallel in the history of humankind, or that we should just listen to the utterly new and cathartic voice of the ‘natural state’ and not put whatever he says in any particular frame whether traditional or modern? How then can one understand his admonitions, his mind-boggling statements? Indeed, how is the problem and the beginning of mischief, since it throws us back into the old ‘frames’ of traditional discourses. Yet, we cannot help but ask questions. We cannot but respond to the challenge, albeit cautiously and without putting this ‘wild bird in constant flight’ into a cage, or on a pedestal.

Now, what does it mean to have a body that is in tune with the cosmos and be affected by whatever is happening in nature? What does it mean to be in a ‘declutched state’ or ‘state of not knowing’, or to feel all sounds emerging from within and have no sense of division at all? Was UG in the state of ‘primordial awareness’; was he the end result of the evolutionary process? Is this what the spiritual masters of the past hinted at but could not clearly articulate in the limited vocabulary of their times? Is this what the mystics and the religious gurus speculated about, but erred in institutionalizing the ‘teachings’, in building knowledge systems and inventing methods to reach it? Is then ‘liberation’ all about reactivation of the thymus, pituitary and pineal glands? Is it a biological mutation? In short, is ‘enlightenment’ physical after all? Truly, UG brought something utterly new and revolutionary into the world, into our consciousness, the implication and impact of which cannot be known today. His is the voice that is at once explosive, subversive and cathartic. In ‘bits and pieces’ we may yet find echoes of his voice in the teachings of the past masters. Perhaps we can say there was a need for the masters and they came in answer to the anguish and cries of their times, and marked a leap in human consciousness and the emergence of new ways of being and doing things. They have served their purpose and are gone. Period. Newton has to give way to Einstein and of course Einstein is not the last word in physics. That is not to say we must forget Newton or the past masters. Our learning can never stop. But there’s no need to continue to build temples and set up organizations for them, and look upon them as perfect models. As UG would say, ‘There is no point in reviving all those things and starting revivalistic movements.

That is dead, finished.... All of them have totally failed. Otherwise we wouldn't be where we are today. If there is anything to their claims, we would have created a better and happier world.... We are partly responsible for this situation because we want to be victimized by them. What is the point in blaming those people?

There is no point in blaming ourselves either because it is a two-way game: we play the game and they play the game. But... you can't come into your own being until you are free from the whole thing surrounding the concept of self. To be really on your own, the whole basis of spiritual life, which is erroneous, has to be destroyed. It does not mean that you become fanatical or violent, burning down temples, tearing down the idols, destroying the holy books like a bunch of drunks. It is not that at all...'

Of course that is not the way. We cannot destroy the past, for, we are the past. But we can refuse to be victims and stop playing games with ourselves. Religions have failed to solve our problems, and politics, that 'warty outgrowth of religious thinking', hasn't done better. Our problem lies in our solutions. No wonder UG challenged the very foundation of our cultures, and in particular, our so-called spiritual practices of 'awakening'. Now, in the light of what UG says, can we really critically re-examine our past, de-psychologize and demystify our religious discourses and political culture, and possibly put ourselves on a different track wherein the search and struggle for non-existent gods and goals have come to an end?

(Extracted from *The Penguin U.G.Krishnamurti Reader*, by Mukunda Rao, Penguin Books India, 2007)

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Body, Mind, And Soul — Do they exist?

Whenever Sri Ramana was asked any questions relating to God, Atman and the meaning of life, his usual response used to be: ‘Who is asking the question? Who or what is this ‘I’? What is mind? Enquire into it; find out...’

How does one find out? There is no asking ‘how’, JK would say, yet, do inquire, be aware, and see ‘what is’. On the other hand, UG would assert that the whole business of self-inquiry is a joke. But in the first place, why do we ask these questions? Who am I? What is man? Is there a God? Is soul different from the body? What is the meaning of all this?

But are these really our questions? Or, are we repeating the questions already asked by others in the past, sometimes rephrasing them this way or that? Or, are we asking these questions because our traditions and Gurus have told us that they are very important and that it is possible to find answers? Or, is it, to use UG’s language, because the old answers are really no answers, that the questions have remained and continue to be asked. Could it be that there are actually no questions but only unsatisfying and unconvincing answers, and these answers are our problem. Is the problem that we hope that one day we should be able to find satisfactory and final answers to all our questions?

Obviously, of all the creatures living on this planet, only the self-conscious human being asks questions. The questioning is backed by a sort of a priori belief that it is possible to know, to understand and share or communicate that understanding to others. Otherwise, all our inquiries, all our searching, all our sciences should come to a grinding halt.

However, there has arisen, time and again, a strong suspicion about this whole business of the search. For, to ask *what* something is, or to ask, say, what the body, or the mind or a human being is, is to seek out its essence. Does such a thing as essence exist? This is indeed a metaphysical question and metaphysical answers are no real answers at all. ‘Man does not exist’, declared Foucault. Actually, what he meant was that the body-mind composite, the empirico-transcendental duo is nothing more than a metaphysical construct. Nietzsche too questioned the very basis of this search, for, according to him, it is rooted in the value not only of absolutes but also of opposites, by playing off one against the other.¹

There is nothing outside the text, announced Derrida, meaning that there is only the text and the language in which it is expressed. The implication is that we have first to examine the text, how it works, examine the language and see if it offers any meaning, stable or otherwise, and whether the texts achieves anything at all!

So then, for many postmodernists it is not the question, but language itself that is problematic. The self, or even the body, is not something given, but the significant effect of language. The self is not outside of language, and is always in relation to the ‘other’. In fact, it is in and through language and in comparison with others that man constructs himself as a subject, and establishes the concept of self or ego.²

It seems to be a terribly futile epistemological exercise. As G B Madison would say: ‘So long as we remain bound to epistemology, which is to say, to metaphysics, searching for ultimate basis or “models”, sources, grounds, or origins, ultimate causal, essentialist, fundamentalist explanations, we are perhaps condemned to go round in endless circles, like a dog chasing its tail in vain.’³

But the chase is on. The dog seems to be getting nearer its own tail, particularly in the non-philosophical, non-metaphysical domains. A considerable number of the psychologists, neuro-physiologists or neuroscientists, geneticists, and socio-biologists do not bother too much about whether ‘mind’ exists at all. They simply grant it a vague epiphenomenal status and get down to talking about behavioural patterns and neural activity. And we see is a certain interpenetration of disciplines: The psychologists reduce their science to biology, the biologists to chemistry and physics, and physicists to the enigmatic man who happens to be the observer who seems to create or construct a phenomenon rather than discover it. This epistemological circle, avers Madison, has not led us anywhere closer to a unified theory or non-reductionist understanding of the human person.

However, there are tough molecular biologists and geneticists who believe that they have nearly solved the body-mind problem within their discipline. It is interesting to take a quick look at two of their important theories.

The Selfish Gene

Richard Dawkin’s celebrated yet controversial book, *The Selfish Gene* narrates a fascinating story of the evolution of man on earth from the genetic point of view. It is the story of the journey of the ruthless gene, starting its passage from the ‘primordial soup’ through Darwinian ‘natural selection’, through ‘mutation’ and ‘adaptation’ to the ‘Homo sapiens’, the human body, which is but a fantastic machine used by the gene for its perpetuation.

According to Dawkins, it is erroneous to assume some grand design or purpose to evolution, or that it is for ‘the good of the species’. No—it is for the good of the individual or the gene. The argument that culture is more important than genes to the understanding of human nature is at best only wishful thinking. ‘Much as we wish to believe otherwise,’ writes Dawkins, ‘universal love and the welfare of the species as a whole are concepts that simply do not make evolutionary sense.’

Anything that has evolved through natural selection is *selfish*, Homo sapiens included. ‘Selfish,’ in the sense that genes act only for themselves, their only interest being their own replication. Come what may, they copy themselves and ‘want’ to be passed on to the next generation. ‘Selfish’, or ‘want’ ought not to be understood as some grand purpose, aim or intention (which are all only mental constructions) but only as ‘chemical instructions’ that can be copied. In this relentless journey of the gene, altruism too is but another technique of the gene, another facet that is played out to ensure its continuity. ‘To put it in a slightly more respectable way, a group, such as a species or a population within a species, whose individual members are prepared to sacrifice themselves for the welfare

of the group, may be less likely to go extinct than a rival group whose individual members place their own selfish interests first.’ Altruism is selfishness in disguise and ‘often altruism within a group goes with selfishness between groups.’⁴

These genes or replicators are basically the same kind of molecules in all living organisms—from bacteria to elephants. The human body, which has evolved over millions of years, is the handiwork of the very same gene, created for its safe perpetuation. ‘We are all survival machines,’ declares Dawkins, ‘for the same kind of replicators—molecules called DNA—but there are many different ways of making a living in the world, the replicators have built a vast range of machines to exploit them. A monkey is a machine that preserves genes up trees, a fish is a machine that preserves genes in water...DNA works in mysterious ways.’

It is genes that are immortal, not some dreamed-up spirit or soul which we imagine and identify ourselves with. There is no such thing as God or spirit either! There are only genes that leap ‘from body to body down the generations, manipulating body after body in its own way and for its own ends...’ We are merely their survival machines and ‘when we have served our purpose we are cast aside. But genes are denizens of geological time: genes are forever.’

What then is ‘mind’ in this scheme of things? Is it just another technique, another ‘machine’ used by the gene for its own survival? Towards the end of his book, Dawkins proposes a theory of what he calls *meme*, apparently to solve the niggling body-mind problem. If the ‘body’ is the survival machine of the gene, the ‘mind’—that is, memory—is the survival machine of the meme, proclaims Dawkins. Unlike genes, memes are not physically located, yet, he asserts: ‘Memes should be regarded as living structures, not just metaphorically but technically.’

If the gene emerged out of the ‘primordial soup’, human culture is a product of the ‘new soup’—memes. But how and when did memes emerge? Dawkins says: ‘The old gene-selected evolution, by making brains, provided the “soup” in which the first memes arose. Once the self-copying memes had arisen, their own, much faster, kind of evolution took off. And they seem to have taken over the genes and start a new, independent kind of evolution of their own.’⁵

There are different kinds of memes—what Dawkins calls ‘meme complexes’—such as fashions in dress and diet, ceremonies and customs, art and architecture, engineering and technology, tunes, ideas and concepts—all of which ‘evolve in historical time in a way that looks like highly speeded up genetic evolution, but has really nothing to do with genetic evolution.’ In other words, these new replicators, like selfish genes, perpetuate themselves simply because it is advantageous to them. They plant themselves on or parasitize the brain, ‘turning it into a vehicle for the meme’s propagation in just the way that a virus may parasitize the genetic mechanism of a host cell.’ According to Dawkins, God exists ‘if only in the form of a meme with high survival value, or infective power, in the environment provided by human cultures.’

The Meme Machine

Surprisingly, it is not Dawkins idea or theory of selfish gene (which many people find reductionist and reactionary), but his novel concept of the meme that has caught the imagination of a considerable number of psychologists, biologists and even cultural theorists, although they may not all use the term to mean the same thing. For instance, Ken Wilber finds the theory quite problematic⁶ though he too uses the term ‘green meme’ to mean pluralistic relativism embedded in egalitarian, anti-hierarchical values.

Susan Blackmore, a psychologist who is interested in ‘near-death experiences’, the effects of meditation, the paranormal and evolutionary psychology, has applied the idea of meme to develop a theory of memetics in her book, *The Meme Machine*. Since her theory has some bearing on what UG has been saying about the nature of thought, it is worthwhile to consider some of her central ideas.

Blackmore believes that memetic theory not only solves what is called the ‘hard problem of consciousness’ and the body-mind dualism more effectively than other theories, but can also open up a whole new way of seeing and being in the world.

We copy each other all the time and with great ease. We imitate and learn through imitation, and that *imitation* is what distinguishes us from animals and makes us special. When we imitate an idea, an instruction, a behaviour, even a gesture, something is passed on again and again and from generation to generation, which takes on a life of its own. It becomes independent and autonomous, for instance, like Karl Popper’s idea of World 3 (the world of ideas, language and stories, works of art and technology, mathematics and science). This is the meme: the second replicator (after the gene). Memes are stored in human brains or in books and computers and passed on endlessly. Memes spread for their own benefit, without regard to whether they are useful, neutral or harmful. As examples, the idea of God, or revolution, or a particular invention, spread irrespective of whether they are useful or not. Some memes are useful and creative, some harmful and even dangerous. But memes don’t care, they just ‘want’ to spread and perpetuate themselves. ‘There is no master plan, no end point, and no designer.’ What we call new creative or original ideas are only ‘variation and combination of old ideas.’ Memes have uncanny ways of perpetuating themselves. But not all thoughts are memes; not our immediate perceptions and emotions, which are ours alone and which we may not pass on. However, once we express them or speak about them to others, be it our feelings or our ideas, they are passed on.

‘Memes have nothing to do with genes. If ‘genes are instructions encoded in molecules of DNA—memes are instructions embedded in human brains, or artefacts such as books, pictures, bridges or steam engines.’⁷

Acknowledging Dennett’s idea of ‘competition between memes to get into our brain’ to make us the kinds of creatures we are, Blackmore believes that our minds and selves are created by the interplay of the memes. For that matter, human consciousness itself is a product of memes.

There are only memes, only thoughts. Thinking involves energy. Much of our thinking is sheer frustration, self-pity, which we could do without, to the huge advantage of the

body. Yet thinking goes on, draining the energies of the body. It happens because the memes, replicators or thoughts are trying to get themselves copied, and in this process, language plays a crucial role in helping memes copy themselves and ensure their perpetuation.

Blackmore says that for at least 2.5 million years, memes have coevolved with genes. Now, for the last century or so, they are ‘off the leash’ and have become independent of genes. For instance, sex is no longer indulged in for reproduction alone, for sex has been taken over by memes. Similarly, the self or the I is the doing of the meme called the ‘selfplex, which, strangely, does not exist. It is an illusion, says Blackmore, in the sense that there is no self separate from the brain, no continuous, persistent and autonomous self. It does not exist, though ‘we construct many of our miseries out of the idea of a persistent self.’ Blackmore quotes the Buddha: ‘...actions do exist, and also their consequences, but the person that acts does not.’

The self is a vast ‘memeplex’, the most insidious and pervasive of all memes. Susan calls it ‘selfplex’, put together by self-protecting memeplexes, by the process of memetic evolution. It is this selfplex that ‘gives rise to ordinary human consciousness based on the false idea that there is someone inside who is in charge...’ but actually it is an illusion, ‘a memetic construct: a fluid and ever changing group of memes installed in a complicated meme machine.’

Therefore, Blackmore suggests that to live honestly one must be free of this illusion, this false sense of self, and allow decisions to be made by themselves. ‘From the memetic point of view the selfplex is not there to make decisions, or for the sake of your happiness, or to make your life easier, it is there for the propagation of the memes that make it up.’ In other words, ‘by its very nature the selfplex brings about self-recrimination, self-doubt, greed, anger, and all sorts of destructive emotions.’

Blackmore ends her thesis on a brilliant, rather ‘spiritual’ note, going beyond her guru Richard Dawkins’ idea of rebellion ‘against the tyranny of the selfish replicators’. She writes, ‘Compassion and empathy come naturally. It is easy to see what another person needs, or how to act in a given situation, if there is no concern about a mythical self to get in the way. Perhaps the greater part of true morality is simply stopping all the harm that we normally do, rather than taking on any great and noble deeds; that is, the harm that comes from having a false sense of self... We can live as human beings, body, brain, and memes, living out our lives as a complex interplay of replicators and environment, in the knowledge that that is all there is. Then we are no longer victims of the selfish selfplex. In this sense we can be truly free—not because we can rebel against the tyranny of the selfish replicators but because we know that there is no one to rebel.’⁸

Alternative Theories Or Towards A Unified Theory Of Life

Alternative theories based on the ideas of transpersonal and integral psychology, hyperspace, ‘deep structure’, quantum mechanics, psychokinesis, the implicate order and so on basically work on the idea of the interconnectedness of life and the universe. Their thesis is that we cannot hope to understand the mystery of the body, the enigma of the

mind, and our belief in God or Spirit, in isolation, but only within this intriguing ebb and flow of reality, of the inextricable, interconnectedness of all things.

These theorists, striving to develop a unified or integral theory of life, reject what they consider to be materialist, linear, reductionist theories of body-mind put forward by biologists such as Francis Crick and Richard Dawkins. The dogma that genes determine behaviour, which has become the conceptual basis of genetic engineering and which is vigorously supported by the biotechnology industry, is viewed with suspicion by persons like Fritjof Capra, the well-known author of *The Tao of Physics*. Capra thinks that the claim made by geneticists that they have found the ‘blueprint’, the ‘language of life’, is premature and misleading. But then, within the family of molecular biologists too, there are a few who are critical of the view of genes as causal agents of human behaviour and of all biological phenomena. For instance, the molecular biologist, Richard Strohman, who is quoted with approval by Capra in support of his criticism, thinks that the basic fallacy of genetic determinism lies in a confusion of levels: ‘the illegitimate extension of a genetic paradigm from a relatively simple level of genetic coding and decoding to a complex level of cellular behaviour represents an epistemological error of the first order.’⁹

The human body is not a mere survival machine for genes, nor is it just a collection of genes. Genes by themselves do not simply act. They have to be activated. For that matter, William Gelbart and Evelyn Fox Keller, both geneticists, find the term ‘gene’ to be of limited value, that it cannot be ‘the core explanatory concept of biological structure and function’, and might be a hindrance to the understanding of the genome.

So then, ‘many of the leading researchers in molecular genetics,’ says Capra, ‘now realize the need to go beyond genes and adopt a wider epigenetic perspective’ to explain the biological structure and function. There is ‘the growing realization that the biological processes involving genes—the fidelity of DNA replication, the rate of mutations, the transcription of coding sequences, the selection of protein functions and pattern of gene expression—are all regulated by the cellular network in which the genome is embedded.’¹⁰

In some ways the ‘epigenetic network’ seems analogous to the ‘morphic field’, the term Rupert Sheldrake, a cell biologist and plant physiologist, employs for an understanding of human consciousness and the process of evolution. Explaining his hypothesis of morphic resonance and morphic fields, Rupert Sheldrake thinks that ‘genes are grossly overrated and that a lot of inheritance depends on the memory which is carried within these organising fields of organisms. This memory is a kind of cumulative memory, a kind of habit memory, which is built up through a pool of species experience, depending on a process I call morphic resonance.’⁶¹ In effect, Sheldrake proposes ‘a field theory of the mind’ in order to arrive at a more integral understanding of the nature of the mind, which in many ways ties up with other attempts and theories to overcome the traditional frameworks of biology, psychology and epistemology that have largely been shaped by the seventeenth-century Cartesian division between mind and matter that has ‘haunted Western science and philosophy for more than 300 years.’

These alternative theorists also question the recent research by neuroscientists on the function of different areas of the brain to explain religious and mystical experiences in

terms of neural network, neurotransmitters and brain chemistry. For instance, neuroscientists have put forward the idea that normal functioning of the right frontal lobe, specifically the parietal lobe, helps orient a person in three-dimensional space, and controls much of our sense of self, and the decreased activity of the parietal lobe could cause the blurring between the self and the rest of the world and give rise to a transcendental feeling of being one with God or with the world.

Vilayanur S Ramachandran, an eminent researcher and author of the widely acclaimed book, *Phantoms in the Brain*, believes that questions on the Self, free will and consciousness can now be approached and explained empirically. He says, ‘Even though its common knowledge these days, it never ceases to amaze me that all the richness of our mental life—all our feelings, our emotions, our thoughts, our ambitions, our love life, our religious sentiments and even what each of us regards as his own intimate private self—is simply the activity of these little specks of jelly in your head, in your brain. There is nothing else... Lofty questions about the mind are fascinating to ask, philosophers have been asking them for three millennia both in India where I am from and here in the West—but it is only in the brain that we can eventually hope to find the answers.’¹²

The alternative theorists, of course, are suspicious of this over enthusiasm of neuroscientists like Ramachandran and reject their ‘findings’ on the ground that the neuroscientists haven’t been able to repeat their experiments to produce identical results as incontrovertible proof, simply because you cannot really reduce human experiences or human consciousness to purely neural mechanisms. These scientists succeed only in explaining away the complex relationship between the nature of the human brain and consciousness.

So, Fritjof Capra suggests: ‘Mind is not a thing but a process of cognition, which is identified with the process of life. The brain is a specific structure through which this process operates. The relationship between mind and brain, therefore, is one between process and structure. Moreover, the brain is not the only structure through which the process of cognition operates. The entire structure of the organism participates in the process of cognition, whether or not the organism has a brain and a higher nervous system.’ For that matter, ‘At all levels of life, beginning with the simplest cell, mind and matter, process and structure are inseparably connected.’¹³

Rupert Sheldrake comes close to UG’s opinion when he suggests that ‘the brain is like a tuning system, and that we tune into our own memories by a process of morphic resonance, which I believe is a general process that happens throughout the whole nature.’

Extending this idea as it were, Saul-Paul Sirag, a theoretical physicist, suggests that ‘in some cosmic sense there really is only one consciousness, and that is really the whole thing—in other words, that hyperspace itself is consciousness acting on itself, and space-time is just a kind of studio space for it to act out various things in.’ Karl Pribram, a professor of neuropsychology, who explores the similarities between current findings in neuropsychology and in quantum physics, thinks that our ideas of mind-brain, for that matter our whole understanding of life, are still caught up in terms of classical mechanics, with cause and effect relationships. In actuality, he says, we can never find out what and where the cause of a particular act or event is. ‘The whole system does it. There isn’t a

start and a midst and so on, because time and space are enfolded, and therefore there is no causality.’ Every act is ‘very much a quantum type, holographic, implicate order kind of idea.’ In view of this, there is no such thing as self, or mind as such; rather, there are only ‘mental processes, mental activities. But there isn’t a thing called the mind.’¹⁴

UG’s Response: Mind is a Myth

Although the various theories discussed above, on the one hand, seem to contradict and cancel each other out, on the other hand they appear to support, extend and explicate each other in quite complex ways. Some of these theories come close to what UG has been saying for more than three decades now. However, our purpose is not so much to note the parallels, but see where and how UG deepens our understanding of the body-mind relationship and the interconnectedness of life and the universe. This is not just an idea or an insight with him, but the way he moves and lives in the world, he asserts. It is amazing how very spontaneously, without batting an eyelid, and with absolute clarity he answers questions that have troubled philosophers and religious thinkers over the centuries. In this context, one may be tempted to compare and contrast UG’s utterances with the Enlightenment traditions and teachings of the sages of the world, although this would not necessarily enhance our understanding of things. In fact, it could even mislead us into thinking that what UG has been saying is as old as hills, so we should tread carefully here. For, in actual fact, there *is* something new, utterly new in what UG is saying, the implication of which is tremendous and critical for a world that seems to have more or less decided what is right for humanity. Unless we break out of our old, and established mode of thinking, our situation will continue to be like that of a dog chasing its own tail in vain.

Outwardly, there is nothing new in the language UG uses. He does not coin any new words like philosophers and scientists do, he uses simple, commonplace terms, free of metaphysical overtones and spiritual content, but what comes through is revolutionary, to say the least.

What is there is only the body, asserts UG. There is no mind. But for centuries we have been made to believe that there is an entity — the ‘I’, the self, the psyche, the mind. There is no such thing. It’s only an illusion.

In the light of what UG says, we need to understand the term ‘mind’ at two levels.

Mind in the sense of intelligence is life itself and is everywhere. It is present in the seed of a plant as much as in a mosquito. It is there in matter, in every particle of the universe, in every cell of the body. This mind or consciousness as intelligence, as awareness, says UG, ‘functioning in me, in you, in the garden slug and earthworm outside, is the same. In me it has no frontiers; in you there are frontiers – you are enclosed in that.’

When Arthur M. Young, says that photons can think, or that so-called matter has properties of mind, or when Saul-Paul Sirag suggests that ‘hyperspace itself is consciousness acting on itself’, they are, in point of fact, saying that Mind is immanent in matter at all levels of life. The *Mundaka Upanishad* too seems to suggest the same thing

poetically: ‘As the web comes out of the spider and is withdrawn...so springs the universe from the eternal Brahman...Brahman ...brought forth out of himself the material cause of the universe; from this came the primal energy, and from the primal energy mind, from mind the subtle elements, from the subtle elements the many worlds...’

But this mind as intelligence, as primal energy, is not our problem, although it would be if we make that into a philosophy or build a religion around it. It simply points to the inseparability of life and the interconnectedness of everything, which by implication means our sense of separation is an error and an illusion.

Our actual problem is the mind in the sense of self. Buddha did not find this self inside or outside, above or below, and UG says it is non-existent. But it is this non-existent self that has created religions, cultures, politics, technology, and the market forces that have begun to dominate the world today. It is the same self that not only produces great architecture, wonderful artefacts, enchanting music but also invents nuclear bombs, wages wars, abuses natural resources and endangers the existence of life on earth.

How does this sense of self arise in the first place? And why? Tradition says we do not know, cannot know, it is *ignorance*. The evolutionary biologists say that self-consciousness probably arose to enable the survival of the hominid. In other words, self-consciousness was the emergent property of the brain, or the result of some strange mutation engineered by the body itself in its fight against the forces threatening its survival. A strange adaptation!

The myth of creation found in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* offers layered meanings and implications: In the beginning there was nothing but It, the Self (in the sense of Awareness), in the form of a person (the Body). It looked around and saw that there was nothing but itself, whereupon its first utterance was ‘It is I’; hence the birth of ‘I’. Then it was afraid, and desired a second. It split itself into two: female and male. The male and female now desired each other and embraced and from them arose all living creatures, including the human race.

Hence, it is said, the sense of aloneness, the sense of lack, fear and desire (*libido, kama*). To put it differently, in the words of Joseph Campbell: ‘Life and death became two, which had been one, and the sexes became two, which also had been one.’ One could say that God divided itself into two and thus began the terrific play, the *maya*; what tradition calls the *lila* of Brahman.

In other words, this primordial creature(s) was thrown out of the Garden of Eden (not in the orthodox Christian sense but in Joseph Campbell’s image), breaking the unitary consciousness. It was a grand illusion, forever accompanied by a sense of separation, alienation, lack, and suffering. As long as this illusion of separation, this ego, remains, in the words of Joseph Campbell again, ‘the commensurate illusion of a separate deity also will be there; and vice versa, as long as the idea of a separate deity is cherished, an illusion of ego, related to it in love, fear, worship, exile, or atonement, will be there. But precisely that illusion of duality is the trick of *maya*.’¹⁵

UG, however, refuses to use this kind of religious or mythical metaphor, or even words that may carry philosophical or metaphysical connotations. The terms such as soul, universal mind, Oversoul, Atman or Higher Self are all only persuasive words that seduce people and put them on the wrong track—a bogus chartered flight! UG believes life has to be described in simple, physical and physiological terms: ‘It must be demystified and depsychologized’.

According to UG, somewhere along the line of evolution, the human species experienced self-consciousness, which does not exist in other species on this planet. (UG refuses to say why this happened, probably because it cannot be known; it is not within the realm of knowing, for thought cannot know its own origin.) With the help of this sense of self-consciousness, man accorded himself a superior position over and above the other species on this planet. It is this separation and sense of superiority that has been the source of man’s problems and tragedy.

Since the whole of Nature is a single unit, human beings cannot ever really separate themselves from the totality of what we call Nature. Our sense of separation from Nature is an illusion and it is in this illusion that the ‘I’ is born (the ‘I’ itself being the illusion) and tries to perpetuate itself, forever seeking permanence. In actuality, there is no permanence, no security, no permanent happiness, and no ‘I’, no separate, psychological entity. The search for permanence and the ‘I’ are the same thing. The institutionalisation of this search is what all religions are about. There is only the ‘I’, as a first person singular pronoun which, UG says, he uses only to make the conversation simpler. There is no other ‘I’.

Sometimes, for purposes of convenience, and for want of a better or adequate word, UG uses the term ‘world mind’ to explain the nature of ‘I’ or the ‘self’. The world mind constitutes the totality of thoughts, feelings, experiences, and hopes of humankind.

‘The world mind is that which has created you and me, for the main purpose of maintaining its status quo, its continuity. That world mind is self-perpetuating, and its only interest is to maintain its continuity, which it can do only through the creation of what we call individual minds — your mind and my mind. So without the help of that knowledge, you have no way of experiencing yourself as an entity. This so-called entity — the I, the self, the soul, the psyche — is created by that. And so we are caught up in this vicious circle, namely, of knowledge giving you the experience, and the experience in turn strengthening and fortifying that knowledge... This knowledge is put into us during the course of our life. When you play with a child, you tell him, “Show me your hand, show me your nose, show me your teeth, your face... what is your name?” this is how we build up the identity of the individual’s relationship with his body and with the world around.’

So, knowledge is all that there is, says UG. The ‘me’, the ‘self’ is nothing but the totality of this inherited knowledge that is passed from generation to generation. Susan Blackmore would be delighted to know that what UG says about knowledge and thoughts reflects her ideas: Memes and memplex are passed on through imitation, education, and knowledge systems, for ensuring their own continuity. But she would note that according to UG, thoughts are passed on not only through education and books; thoughts are everywhere, and we have no way of finding out the seat of thought or human

consciousness. Sometimes, he uses the phrase ‘thought sphere’ or ‘world mind’ to explain the all-pervasive nature of thought. But how this knowledge, these thoughts, this memory is passed on is a mystery. The genetic code is only a part of it; It is much more than the genetic code. He says:

There is no such thing as your mind and my mind. Mind is everywhere, sort of like the air we breathe. There is a thought sphere. It is not ours and not mine. It is always there. Your brain acts like an antenna, picking and choosing what signals it wants to use. That is all. You use the signals for purposes of communication. First of all, we have to communicate with ourselves. We begin as children naming everything over and over again. Communicating with others is a little more complex and comes next. The problem, or the pathology if you will, arises when you constantly communicate with yourself, irrespective of any outside demand for thought. You are all the time communicating with yourself: “I am happy.... I am not happy.... What is the meaning of life?...” and so on. If that incessant communication within yourself is not there, *you* are not there as you now know and experience yourself. When that inner monologue is no longer there, the need to communicate with others is absent. So you communicate with others only to maintain that communication you are having with yourself, your inner monologue. This kind of communication is possible only when you rely and draw upon the vast totality of thoughts passed on by man from generation to generation. Man has through the process of evolution learned to draw from this storehouse quicker, subtler, and more refined thoughts than the rest of the animals. They have powerful instincts. Through thinking man has enabled himself to survive more efficiently than the other species. This ability of thought to adapt is the curse of man.

And it seems to be the curse of man never to know the origin of thought. It is too vast, It has the tremendous momentum gathered over thousands of years of evolutionary history, and within it also survive what UG calls the ‘plant consciousness’ and the ‘animal consciousness’. Whatever insights we might claim to have are arbitrary, the invention of thought itself, for they are a result of thought observing thought, thought thinking about itself. It is not in the nature of thought to know either its own origin or the origin of things. In fact, there is no such thing as the origin of things, origin of consciousness, or the origin of the universe, asserts UG—a position that some scientists seem to have come round to accept today, though reluctantly. In the study of matter, molecules, atoms, particles, and quarks, the scientists finally say that there is really nothing there. Indeed it is an exercise in futility, avers UG; we shall never be able to discover the fundamental particle or the building blocks of the universe, because, ‘the fundamental particle does not exist’.

In a conversation with Jeffrey Mishlove, Capra admits that ‘quantum physics has brought a dissolution of the notion of hard and solid objects, and also of the notion that there are fundamental building blocks of matter.’ The search, however, goes on, although scientists have more or less come to a tacit understanding that in effect, all our laws of physics, all our observations and findings are generated by our minds. The physicist Evan Harris Walker expresses this position most tellingly when he says that essentially what

makes a quantum reaction finally get to some determinate end point is a human consciousness observing it.¹⁶

Thus, we see that in effect, thought manufactures all our ideas and worldviews, for in this lies its illusory existence and its own continuity. But this thought, the ‘I’, separated from nature, from the totality of life, also knows that it cannot exist forever, that it has to come to an end. Hence, the ‘I’ also entails the fear of extinction. And this fear, which is ‘me’, the ‘I’, creates an artificial immortality by way of

- a) linking up thoughts and giving them an illusion of continuity,
- b) projecting an entity, a soul, heaven, etc.,
- c) depending upon and using the body for its own continuity.

Strange and contradictory as it may sound, thought by itself and in itself can do no damage or harm. But when the ‘I’, the ‘self’, uses thought to achieve what it cannot achieve the problems begin. In UG’s words: ‘The thoughts themselves cannot do any harm. It is when you attempt to use, censor, and control those thoughts to *get* something that your problems begin. You have no recourse but to use thought to get what you want in this world. But when you seek to get what does not exist — God, bliss, love, etc., through thought, you only succeed in pitting one thought against another, creating misery for yourself and the world.’

The nature of thought or the self is to think always in pairs, in terms of opposites—love and hate, birth and death, good and evil, God and Satan, spirituality and materialism—and always to privilege one over the other. But such a separation cannot be made, for love and hate, good and evil are born of each other, or rather from the same source; in short, the pairs are made of basically the same self-protective movement of thought.

There is no such thing as spirituality, asserts UG. It is yet another movement of thought or the ‘self’, that creates this artificial division, hoping to overcome the problem that thought has created for itself in the first place. We could perhaps see through this terrible dualism in yet another way. ‘Thought is matter,’ says UG. So when the ‘I’ uses thought to achieve either material or spiritual goals, it is basically the same movement of thought, (that is, matter) to free itself from what may be called self-created anxiety, sorrow, conflict, hate, envy, and the fear of coming to an end. The society may have placed the spiritual goals on a higher level than the material goals, but actually all values, even the so-called spiritual values, are all materialistic.

The Brain is Only a Reactor

The brain has nothing to do with thought. Thoughts are not manufactured by the brain. Concepts such as synapses, micro-circuits, Broca’s area, and so on do not explain the origin and nature and function of thought. As UG says, thought is everywhere. It is there as traces of the past, as memory in every cell of the body, including the brain. And it is there in the ‘thought sphere’ or ‘world mind’. It is the ‘I’ that uses thought, and the body,

strictly speaking, is not involved in its play. Yet, the body carries, in every cell, the traces of not only human memory, but also of plant and animal consciousness.

To emphasize the point again, the brain is not the ‘creator’ of the ‘self’ or of thought, it is only a ‘reactor’. ‘It is, rather, that the brain is like an antenna,’ insists UG, ‘picking up thoughts on a common wavelength, a common thought sphere.’

What UG is saying is that the brain has a minimal function in the protection and survival of the body. Rather, it is only the coordinator of bodily functions. It is not the creator of the coordinator, the ‘I’, which in fact uses the brain. Left to itself, the brain is only concerned with the safety and survival of the body. It is only a reactor, or as Sheldrake would say, it is ‘like a tuning system’. The brain does not generate thoughts, it only picks up thoughts. Now, in UG’s words again:

Thoughts are not really spontaneous. They are not self-generated. They always come from outside. Another important thing for us to realize and understand is that the brain is not a creator. It is singularly incapable of creating anything. But we have taken for granted that it is something extraordinary, creating all kinds of things that we are so proud of. It is just a reactor and a container. It plays a very minor role in this living organism.

The brain is only a computer. Through trial and error you create something. But there are no thoughts there. There is no thinker there. Where are the thoughts? Have you ever tried to find out? What there is is only about thought but not thought. You cannot separate yourself from a thought and look at it. What you have there is only a thought about that thought, but you do not see the thought itself. You are using those thoughts to achieve certain results, to attain certain things, to become something, to be somebody other than what you actually are. I always give the example of a word-finder. You want to know the meaning of a word and press a button. The word-finder says, “Searching.” It is thinking about it. If there is any information put in there, it comes out with it. That is exactly the way you are thinking. You ask questions and if there are any answers there, they come out. If the answers are not there, the brain says “Sorry.” The brain is no different from a computer.

Is There A Soul?

Etymologically speaking, it is said that *atman* in Sanskrit, *psyche* in Greek, *anima* and *spiritus* in Latin mean ‘breath’, as do *pneuma* in Greek and *ruah* in Hebrew. If spirit or soul means ‘breath’, perhaps there isn’t much to say about it except that *prana* or ‘breath’ is the defining characteristic of all life forms. Linked to it, one might suggest, is the ancient idea of ‘spirit’ believed in by the ‘primitive’ or tribal people the world over for thousands of years. They believed that a mysterious spirit (or spirits) animates the whole world, not only life forms but also the whole of Nature.

However, the notions of spirit or soul as found in the belief systems of the major religions and even mystical reports are complex, complicated and different from each other. The Hindu notion of *atman* or Self is not the same as the Christian or Islamic *soul*.

The one common defining characteristic of these different narratives of the soul is that it is conceived of as an independent or separate entity, and that in its complex relationship with God, mind and body, the soul is always privileged over the body. The soul is pure and transcendental; the body is impure, mundane, subject to decay and death. The body is something to be rejected, abandoned, and transcended in order to realize and experience the soul. Despite the hermeneutical attempts to overcome the dualism of body-soul, soul-God, it has to be conceded that this dualism between the body and the soul is the bedrock on which all religions are built and continues to be the core of all their discourses. It is the same with what goes under the name of spirituality, too. After all, what is spirituality? Isn't it understood as something concerned not with the material or the mundane, but with the sacred, the holy, with Soul, God or things divine? Isn't spirituality seen as an engagement with the soul or spirit as opposed to matter, body, and external reality? This dichotomy or dualism between spirit and matter, body and soul, spirituality and materialism is the warp and woof of all religions and all spiritual traditions.

If one were to consign the notion of the soul to the dustbin, religions would collapse like a pack of cards, and gurus would have to find some other job to earn their living. In UG's words, 'We have been fed on this kind of bunk for centuries, and if this diet were to be changed, we would all die of starvation.'

In many ways, this is analogous to our belief in 'love', without which most of our artists, novelists and poets would not survive, and the gargantuan structures of the film and music industry would soon be a heap of ash.

Just as hate is seen as the enemy of love, the body is seen as the enemy of the soul. The major religions might differ in their interpretations of the soul, but they all pit the soul against the poor body! However, some people may argue that of all religions, Hinduism—or rather, India's different religious groups and spiritual traditions—have developed a more rigorous and sophisticated discourse on atman which is radically different from the other notions of the soul. It isn't. The notion of atman, however sophisticated and complex, is not free of this awful dichotomy.

'While our bodily organization undergoes changes, while our thoughts gather like clouds in the sky and disperse again,' writes S Radhakrishnan, 'the self is never lost. It is present in all, yet distinct from all.' The nature of atman or soul is 'not affected by ordinary happenings. It is the source of the sense of identity through numerous transformations. It remains itself though it *sees* all things. It is the one thing that remains constant and unchanged in the incessant and multiform activity of the universe, in the slow changes of the organism, in the flux of sensations, in the dissipation of ideas, the fading of memories.'¹⁷ These words more or less summarize the position of Vedanta, which is considered to be the highest philosophy of atman or Self.

In short, the body, the mind, and the world are arbitrary restrictions imposed on *atman*, which in itself is pure, unaffected, unchanged, immutable and eternal, a trinity of transcendental reality (*sat*), awareness (*cit*), and bliss (*ananda*).

Radhakrishnan himself being a Vedantin, a non-dualist, his interpretation does come close to the various discussions on the nature of atman to Sankara's notion of body as impure, limiting, and imperfect, to his distinction between what he called, the empirical, individual self and the Supreme Self: unconditioned, transcendent, absolute, pure and

immutable, essentially the same as Brahman, the source and ground of all creation and existence. This again is the notion of atman as found in the Bhagavad Gita, which declares atman, not the body, as immutable, immortal, which 'weapons cut not, fire burns not, water wets not, wind dries not'; which casts off worn-out bodies and takes on new ones in its cycles of births and deaths, until it finds release and becomes one with the Supreme.

Say what you will, in these texts, the opposition between the atman and the body is unmistakably evident. Modern gurus and alternative theorists, who are trying to develop an integral and unified theory of spirituality, might argue that atman or Spirit or the Universal Self is not necessarily opposed to the body; that it is a problem of semantics, and the limitation of the vocabulary of the period when these texts were composed. This is sheer word-play that does not really help the situation. The modern theorists succeed only in dodging the real issue, which is the irreconcilable dualism between body and soul, spirit and matter, that runs through all spiritual discourses. The usage of terms such as pure, transcendental, unchanging, unconditioned, and eternal, simultaneously betrays the fear of the self coming to an end and the search for some symbolic security, permanence or immortality. The more important question for us here is: Why talk of soul or atman as immortal, when, in the first place, there is no death for the body?

The Buddha, of course, did not find the atman. As regards JK, he found the whole thing problematic. He asked why, instead of saying the atman is immortal, '*Thou art That*', 'You are That Brahman,' you cannot say 'I am the river,' 'I am the poor man,' 'I am that tree,' 'I am all that.' How can a narrow, conditioned mind observe or even speculate on the unconditioned? How can one start with a conclusion that one is Brahman? Isn't that the end of the search?

UG is categorical and direct in his response and asserts that there is nothing to our search there. He demolishes the questions and the many answers given by declaring: There is no self, no I, no atman, no God.

What is there inside you is nothing but *fear*, states UG. 'Death' is fear, the fear of something coming to an end. The 'I' knows that this body is going to drop dead as others do, it is a frightening situation and it does not want to come to an end. So it creates the belief that there must be something beyond, it projects an afterlife, immortality of soul, God and so on. The problem, therefore, is not whether there is a soul, whether there is a center, whether there is a God or not; it is fear, operating as belief, that is passed on from generation to generation. It is this knowledge, says UG, that makes us think that there must be something beyond and even experience it. But there is nothing to it. In other words, ideas of the soul and life after death are born out of the demand for permanence. That is the foundation of man's religious thinking. All religious thinking is born out of that demand for permanence.

But thought is a tricky customer. It cannot exist without grounding itself in some belief. It will appear to abandon a belief only to create a new one in its place. It will even employ the so-called negative approach to arrive at some positive idea. Atheism, agnosticism, pragmatism, nihilism, and what have you, are only the various tricks of thought to anchor itself to some belief in order to seek its perpetuation. And so, UG warns: 'You will replace one belief with another. You are nothing but belief, and when it

dies, you are dead. What I am trying to tell you is this: don't try to be free from selfishness, greed, anger, envy, desire, and fear. You will only create its opposites, which are, unfortunately, fictitious. If desire dies, you die. The black van comes and carts you away, that's it! Even if you should somehow miraculously survive such a shock, it will be of *no use* to you, or to others.'

And then according to UG, all our beliefs in 'thoughtless state', 'state of awareness', 'choiceless awareness' and so on are nothing but bogus chartered flights. There is no such thing as self-awareness, for the *self* and *awareness* cannot co-exist. If one has to give a simple example or analogy, awareness is something like a mirror, images are reflected upon it, but the image is not the mirror. Awareness is only a medium through which images pass in and pass out. There is nothing more that can be said about it, we cannot call it a soul or build a philosophy or religion around it. Any such attempt will be an attempt to anchor ourselves in something which it is not. In other words, it is only our search for power and security, useful only to the spiritual gurus. In UG's words:

You cannot be aware; you and awareness cannot co-exist. If you could be in a state of awareness for one second by the clock, once in your life, the continuity would be snapped, the illusion of the experiencing structure, the 'you', would collapse, and everything would fall into the natural rhythm. In this state you do not know what you are looking at — that is awareness. If you recognize what you are looking at, you are there, again experiencing the old, what you know. It is not something that can be captured, contained and given expression to through your experiencing structure. It is outside the field of experience. So it cannot be shared with anyone.

Putting it differently, he says:

I am not particularly fond of the word 'awareness'. It is misused. It is a rubbed coin, and everybody uses it to justify some of his actions, instead of admitting that he did something wrong. Sometimes you say, 'I was not aware of what was going on there.' But awareness is an integral part of the activity of this human organism. This activity is not only specifically in the human organism but in all forms of life – the pig and the dog. The cat just looks at you, and is in a state of choiceless awareness. To turn that awareness into an instrument which you can use to bring about a change is to falsify that. Awareness is an integral part of the activity of the living organism.

(Excerpts from *The Other Side of Belief: Interpreting U.G.Krishnamurti*, by Mukunda Rao, Penguin Books India, 2005)

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The Enigma of the Natural State

India boasts of a strong, 300-year old enlightenment tradition. *Yogavashista* speaks of seven steps to enlightenment, the seventh and final stage being moksha — the extinction of the individual, which sounds similar to the concept of Nirvana, meaning the final ‘extinction of the self’. Moksha also means release from the cycles of births and deaths, or complete and ultimate liberation from all ignorance and duality through realization of the Supreme or Universal Self and its identity with Brahman. There are, of course, various other descriptions of what constitutes moksha, depending upon the spiritual tradition one belongs to. Are they all speaking of the same state, in different words? Is there an ‘essence’ to moksha or liberation? How can realization of the Supreme Self be same as ‘the extinction of self’ or Nirvana?

Are there different kinds of enlightenments? Are there levels to it? Does such a thing exist at all?

In 1939, when UG asked more or less the same question of Sri Ramana, the sage of Arunachalam is believed to have answered in the affirmative.

UG: ‘Can one be free sometimes and not free sometimes?’

Ramana: ‘Either you are free, or you are not free at all.’

UG: ‘Are there any levels to it?’

Ramana: ‘No, no levels are possible, it is all one thing. Either you are there or not there at all.’

After his ‘Calamity’ in 1967, in 70s and 80s to be specific, UG used to offer ‘soft’ and not entirely negative answers to questions on enlightenment and questions concerning ‘spiritual’ matters. Today he straightaway rejects the idea of enlightenment. He says: ‘There is no such thing as enlightenment. You may say that every teacher and all the saints and saviours of mankind have been asserting for centuries upon centuries that there is enlightenment and that they are enlightened. Throw them all in one bunch into the river!’

And yet, paradoxically, he also states: ‘But actually an enlightened man or a free man, if there is one, is not interested in freeing or enlightening anybody. This is because he has no way of knowing that he is a free man, that he is an enlightened man. It is not something that can be shared with somebody, because it is not in the area of experience at all.’

Enlightenment Demystified

I believe there is such a thing as enlightenment but not in the sense in which it is talked about by most of our gurus and spiritual teachers in the world today. It is of course, as UG says, a state of being that cannot be shared with or communicated to others, as it is not in the realm of experience as we understand it. Still, if we have to approach the

subject intellectually and suggest a functional definition of it in plain, non-religious terms, we could perhaps say that it is the cessation of all psychological conflicts, the dissolution of the self, and the birth of the individual into the Natural State.

One prefers the term 'Natural State' to 'enlightenment' for two reasons: one, it is a better and more creative term than the much-abused word 'enlightenment', which should help us understand at least intellectually this state of being, cleansed of the anti-intellectual, sanctimonious dross indulged in by religious gurus and apologists of religion. Two, the word 'enlightenment' is being (ab)used widely in a way that has nothing whatsoever to do with the state of enlightenment. This is not to say that one knows what enlightenment is all about or that there can only be one fixed meaning to it. Far from it. It is only to point out what enlightenment is not, just as, in the context of the current knowledge of life, we realize that it is a gross error to think that God created the earth and man in seven days (although there is no consensus even among experts as to how many billion years it took and how exactly life forms and Homo sapiens emerged on earth).

Enlightenment has nothing to do with world peace or with the kind of political and social changes we want to bring about to prevent our mutual destruction. It has nothing to do with our values of justice, equality, love, and even compassion. Gurus who claim to be enlightened not only deceive themselves but also mislead people by attributing non-existent ontological status and spiritual values to enlightenment.

In other words, enlightenment has nothing to do with being good or pious. The enlightenment state is not a blueprint for a world order, much less for world peace. There is no religious or social content there, yet, in its own way it could make a great social and cultural impact by quickening our insights into ourselves and the world. Genuinely enlightened persons, sages (not saints, gurus or even mystics), do not directly recommend any change in the world, or teach a better way of living. They only point out the errors in our perception of things, question our self-righteous ways of being and doing things, our precious ideas and ideologies, in short, our fragmented existence. They simply go on living as if nothing has happened, as if they are not concerned which the way the world goes, for deep in the marrow of their bones, as it were, they know that life goes on and it has its own ways.

An enlightened person is not an avatar or saviour come down on earth to save humanity or lead humanity to some promised land, or create the kingdom of God on earth. His or her utterances cannot be converted into a body of teaching and institutionalized. His social or political comments (which are made in responses to people's queries and demands) do not carry timeless meaning or values. He lives and moves in a state that is outside the framework of our traditional modes of understanding. Enlightenment is what it is. It cannot be willed, or brought about by an act of volition. Perhaps it comes with the cessation of 'will', the stuff the self is made of. It is the natural state nature throws up now and then for reasons not accessible to our reason. Perhaps it is the last stage of evolution and yet, an utterly new expression of life.

Salvation is Physical

The Mind of the Cells — or Willed Mutation of our Species is a record of reports of physical changes and experiences of the Mother of Pondicherry, which occurred over eleven years between 1962 and 1973.

It is a remarkable book that makes other books on mysticism sound like the mere prattling of a child. It is unique not because it is far superior to other texts on mysticism, but because it marks the end of mystical experience. It is an incredible journey on an uncharted sea. One could well call it a journey of billions-of-years old cells, a cellular journey into utterly new waters of life and intelligence, something the molecular biologists should want to discover and understand. But it is not something that could be seen or studied under a microscope in a laboratory, inside the fish bowl of one's mind.

But strangely, it is an incomplete journey, perhaps only to be carried forward by UG, to reach its final and full fruition and expression in his life.

Aurobindo said, 'Man is a transitional being,' and that he has to be surpassed. We do not know if Aurobindo experienced this 'transition'. We know his ideas of 'overmind', 'supermind', 'superman', and 'supramental manifestation'. But did it happen to him? Or, was it only his prediction? Or, merely philosophical speculation?

Going by the Mother's reports, it seems it happened to her. She presided over this transition, this strange transmutation of the body, this bewildering mutation of the cells. It was something that was certainly not entirely in line with Aurobindo's ideas or predictions.

In 1953, the Mother made a statement to the effect that something new was beginning to take shape in her life. She said: '...a new world is born. It is not the old world changing, it is a New World which is born...' although, 'the old is still all-powerful and entirely controlling the ordinary consciousness.'¹⁸

But it seems that only in 1962, when she fell 'ill', did she begin to notice strange changes taking place in her body. It actually was not an illness nor symptoms of illness. Something strange was going on within the cells of her body, '...a sort of decentralization...as if the cells were being scattered by centrifugal force...' She would feel terribly weak at times, faint now and then, yet, something untouched, was fully conscious of what was happening. '...Witnessing everything...' something like 'matter looking at itself in a whole new way.' This process went on for almost eleven years, until the day she passed away in 1973, at the age of ninety-five.

At first it seemed her consciousness was breaking out of its limits; it felt like waves, 'not individual waves, rather a movement of waves.' It was almost infinite and strangely 'undulatory': vast, at times, very quiet, and there was a harmonious rhythm to it. 'And this movement,' she felt, 'is life itself...' and it moves by expansion: 'it contracts and concentrates, then expands and spreads out.'

Something was trying to get established, an utterly new way or movement of life! It was the preparation of the body, of the cells, to mutate. It was not an act of volition. 'You can't try to make it happen,' said the Mother. 'One can't make an effort, one can't try to

know, because that immediately triggers an intellectual activity (habit) which has nothing to do with “that”.’

Then there came a sort of memory block. She did not know how to climb stairs, how to read and things of that sort. It seemed necessary to let go everything, all knowledge, all intelligence, all capacity —everything. The sense of separation was dissolving. Old habits were dying.

Taste, smell, vision, touch, sound —the sensory perceptions began to undergo complete change. Perhaps, ‘they belong to another rhythm,’ she suggested. It seemed curious and funny. ‘There is no longer “something seeing” but I am numerous things. I Live numerous things... I See clearly with my eyes closed than with my eyes open, and yet it is the same vision. It’s physical vision, purely physical...fuller.’

Now and then she experienced a tremendous burst of energy that caused pain. At times she would feel that she was dying, that she was going to explode. It was not what the religious people assume to be joy or bliss, but a sense of alarm, fear, anxiety, pain. ‘...It’s really and truly terrifying...it’s a hideous labour...it’s truly a journey into nothing, with nothing, in a desert strewn with every conceivable trap and obstacle. You are blindfolded, you know nothing.’

The body had become a battleground. A battle within the cells between the old habit and something new that was trying to emerge. In the Mother’s words: ‘The battle begins to be fought deep down in the cells, in the material consciousness, between what we call “the will to haemorrhage” and the reaction of the cells of the body. And it is absolutely like a regular battle, a real fight. But suddenly, the body is seized with a very strong determination and proclaims an order, and immediately the effect begins to be felt and everything returns gradually to normal.’

It is the struggle of the body to cleanse itself of the habit developed over thousands of years of ‘separate existence on account of ego.’ Now it has to learn to continue, without the ego, ‘according to another, unknown law, a law still incomprehensible for the body. It is not a will, it’s... I don’t know...something; a way of being.’

The way human beings have lived with a separative consciousness has been nothing but a habit. A bad habit! All that must be undone, the so-called laws of Nature, all the collective suggestions, all the earthly habits. ‘It is nothing but mechanical habits. But it clings, it’s really sticky, oh!... what appear to us as “the laws of Nature” or “inescapable principles”, are so absurd, so ridiculous!’

And then the body falls into a rhythm all its own. It becomes transparent. ‘All vibrations pass through it freely. It no longer feels limited: it feels spread out in everything it does, in everything around, in all circumstances, in people, movements, feelings...just spread out.’ The Mother felt that the body was everywhere. ‘I am talking here about the cells of the body, but the same applies to external events, even world events. It’s even remarkable in the case of earth quakes, volcanic eruptions, etc. it would seem that the entire earth is like the body.’

Everything is interconnected. Everything is one. The sense of separation is a complete falsehood. Cause and effect only a figment of human imagination. ‘It isn’t something you see or understand or know, it’s...something you are.’ Consciousness or mind, divides

everything up. But here, in the body, everything is one. Literally everything: ‘The speck of dust you wipe off the table, or ecstatic contemplation, it’s all the same.’

The Mother felt it was something beyond what all earlier spiritual leaders had said till then, which is what UG reiterates today with absolute conviction and clarity. It was beyond moksha, beyond Nirvana; it was something very physical. ‘Salvation is physical,’ declared the Mother. And she demanded to know: why did they the spiritual teachers of the past all seek liberation by abandoning their body? Why did they talk of Nirvana as something outside the body? ‘The body is a very, very simple thing, very childlike,’ said the Mother. ‘It does not need to “seek” anything: it’s THERE. And it wonders why men never knew of this from the start: why, but why did they go after all sorts of things—religions, gods, and all those... sorts of things? While it is so simple! So simple! It’s so obvious for the body!’

When the Mother says ‘the body is very simple’ and that it does not need to ‘seek’ anything at all, she sounds very like UG. She confirms what UG has been saying for the last thirty years, when she asserts: ‘All the mental constructions that men have tried to live by and realize on earth come to me from all sides: all the great schools of thought, the great ideas, the great realizations... and then, lower on the scale, the religions; oh, how infantile all that seems! ...Oh, what noise, how vainly you have tried!’

It is fairly clear that the ‘process’ took the Mother beyond even Aurobindo’s philosophy of the supramental manifestation, as well as her own previous ideas about spiritual evolution before the actual physical changes began to take place. Still, her past kept popping up now and then, and she did refer, though reluctantly and hesitantly, to the idea of ‘supermind’ and ‘supramental’. It is surprising to note that even serious followers of Aurobindo have either completely ignored the Mother’s report of these great physical and physiological changes, or interpreted them purely in terms of Aurobindo’s philosophy.

One might quote from Aurobindo’s writings and argue that he was the first to speak about the need, or rather the inevitability, of a physical transformation. Indeed, he was the first to say that if any radical change has to take place, it has to take place in the body, and he did prepare the ground for the Mother’s transformation. Even otherwise, his interpretation of the Upanishads and his criticism of Sankara’s Vedanta makes him one of our most radical mystic-philosophers. But all this should in no way distract us from the cleansing fact that the Mother, quite unwittingly as it were, went beyond Aurobindo’s philosophy, and beyond all the known frames of spiritual reference. This would have certainly brought a smile on Aurobindo’s face, for he would have intuitively known that something like this would happen; after all, didn’t he repeatedly warn that what is to come in future will be something hitherto unknown and unexplored!

What happened to the Mother was something she had least expected, just as UG had not expected his ‘Calamity’ even in his wildest dreams! A careful consideration of the Mother’s report reveals that all through these changes, she felt a sort of total helplessness, ‘choicelessness’, and had absolutely no precedence or frame of reference to which she could relate. ‘I don’t know...can’t say...have no idea...no words to express...blindfolded... you see, I feel I am right in the middle of a world I know nothing about, struggling with laws I know nothing about... it is something like a condition: the

unreality of the goal—not its unreality, its uselessness. Not even uselessness: the non-existence of the goal... it happened in my bathroom upstairs, surely to show that it is in the most trivial things, in everything, continuously... You see, it's even fairly easy to pose as a superman! But it remains ethereal, it isn't the real thing, not the next stage of terrestrial evolution... So simple! It's so obvious for the body!' Her admissions more than reveal her incredible journey into unknown waters of life and intelligence, and she did go beyond Aurobindo and her own ideas and beliefs before the process began.

We do not know. Perhaps the Mother did not live long enough for everything to change, for the process, the mutation, to complete itself. However, to use her own words: '...but some things changed and have never reverted.'

The Mother died in 1973. For UG the 'Calamity' occurred in 1967. It was a full-blown mutation of the body, enabling the human being to become fully human. It was not a mystical experience, nor a Kundalini experience (though the Kundalini experience could just be the beginning, almost elementary). And it has nothing to do with the spiritual goal (as opposed to the material, the body) that the spiritual traditions of the world with their band of teachers have been proclaiming for centuries.

Evidently, this biological mutation, or 'Natural state' as UG would call it, or 'cellular revolution' as the Mother would put it, is not entirely unprecedented. But now we have someone, in the shape of UG, to tell us, in clear physical, physiological and material terms, what it is all about.

The Body Is Immortal

The Bhagavad Gita, the approximately 2000-year old religious text of the Hindus, is certainly not considered to be a text on the subject of the immortality of the body. Rather, it is celebrated as a quintessential text on the immortality of the Universal or Supreme Self. Nevertheless, Chapter XI, on what is called the Universal Form or Self tells a different story. That is the paradox, the irony of ironies the text conceals. After a longish discourse on the different forms of Yoga, the nature of Brahman and atman, Lord Krishna bestows on Arjuna a vision of his Universal Form. Arjuna beholds this terrific kaleidoscope of life with borrowed 'divine eye'. And what does he see?

He beholds the whole cosmos reflected in the *body* of Krishna with multitudinous arms, stomachs, mouths and eyes. It is boundless, with neither end nor the middle nor beginning. Everything, all the innumerable forms of life are there, and in the centre is Lord Brahma resting on a lotus, surrounded by all the sages and the heavenly serpents.

The Sun, the Moon, and the heavenly planets blaze along, worlds radiate within worlds in a never-ending kaleidoscope, torrents of rivers flow relentlessly into thunderous seas, and behold, the flaming mouth licking up, devouring all worlds, all creatures; it is the body, with no beginning, middle or end, swallowing, burning itself up in an endless *maya* of creation and destruction.

There couldn't have been a better metaphor for the body. Many scholars and commentators on the Bhagavad Gita might find it difficult to accept this interpretation.

However, the text reveals that truly, within the body is the cosmic dance of life. Rather, the cosmos itself is the body, and the different, immeasurable life forms, like bacteria in the bloodstream, like fish in the ocean, are rising and dissolving continually, floating, moving back and forth, up and down, with no beginning and no end.

Scientists, however, posit a point of time for the beginning of the universe and the evolution of the human body. We do not know. It is a matter of perspective. We always think in frames, in terms of time and space, cause and effect. It is an incorrigible human habit. But in actuality, says UG, what is there is a space-time-energy continuum, which has no end.

There are, of course, scientists today, who have come round, however reluctantly, to more or less ‘accepting’ this hard reality, yet, if only to keep their profession and search alive, they like to imagine that the universe has had a beginning and consequently should have an end, too. They say that the universe could be about thirteen billion years old, the Sun and the planets about four-and-a-half billion years old. And they like to suggest that it probably took a few more billion years for the first life form to emerge on earth, and a few more million years for Homo sapiens to arrive on this planet. We cannot be sure, of course. Still, if we were to believe, however arbitrarily, in this theory, then it logically follows that Homo sapiens, the human body, which has evolved over millions of years from the ‘primordial soup’, must have everything of the world and the cosmos in it.

According to Paul McLean’s work at the National Institute of Mental Health’s Brain Research Centre, we have three brains in our skulls.¹⁹ All three separate structures are supposed to have developed over millions of years of evolutionary history on earth. First, there is the reptilian brain (identical to the brain found in all reptiles), which includes our spinal cord and the brain stem. Superimposed on this is the great limbic structure, inherited from the mammals; it is believed that this is our emotional-cognitive brain which handles emotional energies. Superimposed on this structure is the neocortex, which is five times bigger than the two animal brain structures and occupies almost eighty percent of our skull. It is this neocortex, containing some ten billion neurons, which is supposed to be our thinking brain which has made possible the so-called human progress from the stone axe to the airplanes to the atom bombs to quantum physics.

‘Speaking allegorically of these three brains within a brain,’ says McLean with a hilarious effect yet with great philosophical implication, ‘we might imagine that when the psychiatrist bids the patient to lie on the couch, he is asking him to stretch out alongside a horse and a crocodile.’ Further: ‘In the popular language today, these three brains might be thought of as biological computers, each with its own peculiar form of subjectivity and its own intelligence, its own sense of time and space and its own memory, motor and other functions.’²⁰

When JK talked of the necessity of mutation in the brain to bring about a radical change in human consciousness, did he mean the transformation of the three brains, in particular the animal brains? Interestingly, that is more or less what some of the neurologists are saying—that religion is the ‘property’ of the brain, that unless there is a fundamental change in the brain, the search for God, the related religious or spiritual beliefs, and the battles over religious identities will be with us for a long time. Even UG seems to suggest the same thing when he says that religion is a serious neurological

problem. But a careful reading of his utterances tells us that he does not simply mean the brain, but the whole body. The brain is only a ‘reactor’. The reptilian brain, the limbic structure and the neocortex perform certain jobs or tasks, but by themselves they are passive. They have to be activated and it is the ‘I’, the activator, which uses them.

The traces of evolutionary history, the traces of animal traits or animal consciousness exist not merely in the brain but all over the body, in the trillions of cells of the body. To theorise further on what UG has been saying, the ‘I’ (the coordinator of thoughts), is a squatter; it uses the body for its own continuity, and it has superimposed itself on every cell of the body. In other words, the ‘I’ with its age-old memories, experiences, along with the animal consciousness, is deeply embedded in every cell of the body. That is what the Mother’s report of her experience of the cellular changes seems more or less to be saying as well. So then, the ‘I’, with all its fears and anxieties, its sense of lack and insecurity, the animal trait of aggression and even the survival instinct, has to go, has to be cleansed, if the human being has to begin truly to function as a human. The cleansing has to take place not just in the brain but in every cell of the body, on which the tremendous gravity of the psychological fear and lack in the form of the ‘I’ or the ‘self’ is superimposed.

To put it in the language of molecular biology, if mutation of cells is what caused the emergence of self-consciousness, (the ‘I’, the neocortex), then it will be another mutation in the cells that will dissolve the ‘I’, which has outrun its original purpose and turned self-destructive.

That seems to be the only way out, failing which the humanity seems to be doomed to destroy itself, along with the millions of other creatures living on this planet. If such a catastrophe were to occur, perhaps only the tough cockroaches will survive, mutate, and let Nature start the evolutionary cycle again, for purposes only Nature knows.

It is the stranglehold of thought, or culture, over the body—culture in the form of religious ideals, goals, political ideologies and so on—that has prevented the body from cleansing itself of these ‘bad habits’ to begin its natural, harmonious, non-destructive movement of existence. Just as disease-causing viruses enter the body and cause havoc, these thoughts have become parasites on the body, throwing the body out of its natural order. The body can sometimes battle the viruses and regain its balance, but it cannot do so with thoughts, for they have a stranglehold on the cells of the body. There has to be a mutation if these thoughts and their coordinator, the ‘I’, has to be destroyed before the body finds its freedom.

Unfortunately, this kind of mutation cannot be willed. Nor can it be genetically engineered, for the ‘I’ is everywhere, and in every cell. It seems that we could perhaps open up the possibilities of that happening if only we stop and achieve a state of ‘do-nothing’ to further strengthen the already tremendous momentum of the destructive structure of thought.

There are already enough religions, enough political ideologies, and more than enough atomic bombs to blow up the earth. It is really ridiculous to talk of peace, love and compassion and then wage wars, absurd to believe in an all-loving God and then slit each other’s throat in the cause of religious identity and in the name of the very same loving God. And it is plain fraud to talk of ‘development’ when evidently all that ‘development’

or ‘progress’ has done is to create a few billionaires and a powerful, predatory class, while hundreds of millions are forced to live a sub-human existence.

The rot has really gone deep into the very cells of our body. It is frightening.

Actually our problems are, as UG has been saying for over more than three decades now, rooted in our so-called solutions: in our gods, our religious ideals, our political goals, our very notions of justice and health. It is the macabre dance of death played out by the self-protective, fascist thought. There seems to be no way out unless there is a benign, biological mutation of the human body.

The ‘Calamity’

UG says that it happened to him despite his long search and sadhana, despite everything he did in all of his forty-nine years before the ‘Calamity’. He calls it a ‘Calamity’ deliberately in order to discourage us from attributing any religious or spiritual meaning and value to what happened to him.

For truly and absolutely there is no religious or spiritual content there. It is a physical process, a physiological phenomenon, brought to fruition in the way Nature works on a tiny seed to give rise to a gigantic tree. It is life finding its fulfilment. It is the completion of the journey of the ‘cells’ started some millions of years ago from the ‘primordial soup’. It is there.

Over seven days, seven different changes took place UG body. It was literally an explosion of energy, and UG cannot say whether it erupted from within the body or descended from outside; actually there was no outside and inside, it came from all sides, everywhere, in waves, in spirals, like a river in spate, like a tidal wave, penetrating into and breaking through every wall, every resistance; it was energy, atomic, repairing, cleansing the body, cleansing every cell of its age-old ‘habits’, the ‘accumulated knowledge’ the traces embedded in it over thousands of years of evolutionary history; it was the flushing out of the virus of thought, memes. The accompanying pain and terror and other sensations of extreme discomfort were the death pangs of the ‘I’, the ‘self’.

It is of crucial importance to note here that the physical process or mutation was triggered off by the dissolution of the question: ‘How do I know that this is the state?’ There was no answer. It was the end of all answers, all knowledge born out of the separative existence, cessation of all opposites; it was a tremendous crisis within the thought structure. It was a calamitous situation for thought, for the ‘self’, the build up of a tremendous molecular pressure within the structure of the mind-body, and it could have release only in an explosion. In other words, with no answer coming, which is absolutely essential for the continuity of thought, it was as if the question itself, akin to matter, cracked and set off a series of explosions in the nuclear plant of the body, blasting every cell, every nerve and every gland. The anxieties and fears, the fantasies and wishes, the images and symbols, the ideas and concepts and worldviews, all created and maintained and played out by the ‘self’ for its own continuity, all the sensory perceptions hitherto enslaved by the self for its own separative existence, the whole history of the body inscribed by the self on every cell, began to explode, burn and dissolve into nothingness.

And thus, on the seventh day, the coordinator, the self, disappeared, and with it the body, constructed by thought, disappeared too.

It was an extremely painful process, almost like physical torture, and it took about three years for the process to complete itself and let the body fall into a new rhythm all its own, into what UG calls the 'Natural State'.

The Natural State is also the state of 'undivided consciousness', says UG. With the sense of separation gone, and even the instinct of survival dissolved, the body is extremely vulnerable to everything around it; the body is 'affected' by the natural phenomena, be it an earthquake or the eclipses of the moon and the sun; or even when someone gets physically hurt. UG calls it the true 'affection'. (It is not spiritual oneness with the world, nor what is called the 'Atman becoming one with the Brahman'. There is no religious or spiritual content there. It is a purely a physiological phenomenon.) With the sense of separative existence dissolved, the stranglehold of culture, the 'I', gone, the body is in tune with the cosmos.

The ductless glands, located exactly in the same spots where, according to Kundalini Yoga, the chakras or energy centres are, have taken over the function of his body, says UG. He doesn't, of course, refer to Kundalini or use any spiritual terms to explain this phenomenon. The thymus gland, which is supposed to be active through childhood until puberty and then goes dormant, is reactivated, and it is there that the physical (not emotional) oneness is felt or experienced. It is not, UG emphasizes, what the Hindus call the atman becoming one with Brahman and all that stuff. There is no spiritual content there. It is not unity of consciousness in the sense we want to understand it. It is just the absence of thought, the past, that enables UG to be in that state of oneness, which also means that he is (physically) affected by everything that happens around him. It is the natural, physical condition of his being. In UG's words:

Sensations are felt there; you don't translate them as 'good' or 'bad'; they are just a thud. If there is a movement outside of you – a clock pendulum swinging, or a bird flying across your field of vision – that movement is also felt in the thymus. The whole of your being is that movement or vibrates with that sound; there is no separation. This does not mean that you identify yourself with that bird or whatever... There is no 'you' there, nor is there any object. What causes that sensation, you don't know. You do not even know that it is a sensation.

'Affection' means that you are affected by everything, not that some emotion flows from you towards something. The natural state is a state of great sensitivity – but this is a physical sensitivity of the senses, not some kind of emotional compassion or tenderness for others. There is compassion only in the sense that there are no "others" for me, and so there is no separation.

He also says that with the co-ordinator, the 'I', which uses the body for its own separative continuity, gone, the pituitary gland—called the 'third eye', *ajna chakra* (*ajna* meaning 'command') — is now in command over the body. With the coordinator gone, it is this ajna chakra or pituitary gland that gives the instructions to the body and enables the body to function in perfect tune with the world. Since there is nobody (no 'I') there to control or interfere with the functioning of the body, thoughts arise in response to a demand or challenge, and once the task is fulfilled, they undergo 'combustion' or burn

themselves up and ionize, releasing energy. Hence, UG says, he is able to talk for hours on end and yet not feel tired or drained of energy.

But when there is no demand or challenge, no stimuli (stimulus and response being a unitary action), he is in a state of ‘not knowing’, a sort of ‘declutched state’. There is no self-talking, thinking, or daydreaming, there is nothing there. But when a question is thrown at him, the response comes quickly and effectively, from what he calls his data or memory bank; it is immediate and it is mechanical. It is like a computer switching on and it responds to queries by scanning its data bank and coming up with an answer. There is nothing mysterious about it. It’s the past, the memory—mechanical. There is nothing else there. If there is something else, there is no way of knowing it.

In other words, when there is no demand, he is in a state of ‘not knowing’. There is only the sensory activity, pure and simple. Each of the senses work, independently (with no coordinator or coordination) at the peak of its capacity. Sensations are not interpreted as hard or soft, sweet or bitter, good or evil, spiritual or material. There is no difference between music and the barking of a dog, or the sound coming from the toilet. It is just sound, notes spaced out in a certain order, that is all. There is no interpretation, for there is no interpreter there.

Further, UG says that his vision is two dimensional, flat, in frames, like a camera clicking away picture after picture, but with no linkage between these pictures. The third, fifth and tenth dimensions are figments of imagination, invented by thought, by the self for its own sake and for its own continuity.

Truly a marvellous machine, an amazing body. It is, put simply, the Natural State! This Natural State is not a spiritual state, not a state of enlightenment, asserts UG. It is not a state of bliss or perfect order. For order and chaos, cause and effect, birth and death are a simultaneous process. There is silence there, but it is like the silence of a volcano. It burns everything, leaving behind no trace. It is the movement of life, the ebb and flow of life that can never be captured by thought.

And his body is supposed to be hermaphroditic or androgynous: qualities of man and woman coexist in it. A perfect union of animus-anima, man-woman in union, pictorially represented by the Indian tradition in the form of *ardhanarishwara*: one half (the right side) of the body as Shiva and the other half as Parvathi, his consort—an artistic illustration of the androgynous state! But UG rejects the comparison and simply states: ‘Here (in UG) the body goes back into that stage where it is neither male nor female. It is not the androgynous thing that they talk about.’ However, when he says that his left side is female and responds to women and the right side is male and responds to men, he seems to imply that there is something in the traditional image of *ardhanarishwara*. As physical evidence of this male-female convergence and difference in the body, there is even a dark line over his stomach upward, as if to demarcate the male and the female in him.

If UG’s body is truly both male and female, or neither purely male nor female, then it challenges our knowledge of the human body. It also certainly goes beyond the understanding of the left and right brain as having different faculties and functions, according to the present-day neurosciences. In view of UG’s experience and what he has said, it seems that it is not merely the right and left hemispheres of the brain but the entire

left and right sides of the body (the two brains being only vital parts of them) that respond in different ways with their different faculties ('intelligence' would be more appropriate) and functions.

To UG, death is a continuous phenomenon. His body is supposed to go through death almost every day, and come back to life. It is the body's way of renewing itself. He says:

This is necessary because the senses in the natural state are functioning at the peak of their sensitivity all the time. So, when the senses become tired, the body goes through death. This is real physical death, not some mental state. It can happen one or more times a day. You do not decide to go through this death; it descends upon you. It feels at first as if you have been given an anaesthetic: the senses become increasingly dull, the heartbeat slows, the feet and hands become ice cold, and the whole body becomes stiff like a corpse. Energy flows from all over the body towards some point. It happens differently every time. The whole process takes forty-eight or forty-nine minutes. During this time the stream of thoughts continues, but there is no reading of the thoughts. At the end of this period you 'conk out': the stream of thought is cut. There is no way of knowing how long that cut lasts — it is not an experience. There is nothing you can say about that time of being 'conked out' — that can never become part of your conscious existence or conscious thinking.

You don't know what brings you back from death. If you had any will at that moment, you could decide not to come back. When the 'conking out' is over, the stream of thought picks up exactly where it left off. Dullness is over; clarity is back. The body feels very stiff — slowly it begins to move of its own accord, limbering itself up. The movements are more like the Chinese T'ai Chi than like Hatha Yoga. The disciples observed the things that were happening to the teachers, probably, and embodied them and taught hundreds of postures — but they are all worthless; it is an extraordinary movement. Those who have observed my body moving say it looks like the motions of a newly born baby. This 'conking out' gives a total renewal of the senses, glands and nervous system: after it they function at the peak of their sensitivity.

In the Natural State there is no conflict, no fear, no desire, and all search of whatever kind comes to end. There is only the simple yet vibrant movement of life. It is the fulfilment of life. It is life. There is nothing supernatural about this state. UG is no superman, no God or avatar come down to save humankind. UG cannot be a model for others, and one cannot convert his utterances into a body of teaching to be followed by others. Perhaps UG's state is the end product of evolution, life at last finding itself! In UG's words: 'Nature, in its own way, throws out, from time to time, some flower, the end-product of human evolution. This cannot be used by the evolutionary process as a model for creating another.'

Now, one may ask here, how does UG know?

'I don't know,' says UG, 'life is aware of itself, if we can put it that way — it is conscious of itself.'

The *Mundaka Upanishad* speaks of this state using the metaphor of two birds. The two birds of golden plumage, inseparable companions, the individual self and the immortal self, are perched on the same tree. The former tastes of the sweet and bitter fruits of the tree, the latter, tasting of neither, calmly observes.

The notion of ‘immortal self’, a much-abused term, is misleading. Perhaps we can simply call it ‘awareness’, an integral part of the activity not only of all organisms but of all forms of life. It is there, functioning in a tree and the birds that perch on it, as much as in a human being. And there is nothing more one can say about it, for it cannot be conceptualized or converted into a philosophy, for it would be like trying to catch the wind in one’s palm and giving it a name and form. And so, UG says:

‘This consciousness (or Awareness) which is functioning in me, in you, in the garden slug and earthworm outside, is the same. In me it has no frontiers; in you there are frontiers — you are enclosed in that. Probably this unlimited consciousness pushes you, I don’t know. Not me; I have nothing to do with it. It is like the water finding its own level, that’s all — that is its nature. That is what is happening in you: life is trying to destroy the enclosing thing, that dead structure of thought and experience, which is not of its nature. It’s trying to come out, to break open. You don’t want that. As soon as you see some cracks there, you bring some plaster and fill them in and block it again. It doesn’t have to be a so-called self-realized man or spiritual man or God-realized man that pushes you; anything, that leaf there, teaches you just the same if only you let it do what it can. You must let that do. I have to put it that way. Although “let that do” may imply that there is some kind of volition on your part, that’s not what I mean.

But we don’t let things be, or ‘let that do’. We theorise and build traditions around that ‘awareness’ and hope to achieve what cannot be achieved. For it is not something to be achieved, or willed into existence. In other words, there is no need to achieve or realize what is always already there. And so UG warns: ‘Get this straight, this is your state I am describing, your natural state, not my state or the state of a God-realized man or a mutant or any such thing. This is your natural state, this is the way you, stripped of the machinations of thought, are also functioning. But what prevents what is there from expressing itself in its own way is your reaching out for something, trying to be something other than what you are.’

(Extracted from *The Other Side of Belief: Interpreting U.G.Krishnamurti*, by Mukunda Rao, Penguin Books India, 2005)

Notes

1. *The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity— Figures & Themes*, G.B.Madison, Midland Book Edition, 1990.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

4. *The Selfish Gene*, Richard Dawkins, Oxford University press, New York, 1999.
5. Ibid.
6. See the notes part in his *A Theory of Everything—An Integral Vision for Business, Politics, Science & Spirituality*, Gateway, 2001.
7. *The Meme Machine* by Susan Blackmore, Oxford University Press, 1999.
8. Quoted in *The Hidden Connection*, Fritjof Capra, Flamingo, 2003.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. For interesting insights into body-mind problem and related issues, read Jeffrey Mishlove's discussions with Fritjof Capra, Rupert Sheldrake, Saul-Paul Sirag, Julian Isaacs, Karl Pribram, U. G. Krishnamurti and others, in *Thinking Allowed*, Council Oak Books, 1992.
12. See Vilayanur S. Ramachandran's Reith Lectures on 'The Emerging Mind' available online at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/reith2003>.
13. *The Hidden Connection*, Fritjof Capra.
14. *Thinking Allowed*, Jeffrey Mishlove.
15. *Oriental Mythology*, Joseph Campbell.
16. Read Julian Isaac in conversation with Jeffrey Mishlove in *Thinking Allowed*.
17. *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, S. Radhakrishnan, Oxford University Press, 1977, pp. 26-27.
18. This quotation and all the other quotations from the Mother in this chapter are from *The Mind of the Cells — or Willed Mutation of our Species*, edited by Satprem, Institute For Evolutionary Research, New York, 1982.
19. *Thinking Allowed*, p.270.
20. Quoted by Arthur Koestler in *Janus — A Summing Up*, Picador, 1979.

Anti-teaching: Calling It like It Is

How do I know? I don't know. Life is aware of itself, if we can put it that way — it is conscious of itself.

I have no answers for any metaphysical questions because I am not thinking metaphysically. I am not thinking in concepts. You may very well ask whether it is possible to use words without concepts. I say it is possible. There is no content to these words. These are not born out of any concept. They are just words. To imagine that there is a state of nonverbal conceptualization is just a myth. The purpose of this conversation is to enable you to break free from the methods of thought as a means to understand anything.

Is there a Teaching?

There is no teaching of mine, and never shall be one. 'Teaching' is not the word for it. A teaching implies a method or a system, a technique or a new way of thinking to be applied in order to bring about a transformation in your way of life. What I am saying is outside the field of teachability; it is simply a description of the way I am functioning. It is just a description of the *natural state* of man – this is the way you, stripped of the machinations of thought, are also functioning.

The natural state is not the state of a self-realized, God-realized man, it is not a thing to be achieved or attained, it is not a thing to be willed into existence; it is *there* – it is the living state. This state is just the functional activity of life. By 'life' I do not mean something abstract; it is the life of the senses, functioning naturally without the interference of thought. Thought is an interloper, which thrusts itself into the affairs of the senses. It has a profit motive: thought directs the activity of the senses to get something out of them, and uses them to give continuity to itself.

Your natural state has no relationship whatsoever with the religious states of bliss, beatitude and ecstasy; they lie within the field of experience. Those who have led man on his search for religiousness throughout the centuries have perhaps experienced those religious states. So can you. They are thought-induced states of being, and as they come, so do they go. Krishna Consciousness, Buddha Consciousness, Christ Consciousness, or what have you, are all trips in the wrong direction: they are all within the field of time. The timeless can never be experienced, can never be grasped, contained, much less given expression to, by any man. That beaten track will lead you nowhere. There is no oasis situated yonder; you are stuck with the mirage.

I've no message to give to the world. Whatever happens to me is such that you can't share it with the world. That's the reason why I don't get up on a platform or give any lectures – it's not that I can't give lectures; I've lectured everywhere in the world – I've nothing to say. And I don't like to sit in one place, surrounded by people asking set questions. I never initiate any discussions; people come and sit round me – they can do

what they like. If somebody asks me a question suddenly, I try to answer, emphasizing and pointing out that there is no answer to that question. So, I merely rephrase, restructure and throw the same question back at you. It's not game playing, because I'm not interested in winning you over to my point of view. It's not a question of offering opinions – of course I do have my opinions on everything from disease to divinity, but they're as worthless as anybody else's.

What I say you must not take literally. So much trouble has been created by people taking it all literally. You must test every word, every phrase, and see if it bears any relation to the way you are functioning. You must test it, but you are not in a position to accept it – unfortunately this is a fact, take it or leave it. By writing it down, you will do more harm than good. You see, I am in a very difficult position: I cannot help you, whatever I say is misleading.

What I am saying has no logic. If it has a logic, it has a logic of its own – I don't know anything about it. But you have necessarily to fit me into the logical structure of your thought; otherwise the logical structure there, the rational thing, comes to an end. You see, you have to rationalize – that is what you are. But this has nothing to do with rationality, it has nothing to do with your logic – that doesn't mean that it is illogical or irrational.

On Himself or the Natural State

I am not out to liberate anybody. You have to liberate yourself, and you are unable to do that. What I have to say will not do it. I am only interested in describing this state, in clearing away the occultation and mystification in which those people in the 'holy business' have shrouded the whole thing. Maybe I can convince you not to waste a lot of time and energy, looking for a state which does not exist except in your imagination.

There is nobody here talking, giving advice, feeling pain, or experiencing anything at all. Like a ball thrown against the wall, it bounces back, that is all. My talking is the direct result of your question, I have nothing here of my own, no obvious or hidden agenda, no product to sell, no axe to grind, nothing to prove.

That silence burns everything here. All experiences are burnt. That is why talking to people doesn't exhaust me. It is energy to me. That is why I can talk for the whole day without showing any fatigue. Talking with so many people over the years has had no impact upon me. All that they or I have said is burnt here, leaving no trace. This is not, unfortunately, the case with you.

The personality does not change when you come into this state. You are, after all, a computer machine, which reacts as it has been programmed. It is in fact your present effort to change yourself that is taking you away from yourself and keeping you from functioning in the natural way. The personality will remain the same. Don't expect such a man to become free from anger or idiosyncrasies. Don't expect some kind of spiritual humility. Such a man may be the most arrogant person you have ever met, because he is touching life at a unique place where no man has touched before. It is for this reason that

each person who comes into this state expresses it in a unique way, in terms relevant to his time. It is also for this reason that if two or more people are living in this state at the same time, they will never get together. They won't dance in the streets hand in hand: 'We are all self-realized men! We belong!'

Man becomes man for the first time – and that is possible *only* when he frees himself from the burden of the heritage we are talking about, the heritage of *man as a whole* (not East and West; there is no East and West). Then only does he become an individual. For the first time he becomes an individual – that is the individual I am talking about. That individual will certainly have an impact on human consciousness, because when something happens in this consciousness of man it affects (the whole), to a very microscopic extent maybe. So, this is a simile: when you throw a stone in a pool, it sets in motion circular waves. In exactly the same way, it is *very* slow, *very* slow – it is something which cannot be measured with anything.

So, maybe that's the only hope that man has – that's the first time such an individual becomes a man – otherwise he's an animal. And he has remained an animal because of the heritage, because the heritage has made it possible, from the point of view of Nature, for the unfit to remain; otherwise Nature would have rejected them a long time ago. It has become possible for the unfit to survive – not the survival of the fittest, but of those unfit to survive – and religion is responsible for that. That's my argument. You may not agree. It doesn't matter.

Is there such a thing as Enlightenment?

There is no such thing as enlightenment. You may say that every teacher and all the saints and saviours of mankind have been asserting for centuries upon centuries that there is enlightenment and that they are enlightened. Throw them all in one bunch into the river! I don't care. To realize that there is *no* enlightenment at all *is* enlightenment.

But actually an enlightened man or a free man, if there is one, is not interested in freeing or enlightening anybody. This is because he has no way of knowing that he is a free man, that he is an enlightened man. It is not something that can be shared with somebody, because it is not in the area of experience at all.

To me what does exist is a purely physical process; there is nothing mystical or spiritual about it. If I close the eyes, some light penetrates through the eyelids. If I cover the eyelids, there is still light inside. There seems to be some kind of a hole in the forehead, which doesn't show, but through which something penetrates. In India that light is golden; in Europe it is blue. There is also some kind of light penetration through the back of the neck. It's as if there is a hole running through between those spots in front and back of the skull. There is nothing inside but this light. If you cover those points, there is complete, total darkness. This light doesn't do anything or help the body to function in any way; it's just there.

This state is a state of not knowing; you really don't know what you are looking at. I may look at the clock on the wall for half an hour – still I do not read the time. I don't

know it is a clock. All there is inside is wonderment: ‘What is this that I am looking at?’ Not that the question actually phrases itself like that in words: the whole of my being is like a single, big question mark. It is a state of wonder, of wondering, because I just do not know what I am looking at. The knowledge about it – all that I have learned – is held in the background unless there is a demand. It is in the ‘declutched state’. If you ask the time, I will say ‘It’s a quarter past three’ or whatever – it comes quickly like an arrow – then I am back in the state of not knowing, of wonder.

When I talk of ‘feeling’, I do not mean the same thing that you do. Actually, feeling is a physical response, a thud in the thymus. The thymus, one of the endocrine glands, is located under the breastbone. The doctors tell us that it is active through childhood until puberty and then becomes dormant. When you come into your natural state, this gland is re-activated. Sensations are felt there; you don’t translate them as ‘good’ or ‘bad’; they are just a thud. If there is a movement outside of you – a clock pendulum swinging, or a bird flying across your field of vision – that movement is also felt in the thymus. The whole of your being is that movement or vibrates with that sound; there is no separation. This does not mean that you identify yourself with that bird or whatever – ‘I am that flying bird.’ There is no ‘you’ there, nor is there any object. What causes that sensation, you don’t know. You do not even know that it is a sensation.

‘Affection’ means that you are affected by everything, not that some emotion flows from you towards something. The natural state is a state of great sensitivity – but this is a physical sensitivity of the senses, not some kind of emotional compassion or tenderness for others. There is compassion only in the sense that there are no ‘others’ for me, and so there is no separation.

The Body

My body exists for other people; it does not exist for me; there are only isolated points of contact, impulses of touch which are not tied together by thought. So the body is not different from the objects around it; it is a set of sensations like any others. Your body does not belong to you.

Perhaps I can give you the ‘feel’ of this. I sleep four hours at night, no matter what time I go to bed. Then I lie in bed until morning fully awake. I don’t know what is lying there in the bed; I don’t know whether I’m lying on my left side or my right side – for hours and hours I lie like this. If there is any noise outside – a bird or something – it just echoes in me. I listen to the ‘flub-dub-flub-dub’ of my heart and don’t know what it is. There is no body between the two sheets – the form of the body is not there. If the question is asked, ‘What is in there?’ there is only an awareness of the points of contact, where the body is in contact with the bed and the sheets, and where it is in contact with itself, at the crossing of the legs, for example. There are only the sensations of touch from these points of contact, and the rest of the body is not there. There is some kind of heaviness, probably the gravitational pull, something very vague. There is nothing inside which links up these things. Even if the eyes are open and looking at the whole body, there are still only the points of contact, and they have no connection with what I am

looking at. If I want to try to link up these points of contact into the shape of my own body, probably I will succeed, but by the time it is completed the body is back in the same situation of different points of contact. The linkage cannot stay. It is the same sort of thing when I'm sitting or standing. There is no body.

In the natural state there is no entity who is co-ordinating the messages from the different senses. Each sense is functioning independently in its own way. When there is a demand from outside which makes it necessary to co-ordinate one or two or all of the senses and come up with a response, still there is no co-ordinator, but there is a temporary state of co-ordination. There is no continuity; when the demand has been met, again there is only the uncoordinated, disconnected, disjointed functioning of the senses. This is always the case. Once the continuity is blown apart – not that it was ever there; but the illusory continuity – it's finished once and for all.

God is Irrelevant

Is there a beyond? Because you are not interested in the everyday things and the happenings around you, you have invented a thing called the 'beyond', or 'timelessness', or 'God', 'Truth', 'Reality', 'Brahman', 'enlightenment', or whatever, and you search for that. There may not be any beyond. You don't know a thing about that beyond; whatever you know is what you have been told, the knowledge you have about that. So you are projecting that knowledge. What you call 'beyond' is created by the knowledge you have about that beyond; and whatever knowledge you have about a beyond is exactly what you will experience. The knowledge creates the experience, and the experience then strengthens the knowledge. What you know can never be the beyond. Whatever you experience is not the beyond. If there is any beyond, this movement of 'you' is absent. The absence of this movement probably is the beyond, but the beyond can never be experienced by you; it is when the 'you' is not there. Why are you trying to experience a thing that cannot be experienced?

Man has to be saved from God – that is very essential because ... I don't mean God in the sense in which you use the word 'God'; I mean all that 'God' stands for, not only God, but all that is associated with that concept of God – even *karma*, reincarnation, rebirth, life after death, the *whole* thing, the whole business of what you call the 'great heritage of India' – all that, you see. Man has to be saved from the heritage of India. Not only the people; the country has to be saved from that heritage. (Not by revolution, not the way they have done it in the communist countries – that's not the way. I don't know why; you see, this is a very *tricky* subject.) Otherwise there is no hope for the individual and no hope for the country.

That messy thing called the mind has created many destructive things, and by far the most destructive of them all is God. To me the question of God is irrelevant and immaterial. We have no use for God. More people have been killed in the name of God than in the two world wars put together. In Japan, millions of people died in the name of the sacred Buddha. Christians and Muslims have done the same. Even in India, five

thousand Jains were massacred in a single day. Yours is not a peaceful nation. Read your own history — it's full of violence from the beginning to the end. Man is merely a biological being. There is no spiritual side to his nature. There is no such thing... All the virtues, principles, beliefs, ideas and spiritual values are mere affectations. They haven't succeeded in changing anything in you. You're still the brute that you have always been. When will you begin to see the truth that the philosophy of 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' is not what stops you from killing indiscriminately but it's the terror of the fact that if you kill your neighbour you too will also be destroyed along with him that stops you from killing.

God is the ultimate pleasure, uninterrupted happiness. No such thing exists. Your wanting something that does not exist is the root of your problem. Transformation, *moksha*, liberation, and all that stuff are just variations on the same theme: permanent happiness.

Religion is a Neurological Problem

Religion is not a contractual arrangement, either public or private. It has nothing to do with the social structure or its management. Religious authority wants to continue its hold on the people, but religion is entirely an individual affair. The saints and saviours have only succeeded in setting you adrift in life with pain and misery and the restless feeling that there must be something more meaningful or interesting to do with one's life.

'Religion', 'God', 'Soul', 'Beatitudes', 'moksha', are all just words, ideas used to keep your psychological continuity intact. When these thoughts are not there, what is left is the simple, harmonious physical functioning of the organism.

Love, compassion, *ahimsa*, understanding, bliss, all these things which religion and psychology have placed before man, are only adding to the strain of the body. *All* cultures, whether of the Orient or of the Occident, have created this lopsided situation for mankind and turned man into a neurotic individual.

Man has already messed up his life, and religion has made it worse. It is religion that really made a mess of man's life.

You cannot exonerate the founders and leaders of religions. The teachings of all those teachers and saviours of mankind have resulted in only violence. Everybody talked of peace and love, while their followers practiced violence.

Holy Men and Holy Business

We have been brainwashed for centuries by holy men that we must control our thoughts. Without thinking you would become a corpse. Without thinking the holy men wouldn't have any means of telling us to control our thoughts. They would go broke. They have become rich telling others to control their thoughts.

The whole religious business is nothing but moral codes of conduct: you must be generous, compassionate, loving, while all the time you remain greedy and callous. Codes of conduct are set by society in its own interests, sacred or profane. There is nothing religious about it. The religious man puts the priest, the censor, inside you. Now the policeman has been institutionalized and placed outside you. Religious codes and strictures are no longer necessary; it is all in the civil and criminal codes. You needn't bother with these religious people anymore; they are obsolete. But they don't want to lose their hold over people. It is their business; their livelihood is at stake. There is no difference between the policeman and the religious man. It is a little more difficult with the policeman, for, unlike the inner authority sponsored by the holy men, he lies outside you and must be bribed. The secular leaders tell you one way, the holy men another way. It makes no difference: as long as you are searching for peace of mind, you will have a tormented mind. If you try not to search, or if you continue to search, you will remain the same. You have to *stop*.

Understanding yourself is one of the greatest jokes, perpetrated on the gullible and credulous people everywhere, not only by the purveyors of ancient wisdom— the holy men— but also by the modern scientists. The psychologists love to talk about self-knowledge, self-actualization, living from moment to moment, and such rot. These absurd ideas are thrown at us as if they are something new.

You have been brainwashed by all those holy men, gurus, teachers and the so-called enlightened people that the past should die, should come to an end. 'If you attain this, life would be hunky-dory – full of sweetness.' You have fallen for all that romantic stuff. If you try to suppress the past and try to be in the present, it will drive you crazy. You are trying to control something which is beyond your control.

It is not only your past. It's the entire past, entire existence of every human being and every form of life. It is not such an easy thing. It is like trying to stop this flow of the river through all those artificial means. It will inundate the whole thing.

They talk very lightly of money as if it has no importance for them, when in fact it is one of the most important things in their lives. These holy men are greedy, jealous, and vindictive bastards, just like everybody else. You want to live through your work, and through your children. These people want to live through their religious institutions.

What these gurus in the market place do is to sell you some ice packs and provide you with some comforters.

Meditation is Warfare

Meditation is a self-centred activity. It is strengthening the very self you want to be free from. What are you meditating for? You want to be free from something. What are you to meditate on? All right, thought is a noise, sound. What is sound? You look at this and you say 'This is a tape-recorder,' so thought is sound. There is a continuous flow of thoughts, and you are linking up all these thoughts all the time, and this is the noise you can't stand. Why can't you stand that noise? So, by repeating *mantras*, you create a louder noise, and

you submerge the noise of thought, and then you are at peace with yourself. You think that something marvellous is happening to you. But all meditation is a self-centred activity.

You have also been told that through meditation you can bring selfishness to an end. Actually, you are not meditating at all, just thinking about selflessness, and doing nothing to be selfless. I have taken that as an example, but all other examples are variations of the same thing. All activity along these lines is exactly the same. You must accept the simple fact that you do not want to be free from selfishness.

Meditation is warfare. You sit for meditation while there is a battle raging within you. The result is violent, evil thoughts welling up inside you. Next, you try to control or direct these brutal thoughts, making more effort and violence for yourself in the process.

Consciousness

Krishna Consciousness, Buddha Consciousness, Christ Consciousness, or what have you, are all trips in the wrong direction: they are all within the field of time. The timeless can never be experienced, can never be grasped, contained, much less given expression to, by any man.

This consciousness which is functioning in me, in you, in the garden slug and earthworm outside, is the same. In me it has no frontiers; in you there are frontiers – you are enclosed in that. Where is the seat of human consciousness?

You have no way at all of finding out for yourself the seat of human consciousness, because it is all over, and you are not separate from that consciousness. Even with all the experiments that the brain physiologists and psychologists are doing, wasting millions and millions of dollars just to find out the seat of human consciousness, they will never be able to find it out at all.

Culture is part of this human consciousness, so everything that man has experienced and felt before you is part of that consciousness.

It is really a mystery. All the experiences – not necessarily just your experiences during your span of thirty, forty or fifty years, but the animal consciousness, the plant consciousness, the bird consciousness – all that is part of this consciousness.

Consciousness is a very powerful factor in experiencing things, but it is not possible for anybody to find out the content of the whole thing – it is too vast. The genetic is only part of it. It is much more than the genetic.

Whatever you experience, however profound that experience may be, is the result of the knowledge that is part of your consciousness. Somebody must have, *somewhere* along the line, experienced the bliss, beatitude – call it ‘ecstasy’, call it by *whatever* name you like, but *somebody somewhere* along the line – not necessarily you – must have experienced that, and that experience is part of your consciousness. you have to come to a point where there is no such thing as a *new* experience at all: somebody has experienced it before, so it is not yours.

The consciousness of the body does not exist. There is no such thing as consciousness at all. The one thing that helps us to become conscious of the non-existing body, for all practical purposes, is the knowledge that is given to us. Without that knowledge you have no way of creating your own body and experiencing it. I am questioning the very idea of consciousness, let alone the subconscious, the unconscious, the different levels of consciousness, and higher states of consciousness. I don't see that there is any such thing as consciousness. I become conscious of this (touching the arm of the chair) only through the knowledge that I have of it. The touch does not tell me anything except when I translate it within the framework of knowledge. Otherwise I have no way of experiencing that touch at all. The way these senses are operating here is quite different from the way we are made to believe. The eye is looking at the movement of your hand, and is not saying anything about that activity, except observing what is going on there.

Awareness

I am not particularly fond of the word 'awareness'. It is misused. It is a rubbed coin, and everybody uses it to justify some of his actions, instead of admitting that he did something wrong. Sometimes you say, 'I was not aware of what was going on there.' But awareness is an integral part of the activity of this human organism. This activity is not only specifically in the human organism but in all forms of life – the pig and the dog. The cat just looks at you, and is in a state of choiceless awareness. To turn that awareness into an instrument which you can use to bring about a change is to falsify that. Awareness is an integral part of the activity of the living organism.

There is no Self, no Soul

The belief that there is a centre here, that there is a spirit here, that there is a soul here, is what is responsible for that belief that there must be something beyond.

Is there any such thing as soul? Is there any such thing as the 'I'? Is there any such thing as the psyche? Whatever you see there, whatever you experience there, is created only by the knowledge you have of that self.

There is no self, there is no I, there is no spirit, there is no soul, and there is no mind. That knocks off the whole list, and you have no way of finding out what you are left with.

Ideas of soul and life after death are born out of the demand for permanence. That's the basis of man's religious thinking. All religious thinking is born out of the demand for permanence.

Mind is a Myth

There is no such thing as an unconditioned mind; the mind *is* conditioned. It is absurd, you see, to.... If there is a mind, it is bound to be conditioned. There is no such thing as an open mind.

To me there is no such thing as mind; mind is a myth. Since there is no such thing as mind, the 'mutation of mind' that J. Krishnamurti is talking about has no meaning. There is nothing there to be transformed, radically or otherwise. There is no self to be realized. The whole religious structure that has been built on this foundation collapses because there is nothing there to realize.

The whole Buddhist philosophy is built on the foundation of that 'no mind'. Yet they have created tremendous techniques of freeing themselves from the mind. All the Zen techniques of meditation try to free you from the mind. But the very instrument that we are using to free ourselves from the thing called 'mind' *is* the mind. Mind is nothing other than what you are doing to free yourself from the mind. But when it once dawns on you, by some strange chance or miracle, that the instrument that you are using to understand everything is not the instrument, and that there is no other instrument, it hits you like a jolt of lightning.

Thought is Bourgeois

Thought in its birth, in its origin, in its content, in its expression, and in its action is very fascist. When I use the word 'fascist' I use it not in the political sense but to mean that thought controls and shapes our thinking and our actions. So it is a very protective mechanism. It has no doubt helped us to be what we are today. It has helped us to create our high-tech and technology. It has made our life very comfortable. It has also made it possible for us to discover the laws of nature. But thought is a very protective mechanism and is interested in its own survival. At the same time, thought is opposed fundamentally to the functioning of this living organism.

It is thought that has invented the ideas of cause and effect. There may not be any such thing as a cause at all. Every event is an individual and independent event. We link up all these events and try to create a story of our lives. But actually every event is an independent event. If we accept the fact that every event is an independent event in our lives, it creates a tremendous problem of maintaining what we call identity. And identity is the most important factor in our lives. We are able to maintain this identity through the constant use of memory, which is also thought. This constant use of memory or identity, or whatever you call it, is consuming a tremendous amount of energy, and it leaves us with no energy to deal with the problems of our living. Is there any way that we can free ourselves from the identity? As I said, thought can only create problems; it cannot help us to solve them. Through dialectical thinking about thinking itself we are only sharpening that instrument. All philosophies help us only to sharpen this instrument.

Thought is very essential for us to survive in this world. But it cannot help us in achieving the goals that we have placed before ourselves. The goals are unachievable

through the help of thought. The quest for happiness, as you mentioned, is impossible because there is no such thing as permanent happiness. There are moments of happiness, and there are moments of unhappiness. But the demand to be in a permanent state of happiness is the enemy of this body. This body is interested in maintaining its sensitivity of the sensory perceptions and also the sensitivity of the nervous system. That is very essential for the survival of this body. If we use that instrument of thought for trying to achieve the impossible goal of permanent happiness, the sensitivity of this body is destroyed. Therefore, the body is rejecting all that we are interested in – permanent happiness and permanent pleasure. So, we are not going to succeed in that attempt to be in a permanent state of happiness.

Thought to me is matter. Therefore, all our spiritual goals are materialistic in their value. And this is the conflict that is going on there. In this process, the totality of man's experiences created what we call a separate identity and a separate mind. But actually if you want to experience anything, be it your own body, or your own experiences, you have no way of experiencing them without the use of the knowledge that is passed on to us.

All the problems are artificially created by the various structures created by human thinking. There is some sort of (I can't make a definitive statement) neurological problem in the human body. Human thinking is born out of this neurological defect in the human species. Anything that is born out of human thinking is destructive. Thought is destructive. Thought is a protective mechanism. It draws frontiers around itself, and it wants to protect itself. It is for the same reason that we also draw lines on this planet and extend them as far as we can. Do you think these frontiers are going to disappear? They are not. Those who have entrenched themselves, those who have had the monopoly of all the world's resources so far and for so long, if they are threatened to be dislodged, what they would do is anybody's guess. All the destructive weapons that we have today are here only to protect that monopoly.

But actually 'Is there a thought?' the question is born out of the assumption that there is a thought there. But what you will find there is all *about* thought and *not* thought. All *about* thought is what is put in there by the culture. That is put in by the people who are telling us that it is very essential for you to free yourself from whatever you are trying to free yourself from through that instrument. My interest is to emphasize that that is not the instrument, and there is no other instrument. And when once this hits you, dawns upon you that thought is not the instrument, and that there is no other instrument, then there is no need for you to find out if any other instrument is necessary. No need for any other instrument. This very same structure that we are using, the instrument which we are using, has in a very ingenious way invented all kinds of things like intuition, right insight, right this, that, and the other. And to say that through this very insight we have come to understand something is the stumbling block. All insights, however extraordinary they may be, are worthless, because it is thought that has created what we call insight, and through that it is maintaining its continuity and status quo.

Where does thought come from? Is it from inside, or outside? Where is the seat of human consciousness? So, for purposes of communication, or just to give a feel about it, I say there is a 'thought sphere'. In that 'thought sphere' we are all functioning, and each of us probably has an 'antenna', or what you call an 'aerial' or something, which is the

creation of the culture into which we are born. It is that that is picking up these particular thoughts. You have no way at all of finding out for yourself the seat of human consciousness, because it is all over, and you are not separate from that consciousness. Even with all the experiments that the brain physiologists and psychologists are doing, wasting millions and millions of dollars just to find out the seat of human consciousness, they will never be able to find it out at all. I am not making a dogmatic statement or any such thing.

Thought can never capture the movement of life, it is much too slow. It is like lightning and thunder. They occur simultaneously, but sound, travelling slower than light, reaches you later, creating the illusion of two separate events. It is only the natural physiological sensations and perceptions that can move with the flow of life.

There is no such thing as looking at something without the interference of knowledge. To look you need space, and thought creates that space. So space itself, as a dimension, exists only as a creation of thought. Thought has also tried to theorize about the space it has created, inventing the 'time-space-continuum'. Time is an independent reference or frame. There is no necessary continuity between it and space. Thought has also invented the opposite of time, the 'now', the 'eternal now'. The present exists only as an idea. The moment you attempt to look at the present, it has already been brought into the framework of the past. Thought will use any trick under the sun to give momentum to its own continuity. Its essential technique is to repeat the same thing over and over again; this gives it an illusion of permanency. This permanency is shattered the moment the falseness of the past-present-future continuum is seen. The future can be nothing but the modified continuity of the past.

Feeling too is Thought

Feeling is also thought. We want to feel that feelings are more important than thoughts, but there is no way you can experience a feeling without translating that within the framework of the knowledge that you have. Take for example that you tell yourself that you are happy. You don't even know that the sensation that is there is happiness. But you capture that sensation within the framework of the knowledge you have of what you call a state of happiness, and the other state, that of unhappiness. What I am trying to say is that it is the knowledge that you have about yourself which has created the self there and helps you to experience yourself as an entity there.

Knowledge and Experience

Whatever you experience – peace, bliss, silence, beatitude, ecstasy, joy, God knows what – will be old, second-hand. You already have knowledge about all of these things. The fact that you are in a blissful state or in a state of tremendous silence means that you know about it. You must know a thing in order to experience it. That knowledge is

nothing marvellous or metaphysical; ‘bench’, ‘bag’, ‘red bag’, is the knowledge. Knowledge is something which is put into you by somebody else, and he got that from somebody else; it is not yours. Can you experience a simple thing like that bench that is sitting across from you? No, you only experience the knowledge you have about it. And the knowledge has come from some outside agency, always. You think the thoughts of your society, feel the feelings of your society and experience the experiences of your society; there is no new experience.

Knowledge is not something mysterious or mystical. You know that you are happy, and you have theories about the working of the fan, the light – this is the knowledge we are talking about. You introduce another knowledge, ‘spiritual knowledge’, but – spiritual knowledge, sensual knowledge – what is the difference? We give the names to them. Fantasies about God are acceptable, but fantasies about sex are called ‘sensual’, ‘physical’. There is no difference between the two; one is socially acceptable, the other is not. You are limiting knowledge to a particular area of experience, so then it becomes ‘sensual’, and the other becomes ‘spiritual’? Everything is sensual.

You cannot communicate what you cannot experience. I don’t want to use those words, because ‘inexpressible’ and ‘incommunicable’ imply that there is something which cannot be communicated, which cannot be expressed. I don’t know. There is an assumption that there is something there which cannot be expressed, which cannot be communicated. There is nothing there. I don’t want to say there is nothing there, because you will catch me – you will call it ‘emptiness’, ‘void’ and all that sort of thing.

Whatever is experienced is thought-induced. Without knowledge you can’t experience. And experience strengthens the knowledge. It is a vicious circle: the dog chasing its own tail.

Where, you ask, is this knowledge, the past? Is it in your brain? Where is it? It is all over your body. It is in every cell of your body.

Is There any Meaning and Purpose to Life?

‘What is the meaning of life?’ It is not life that we are really interested in but living. The problem of living has become a very tiring business – to live with somebody else, to live with our feelings, to live with our ideas. In other words, it is the value system that we have been thrown into. You see, the value system is false.

The heart does not for a moment know that it is pumping blood. It is not asking the question, ‘Am I doing it right?’ It is just functioning. It does not ask the question, ‘Is there any purpose?’ To me, that question has no meaning. The questions, ‘Is there any meaning?’ ‘Is there any purpose?’ take away the living quality of life. You are living in a world of ideas.

Suppose I say that this meaninglessness is all there is for you, all there can ever be for you. What will you do? The false and absurd goal you have before you is responsible for that dissatisfaction and meaninglessness in you. Do you think life has any meaning? Obviously you don’t. You have been told that there *is* meaning, that there *must* be a

meaning to life. Your notion of the 'meaningful' keeps you from facing this issue, and makes you feel that life has no meaning. If the idea of the meaningful is dropped, then you will see meaning in whatever you are doing in daily life.

Why should life have any meaning? Why should there be any purpose to living? Living itself is all that is there. Your search for spiritual meaning has made a problem out of living. You have been fed all this rubbish about the ideal, perfect, peaceful, purposeful way of life, and you devote your energies to thinking about that rather than living fully. In any case you are living, no matter what you are thinking about. Life has to go on.

Once a very old gentleman, ninety-five years old, who was considered to be a great spiritual man and who taught the great scriptures all the time to his followers, came to see me. He heard that I was there in that town. He came to me and asked me two questions. He asked me, 'What is the meaning of life? I have written hundreds of books telling people all about the meaning and purpose of life, quoting all the scriptures and interpreting them. I haven't understood the meaning of life. You are the one who can give an answer to me.' I told him, 'Look, you are ninety-five years old and you haven't understood the meaning of life. When are you going to understand the meaning of life? There may not be any meaning to life at all.' The next question he asked me was, 'I have lived ninety-five years and I am going to die one of these days. I want to know what will happen after my death.' I said, 'You may not live long to know anything about death. You have to die now. Are you ready to die?' As long as you are asking the question, 'What is death?' or 'What is there after death?' you are already dead. These are all dead questions. A living man would never ask those questions.

Is There Such a Thing as TRUTH?

Truth is a movement. You can't capture it, contain it, give expression to it, or use it to advance your interests. The moment you capture it, it ceases to be the truth. What is the truth for me is something that cannot, under any circumstances, be communicated to you. The certainty here cannot be transmitted to another. For this reason the whole guru business is absolute nonsense. This has always been the case, not just now. Your self-denial is to enrich the priests. You deny yourself your basic needs while that man travels in a Rolls Royce car, eating like a king, and being treated like a potentate. He, and the others in the holy business, thrive on the stupidity and credulity of others. The politicians, similarly, thrive on the gullibility of man. It is the same everywhere.

Is there Freedom?

I maintain that man has no freedom of action. I don't mean the fatalism that the Indians have practiced and still are practicing: when I say that man has no freedom of action it is in relation to changing himself, to freeing himself from the burden of the past. It means that you have no way of acting except through the help of the knowledge that is passed on to you. It is in that sense, I said, no action is possible without thought.

So what is necessary is that the individual should free himself from the burden of the past, the great heritage you are talking about. Unless the individual frees himself from the burden of the past, he cannot come up with new solutions for the problems; he repeats the same old.... So it is up to the individual. He has to free himself from the *entire* past, the heritage which you are talking about – that is to say he has to break away from the cumulative wisdom of the ages – only then is it possible for him to come out with the solutions for the problems with which man is confronted today.

But that is not in his hands; there is nothing that he can do to free himself from the burden of the past. It is in that sense that I say he has no freedom of action. You have freedom to come here or not to come here, to study or teach economics or philosophy or something else – *there* you have a limited freedom. But you have no freedom to control the events of the world or shape the events of the world – *nobody* has that power, no nation has that power.

Man is Memory

The mind is (not that I am giving a new definition) the totality of man's experiences, thoughts, and feelings. There is no such thing as your mind or my mind. I have no objection if you want to call that totality of man's thoughts, feelings, and experiences by the name 'mind'. But how they are transmitted to us from generation to generation is the question. Is it through the medium of knowledge or is there any other way by which they are transmitted from generation to generation, say for example, through the genes? We don't have the answers yet. Then we come to the idea of memory. What is man? Man is memory. What is that memory? Is it something more than just to remember, to recall a specific thing at a specific time? To all this we have to have some more answers. How do the neurons operate in the brain? Is it all in one area? The other day I was talking to a neurosurgeon, a very young and bright fellow. He said that memory, or rather the neurons containing memory, are not in one area. The eye, the ear, the nose, all the five sensory organs in your body have a different sort of memory. But they don't yet know for sure. So we have to get more answers.

There is always a space between perception and memory. Memory is like sound. Sound is very slow, whereas light travels faster. All these sensory activities or perceptions are like light. They are very fast. But for some reason we have lost the capacity to kick that (memory) into the background and allow these things to move as fast as they occur in nature. Thought comes, captures it (the sensory perception), and says that it is this or that. That is what you call recognition, or naming, or whatever you want to call it. The moment you recognize this as the tape recorder, the name 'tape recorder' also is there. So recognition and naming are not two different things.

We maintain the separation and keep up a non-existing identity. That is the reason why you have to constantly use your memory, which is nothing but the neurons, to maintain your identity.

‘Who am I?’ ‘What is the meaning of life?’ ‘Does God exist?’ or ‘Is there an afterlife?’ all these questions spring only from memory. That is why I ask whether you have a question of your own.

What you call the ‘act of knowing’ is nothing other than this accumulated memory.

Can you become conscious of anything except through the medium of memory and thought? Memory is knowledge. Even your feelings are memory.

To attempt to be free from memory is withdrawal, and withdrawal is death.

You Are Not There

YOU don’t exist. There is no individual there at all. Culture, society, or whatever you want to call it, has created ‘you’ and ‘me’ for the sole purpose of maintaining its own continuity. But, at the same time, we are made to believe that you have to become an individual. These two things have created this neurotic situation for us. There is no such thing as an individual, and there is no such thing as freedom of action. I am not talking of a fatalistic philosophy or any such thing. It is this fact that is frustrating us. The demand to fit ourselves into that value system is using a tremendous amount of energy, and there is nothing we can do to deal with the living problems here. All the energy is being consumed by the demands of the culture or society, or whatever you want to call it, to fit you into the framework of that value system. In the process, we are not left with any energy to deal with the other problems. But these problems, that is, the living problems, are very simple.

Relationship is Division

The problem is a problem of relationship. It is just not possible to establish any relationship with anything around you, including your near and dear ones, except on the level of what you can get out of the relationship. You see, the whole thing springs from this separation or isolation that human beings live in today. We are isolated from the rest of creation, the rest of life around us. We all live in individual frames. We try to establish a relationship at the level of ‘What do I get out of that relationship?’ We use others to try and fill this void that is created as a result of our isolation.

We always want to fill this emptiness, this void, with all kinds of relationships with people around us. That is really the problem. We have to use everything – an idea, a person, anything we can get hold of, to establish relationships with others. Without relationships we are lost, and we don’t see any meaning; we don’t see any purpose.

But that relationship is already there. So, what separates you from me and me from you is the knowledge we have

Love is Fascist

What an amount of energy we are putting into making our relationship into a loving thing! It is a battle, it is a war. It is like preparing yourself all the time for war hoping that there will be peace, eternal peace, or this or that. You are tired of this battle, and you even settle for that horrible, non-loving relationship. And you hope and dream one day it will be nothing but love. 'Love thy neighbour as thyself—' in the name of that how many millions of people have been killed? More than all the recent wars put together. How can you love thy neighbour as thyself? It is just not possible.

Love implies division, separation. As long as there is division, as long as there is a separation within you, so long do you maintain that separation around you. When everything fails, you use the last card, the trump in the pack of cards, and call it love... We say: I love my country, I love my dog, I love my wife, and what else. What happens? You love your country, I love my country, and there is war.

It is not going to help us, and it has not helped us at all. Even religion has failed to free man from violence and from ten other different things that it is trying to free us from. You see, it is not a question of trying to find new concepts, new ideas, new thoughts, and new beliefs.

What, after all, is the world? The world is the relationship between two individuals. But that relationship is based on the foundation of 'What do I get out of a relationship?' Mutual gratification is the basis of all relationships. If you don't get what you want out of a relationship, it goes sour. What there is in the place of what you call a 'loving relationship' is hate.

The whole music of our age is all around that song, 'Love, Love, Love....' But love is fascist in its nature, in its birth, in its expression and in its action. It cannot do us any good. We may talk of love but it doesn't mean anything.

Sex is Thought

Sexuality, if it is left to itself, as it is in the case of other species, other forms of life, is merely a biological need, because the living organism has this object to survive and produce one like itself. Anything you superimpose on that is totally unrelated to the living organism. But we have turned that, what you call sexual activity, which is biological in its nature, into a pleasure movement.

It is a very simple functioning of the living organism. The religious man has turned that into something big, and concentrated on the control of sex. After that the psychologists have turned that into something extraordinary. All commercialism is related to sex. How do you think it will fall into its proper place?

You may ask: Is not sex a basic human requirement? Sex is dependent upon thought; the body itself has no sex. Only the genitals and perhaps the hormone balances differ between male and female. It is thought that says 'I am a man, and that is a woman, an

attractive woman.’ It is thought that translates sex feelings in the body and says ‘These are sexual feelings.’ And it is thought that provides the build-up without which no sex is possible: ‘It would be more pleasurable to hold that woman’s hand than just to look at her. It would be more pleasurable to kiss her than just to embrace her,’ and so on. In the natural state there is no build-up of thought. Without that build-up, sex is impossible. And sex is tremendously violent to the body. The body normally is a very peaceful organism, and then you subject it to this tremendous tension and release, which feels pleasurable to you. Actually it is painful to the body.

But through suppression or attempts at sublimation of sex you will never come into this state. As long as you think of God, you will have thoughts of sex. Ask any religious seeker you may know who practices celibacy, whether he doesn’t dream of women at night.

The peak of the sex experience is the one thing in life you have that comes close to being a first-hand experience; all of the rest of your experiences are second-hand, somebody else’s. Why do you weave so many taboos and ideas around this? Why do you destroy the joy of sex? Not that I am advocating indulgence or promiscuity; but through abstinence and continence you will never achieve a thing.

Marriage is Possessiveness

The institution of marriage is not going to disappear. As long as we demand relationships, it will continue in some form or other. Basically, it is a question of possessiveness.

The marriage institution will somehow continue because it is not just the relationship between the two, but children and property are involved. And we use property and children as a pretext to give continuity to the institution of marriage. The problem is so complex and so complicated. It is not so easy for anybody to come up with answers to the age-old institution of marriage.

Desire and Selfishness

Man is *always* selfish, and he will remain selfish as long as he practices selflessness as a virtue. I have nothing against selfish people. I don’t want to talk about selflessness – it has no basis at all. You say ‘I will be a selfless man tomorrow. Tomorrow I will be a marvellous man’ – but until tomorrow arrives (or the day after tomorrow, or the next life) you will remain selfish. What do you mean by ‘selflessness’? You tell everybody to be selfless. What is the point? I have never said to anybody ‘Don’t be selfish.’ Be selfish, stay selfish! – that is my message. Wanting enlightenment is selfishness. The rich man’s distributing charity is also selfishness: he will be remembered as a generous man; you will put up a statue of him there.

You have been told that you should practice desirelessness. You have practiced desirelessness for thirty or forty years, but still desires are there. So something must be wrong somewhere. Nothing can be wrong with desire; something must be wrong with the one who has told you to practice desirelessness. This (desire) is a reality; that

(desirelessness) is false – it is falsifying you. Desire is there. Desire as such can't be wrong, can't be false, because it is there.

Don't you see that it is the very thinking that has turned this into a problem? Anger is energy, desire is energy – all the energy you want is already in operation there.

You hope that you will be able to resolve the problem of desire through thinking, because of that model of a saint who you think has controlled or eliminated desire. If that man has no desire as you imagine, he is a corpse. Don't believe that man at all! Such a man builds some organization, and lives in luxury, which you pay for. You are maintaining him. He is doing it for his livelihood. There is always a fool in the world who falls for him. Once in a while he allows you to prostrate before him. You will be surprised if you live with him. You will get the shock of your life if you see him there. That is why they are all aloof – because they are afraid you will catch them some time or the other. The rich man is always afraid that you will touch him for money. So too the religious man - he never, never comes in contact with you. Seeing him is far more difficult than seeing the President of your country – that is a lot easier than seeing a holy man. He is not what he says he is, not what he claims he is.

As long as there is a living body, there will be desire. It is natural. Thought has interfered and tried to suppress, control, and moralize about desire, to the detriment of mankind. We are trying to solve the 'problem' of desire through thought. It is thinking that has created the problem. You somehow continue to hope and believe that the same instrument can solve your other problems as well. You hope against hope that thought will pull you through, but you will die in hope just as you have lived in hope. That is the refrain of my doom song.

Politics

All the political ideologies, even your legal structures, are the warty outgrowth of the religious thinking of man. It is not so easy to flush out the whole series of experiences which have been accumulated through centuries, and which are based upon the religious thinking of man. There is a tendency to replace one belief with another belief, one illusion with another illusion. That is all we can do.

Revolution is only Revaluation of the Old

The human being modelled after the perfect being has totally failed. The model has not touched anything there. Your value system is the one that is responsible for the human malady, the human tragedy, forcing everybody to fit into that model. So, what do we do? You cannot do anything by destroying the value system, because you replace one value system with another. Even those who rebelled against religion, like those in the Communist countries, have themselves created another kind of value system. So, revolution does not mean the end of anything. It is only a revaluation of our value system. So, that needs another revolution, and so on and so on. There is no way.

Every human being is different. That is all I am saying. There is nobody like you anywhere in this world. I tell you, nobody! I am talking physiologically, you know. But

we ignore that, and try to put everybody in a common mould and create what we call the greatest common factor. All the time you are trying to educate them and fit them into the value system. If that value system does not work, naturally revolutions take place. The whole idea of restructuring is nothing but a revaluation of the old value system. Revolution only means revaluation of our value system. It is the same thing. After a while things settle down, and then they go at it again. There is no improvement again. Or there is a slight improvement. But it is basically a modified continuity of the same. In that process what horrors we have committed, you know! Is it really worth all that? But you seem to think that it is. After killing so many people you go back to the same system, the same technique. What is the point?

Fear and Death

The balance of energy in nature has to be maintained for some reason. I don't know why. So death occurs only when there is a need for the atoms to maintain the balance of energy in the universe. It is nothing but a reshuffling of atoms. This organism has no way of finding out that it was born at a particular point of time and is going to die at another point of time, and also that it is living at this moment and not dead.

You shall not taste of death, for there is no death for you: you cannot experience your own death. Are you born? Life and death cannot be separated; you have no chance whatever of knowing for yourself where one begins and the other ends. You can experience the death of another, but not your own. The only death is physical death; there is no psychological death.

Why are you so afraid of death?

Your experiencing structure cannot conceive of any event that it will not experience. It even expects to preside over its own dissolution, and so it wonders what death will feel like – it tries to project the feeling of what it will be like not to feel. But in order to anticipate a future experience, your structure needs knowledge, a similar past experience it can call upon for reference. You cannot remember what it felt like not to exist before you were born, and you cannot remember your own birth, so you have no basis for projecting your future non- existence. As long as you have known life, you have known yourself, you have been there, so, to you, you have a feeling of eternity. To justify this feeling of eternity, your structure begins to convince itself that there will be a life after death for you – heaven, reincarnation, transmigration of souls, or whatever. What is it that you think reincarnates? Where is that soul of yours? Can you taste it, touch it, show it to me? What is there inside of you that goes to heaven? What is there? There is nothing inside of you but fear.

Is there anything to Vegetarianism?

Vegetarianism for what? For some spiritual goals? One form of life lives off another. That's a fact, whether you like it or not. He (the questioner) says his cat is a vegetarian cat, it doesn't kill a fly. Because of its association with vegetarians it has become vegetarian. For health reasons maybe one should. I don't know, I don't see any adequate

reason why one should be a vegetarian. Your body is not going to be any more pure than the meat eating body. You go to India, those that have been vegetarians, they are not kind, they are not peaceful. You will be surprised. Vegetarians can be more aggressive than the meat eaters. Read the history of India – it is full of bloodshed, massacres, and assassinations – all in the name of religion. So it has nothing to do with spirituality, – what you put in there (stomach) is not really the problem.

What is Life?

You will *never* know what life is. *Nobody* can say anything about life. You can give definitions, but those definitions have no meaning. You can theorize about life, but that is a thing which is not of any value to you – it cannot help you to understand anything. So you don't ask questions like 'What is life?' you know. 'What is life?' – there is no answer to that question, so the question cannot stay there any longer. You really don't know, so the question disappears. You don't let that happen there, because you think there must be an answer. If you don't know the answer, you think there may be somebody in this world who can give an answer to that question. 'What is life?' – *nobody* can give an answer to that question – we really don't know. So the question cannot stay there; the question burns itself out, you see. The question is born out of thought, so when it burns itself out, what is there is energy. There's a combustion: thought burns itself out and gives physical energy. In the same way, when the question is burnt, along with it goes the questioner also. The question and the questioner are not two different things. When the question burns itself out, what is there is energy. You can't say anything about that energy – it is already manifesting itself, expressing itself in a boundless way; it has no limitations, no boundaries. It is not yours, not mine; it belongs to everybody. You are part of that. You are an expression of that. Just as the flower is an expression of life, you are another expression of life.

Life is one unitary movement, not two different movements. It's moving, it's a continuous flux, but you cannot look at that flux and say 'That is a flux.' ... This is just a pure and simple physiological functioning of the organism. Because there is life, there is a response. The response and the stimulus are not two different movements: you cannot separate the response from the stimulus. (The moment you separate the response from the stimulus, there is a division, it is a divisive consciousness that is in operation.) So, it is one movement.

There are only Answers, no Questions

Try and formulate a question which you can call your own. This you will discover: they are not your questions at all.

Questions are there because you have a *vague* answer for the question.

Your problems continue because of the false solutions you have invented. If the answers are not there, the questions cannot be there. They are interdependent; your problems and solutions go together. Because you want to use certain answers to end your problems, those problems continue. The numerous solutions offered by all these holy people, the psychologists, the politicians, are not really solutions at all. That is obvious. If there were legitimate answers, there would be no problems. They can only exhort you to try harder, practice more meditations, cultivate humility, stand on your head, and more and more of the same. That is all they can do. The teacher, guru, or leader who offers solutions is also false, along with his so-called answers. He is not doing any honest work, only selling a cheap, shoddy commodity in the marketplace. If you brushed aside your hope, fear, and naiveté, and treated these fellows like businessmen, you would see that they do not deliver the goods, and never will. But you go on and on buying these bogus wares offered up by the experts.

Real Problem is the Solution

The real problem is the solution. Your problems continue because of the false solutions you have invented. If the answers are not there, the questions cannot be there. They are interdependent; your problems and solutions go together. Because you want to use certain answers to end your problems, those problems continue. The numerous solutions offered by all these holy people, the psychologists, the politicians, are not really solutions at all. That is obvious. They can only exhort you to try harder, practice more meditations, cultivate humility, stand on your head, and more and more of the same. That is all they can do. If you brushed aside your hope, fear, and naiveté, and treated these fellows like businessmen, you would see that they do not deliver the goods, and never will. But you go on and on buying these bogus wares offered up by the experts.

Actually there are no problems, there are only solutions. But we don't even have the guts to say that they don't work. Even if you have discovered that they don't work, sentimentality comes into the picture. The feeling, 'That man in whom I have placed my confidence and belief cannot con himself and con everyone else,' comes in the way of throwing the whole thing out of the window, down the drain. The solutions are still a problem. Actually there is no problem there. The only problem is to find out the inadequacy or uselessness of all the solutions that have been offered to us. The questions naturally are born out of the assumptions and answers that we have taken for granted as real answers. But we really don't want any answers to the questions, because an answer to the questions is the end of the answers. If one answer ends, all the other answers also go.

What is Maya?

Not that the world is an illusion. All the Vedanta philosophers in India, particularly the students of Sankara, indulge in such frivolous, absolute nonsense. The world is not an illusion, but anything you experience in relationship to this point, which itself is illusory,

is bound to be an illusion, that's all. The Sanskrit word 'maya' does not mean illusion in the same sense in which the English word is used. 'Maya' means to measure. You cannot measure anything unless you have a point. So, if the centre is absent, there is no circumference at all. That is pure and simple basic arithmetic.

Silence

The peace there is not this inane dead silence you experience. It's like a volcano erupting all the time. That is the silence; that is peace. The blood is flowing through your veins like a river. If you tried to magnify the sound of the flow of your blood you will be surprised – it's like the roar of the ocean. If you put yourself in a sound proof room you will not survive even for five minutes. You will go crazy, because you can't bear the noises that are there in you. The sound of the beat of your heart is something which you cannot take. You love to surround yourself with all these sounds and then you create some funny experience called the 'experience of the silent mind,' which is ridiculous. Absurd. That is the silence that is there – the roar – the roar of an ocean. Like the roaring of the flow of blood.

The Body is Immortal

It is the body which is immortal. It only changes its form after clinical death, remaining within the flow of life in new shapes. The body is not concerned with 'the afterlife' or any kind of permanency. It struggles to survive and multiply NOW. The fictitious 'beyond', created by thought out of fear, is really the demand for more of the same, in modified form. This demand for repetition of the same thing over and over again is the demand for permanence. Such permanence is foreign to the body. Thought's demand for permanence is choking the body and distorting perception. Thought sees itself as not just the protector of its own continuity, but also of the body's continuity. Both are utterly false.

The moment you die, the body begins to decay, returning back to other, differently organized forms of life, putting an end to nothing. Life has no beginning and no end. A dead and dying body feeds the hungry ants there in the grave, and rotting corpses give off soil-enriching chemicals, which in turn nourish other life forms. You cannot put an end to your life, it is impossible. The body is immortal and never asks silly questions like, 'Is there immortality?' It knows that it will come to an end in that particular form, only to continue on in others. Questions about life after death are always asked out of fear.

This body has not fundamentally changed for hundreds of thousands of years. Its propensity to follow leaders, to avoid solitude, to wage war, to join groups– all such traits are in the genetic make-up of mankind, part of his biological inheritance.

The human body, when broken into its constituent elements, is no different from the tree out there or the mosquito that is sucking your blood. Basically, it is exactly the same. The proportions of the elements may be higher in one case and lesser in the case of the others. You have eighty percent of water in the body, and there is eighty percent of water in the trees and eighty percent on this planet. So that is the reason why I maintain that we

are nothing but a fortuitous concourse of atoms. If and when death takes place, the body is reshuffled, and then these atoms are used to maintain the energy levels in the universe. Other than that, there is no such thing as death to this body.

Thought is only a response to stimuli. The brain is not really a creator; it is just a container. The function of the brain in this body is only to take care of the needs of the physical organism and to maintain its sensitivity, whereas thought, through its constant interference with sensory activity, is destroying the sensitivity of the body. That is where the conflict is. The conflict is between the need of the body to maintain its sensitivity and the demand of thought to translate every sensation within the framework of the sensual activity. I am not condemning sensual activity. Mind, or whatever you want to call it, is born out of this sensuality. So, all activities of the mind are sensual in their nature, whereas the activity of the body is to respond to the stimuli around it. That is really the basic conflict between what you call the mind and the body.

You are a Cheat

You are a cheat. Your religious ambitions are just like the businessman's there. If you can't cheat there is something wrong. How do you think the rich man there got his great wealth? Through lectures about non-greed and selflessness? Not at all. He got it by cheating somebody. Society, which is immoral to begin with, says that cheating is immoral, and that non-cheating is moral. I don't see the difference. If you get caught they put you in jail. So your food and shelter are provided for. Why worry? It is the guilt you have that compels you to talk of non-greed while you continue on with your greedy life. Your non-greed is invented by thought to keep you from facing the fact that greed is all that is there. But you are not satisfied with what is so. If there were nothing more than that, what would you do? That is all that is there. You just have to live with it. You can't escape. All thought can do is repeat itself over and over again. That is all it can do. And anything repetitive is senile.

There is no such thing as Spirituality

Separating things, dividing things into material life, and spiritual life. There is only one life. This is a material life, and that other has no relevance. Wanting to change your material life into that so-called religious pattern given to you, placed before you by these religious people, is destroying the possibility of your living in harmony and accepting the reality of this material world exactly the way it is. That is responsible for your pain, for your suffering, for your sorrow.

Stop it

You can stop it in you. Free yourself from that social structure that is operating in you without becoming anti-social, without becoming a reformer, without becoming anti-this, anti-that. You can throw the whole thing out of your system and free yourself from the

burden of this culture, for yourself and by yourself. Whether it has any usefulness for society or not is not your concern. If there is one individual who walks free, you don't have any more the choking feeling of what this horrible culture has done to you. It's neither East nor West, it's all the same. Human nature is exactly the same – there's no difference.

You are Unique

By using the models of Jesus, Buddha, or Krishna we have destroyed the possibility of nature throwing up unique individuals. Those who recommend that you forget your own natural uniqueness and be like someone else, no matter how saintly that person may be, is putting you on the wrong track. It is like the blind leading the blind.

When dealing with these yogins and holy men the first wrong turn you take is in trying to relate the way they are functioning with the way you are functioning. What they are describing may not be related to the way you are functioning at all. Uniqueness is not something which can be turned out in a factory. Society is interested only in the status quo and has provided all these so-called special individuals so that you'll have models to follow. You want to be like that fellow– the saint, the saviour, or the revolutionary– but it is an impossibility. Your society, which is only interested in turning out copies of acceptable models, is threatened by real individuality because it (individuality) threatens its continuity. A truly unique person, having no cultural reference point, would never know that he is unique.

What nature has created in the form of human species is something extraordinary. It is an unparalleled creation. But culture is interested in fitting the actions of all human beings into a common mould. That is because it is interested in maintaining the status quo, its value system. That is where the real conflict is.

Man cannot become man so long as he follows somebody. What is responsible for man remaining an animal is that culture – the top dog, following somebody – that has not helped you at all. You want to be a cheap imitation of Sankara or Buddha; you don't want to be yourself. What for? I tell you, you are far more unique and extraordinary than all those saints and saviours of mankind put together. Why do you want to be a cheap imitation of that fellow? That is one of the myths. Forget it.

Sages

You cannot become a sage through any *sadhana* (spiritual practice); it is not in your hands. A sage cannot have a disciple, a sage cannot have a follower, because it is not an experience that can be shared. The sages and seers are original and unique because they have freed themselves from the entire past. (Even the mystic experience is part of the past.) Not that the past goes for such a man; but for him the past has no emotional content – it is not continually operative, coloring the actions.

No Power Outside of You

Psychic powers, clairvoyance, clairaudience – they are all human instincts. And they are necessary because there are two things that the human organism is interested in. One: its survival at any cost. Why should it survive? I don't know; it is a foolish question to ask. That is one of the most important things: it has a survival mechanism of its own, which is quite different from the survival mechanism of the movement of thought. The second thing is: to reproduce itself. It has to reproduce. These are the two fundamental characteristics of the human organism, the living organism.

I can tell you that there is no power outside of you – no power. This does not mean that you have all the attributes that you read about of the super-duper gods; but there is no power outside of you. If there is any power in this universe, it is in you.

Courage to Stand Alone

Man has to be saved from the saviours of mankind! The religious people – they kidded themselves and fooled the whole of mankind. Throw them out! That is courage itself, because of the courage there; not the courage you practice.

Fearlessness is not freedom from all the phobias. The phobias are essential for the survival of the organism. You must have the fear of heights and the fear of depths – if that is not there, there is a danger of your falling. But you want to teach courage to man to fight on the battlefield. Why do you want to teach him courage? To kill others and get killed himself – that is your culture. Crossing the Atlantic in a balloon or the Pacific on a raft – anybody can do that – that is not courage. Fearlessness is not a silly thing like that.

Courage is to brush aside everything that man has experienced and felt before you. You are the only one, greater than all those things. Everything is finished, the whole tradition is finished, however sacred and holy it may be – then only can you be yourself – that is individuality. For the first time you become an individual.

What Is

We are not created for any grander purpose than the ants that are there or the flies that are hovering around us or the mosquitoes that are sucking our blood.

*

We are no more purposeful or meaningful than any other thing on this planet.

*

The plain fact is that if you don't have a problem, you create one. If you don't have a problem you don't feel that you are living.

*

When you are no longer caught up in the dichotomy of right and wrong or good and bad,

you can never do anything wrong. As long as you are caught up in this duality, the danger is that you will always do wrong.

*

In nature there is no death or destruction at all. What occurs is the reshuffling of atoms. If there is a need or necessity to maintain the balance of 'energy' in this universe, death occurs.

*

An artist is a craftsman like any other craftsmen. He uses that tool to express himself. All art is a pleasure movement.

*

There is more life in the chorus of the barking dogs than in the music or singing of your famous musicians and singers.

*

A messiah is the one who leaves a mess behind him in this world.

*

Religions have promised roses but you end up with only thorns.

*

It is terror, not love, not brotherhood that will help us to live together.

*

Meditation itself is evil. That is why you get evil thoughts when you start meditating.

*

Anything you want to be free from for whatever reason is the very thing that can free you.

*

Atmospheric pollution is most harmless when compared to the spiritual and religious pollution that have plagued the world.

*

Going to the pub or the temple is exactly the same; it is quick fix.

*

The body has no independent existence. You are a squatter there.

*

God and sex go together. If God goes sex goes, too.

*

When you know nothing, you say a lot. When you know something, there is nothing to say.

*

You have to touch life at a point where nobody has touched it before. Nobody can teach you that.

*

Until you have the courage to blast me, all that I am saying, and all gurus, you will remain a cultist with photographs, rituals, birthday celebrations and the like.

*

All I can guarantee you is that as long as you are searching for happiness, you will remain unhappy.

*

Understanding yourself is one of the greatest jokes perpetrated not only by the purveyors of ancient wisdom– the holy men– but also the modern scientists. The psychologists love to talk about self-knowledge, self-actualization, living from moment to moment, and such rot.

*

The more you know about yourself the more impossible it becomes to be humble and sensitive. How can there be humility as long as you know something?

*

It is mortality that creates immortality. It is the known that creates the unknown. It is the time that has created the timeless. It is thought that has created the thoughtless.

*

You actually have no way of looking at the sunset because you are not separated from the sunset. The moment you separate your self from the sunset, the poet in you comes out. Out of that separation poets and painters have tried to express themselves, to share their experiences with others. All that is culture.

*

The feminist movement will not succeed as long as the woman depends on the man for her sexual needs.

*

All experiences however extraordinary they may be are in the area of sensuality.

*

Humility is an art that one practices. There is no such thing as humility. As long as you know, there is no humility. The known and humility cannot coexist

*

Man cannot be anything other than what he is. Whatever he is, he will create a society that mirrors him.

*

Inspiration is a meaningless thing. Lost, desperate people create a market for inspiration. All inspired action will eventually destroy you and your kind.

*

Love and hate are not opposite ends of the same spectrum; they are one and the same thing. They are much closer than kissing cousins.

*

It is a terrible thing to use somebody to get pleasure. Whatever you use, an idea, a concept, a drug, or a person, or anything else, you cannot have pleasure without using something.

*

Hinduism is not a religion in the usual sense. It is a combination and confusion of many things. It is like a street with hundreds of shops.

*

Gurus play a social role, so do prostitutes.

*

Society, which has created all these sociopaths, has invented morality to protect itself from them. Society has created the ‘saints’ and ‘sinners’. I don’t accept them as such.

*

By using the models of Jesus, Buddha, or Krishna we have destroyed the possibility of nature throwing up unique individuals.

*

As long as you are doing something to be selfless, you will be a self-centred individual.

*

The subject does not exist there. It is the object that creates the subject. This runs counter to the whole philosophical thinking of India.

*

When thought is not there all the time, what is there is living from moment to moment. It’s all in frames, millions and millions and millions of frames, to put it in the language of film.

*

The man who spoke of ‘love thy neighbour as thyself’ is responsible for this horror in the world today. Don’t exonerate those teachers.

*

Life has to be described in pure and simple physical and physiological terms. It must be demystified and depsychologized.

*

Society is built on a foundation of conflict, and you are society. Therefore you must always be in conflict with society.

*

You know the story of ‘Alice in Wonderland’. The red queen has to run faster and faster to keep still where she is. That is exactly what you are all doing. Running faster and faster. But you are not moving anywhere.

*

The appreciation of music, poetry and language is all culturally determined and is the product of thought. It is acquired taste that tells you that Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony is more beautiful than a chorus of cats screaming; both produce equally valid sensations.

*

The peak of sex experience is the one thing in life you have that comes close to being a first-hand experience; all the rest of your experiences are second-hand, somebody else’s.

*

The problem with language is, no matter how we try to express ourselves, we are caught up in the structure of words. There is no point in creating new language, a new lingo, to express anything. There is nothing there to be expressed except to free yourself from the stranglehold of thought.

*

What you call ‘yourself’ is fear. The ‘you’ is born out of fear; it lives in fear, functions in fear and dies in fear.

*

It would be more interesting to learn from children, than try to teach them how to behave, how to live and how to function.

*

Food, clothing and shelter- these are the basic needs. Beyond that, if you want anything, it is the beginning of self-deception.

Knock Off

My interest is not to knock off what others have said (that is too easy), but to knock off what *I* am saying. More precisely, I am trying to stop what you are making out of what I am saying. This is why my talking sounds contradictory to others. I am forced by the nature of your listening to always negate the first statement with another statement. Then the second statement is negated by a third, and so on. My aim is not some comfy dialectical thesis, but the total negation of everything that can be expressed. Anything you try to make out of my statements is not it.

* * *

Laughing with UG

If not liberation at least a transistor

Once a *harikatha dasa*, a traditional teller of stories of Gods, famously called Bhagavata throughout South India, visited UG. He came dressed in a white dhoti, a white shirt, a Kashmir shawl on his shoulders, and a rosary around his neck. He wore marks of *vibhuti* (ashes) on his forehead. In the middle of those marks, he wore a round red vermilion mark. He was over seventy five years old, yet looked healthy and strong. He believed UG was an enlightened man and addressed him as ‘Appa’ although UG was twenty years younger than him. UG never condemned the Bhagavata’s faith or beliefs. But, when at times UG started his tirade on human culture and civilization, immediately Bhagavata would get up and run out saying, “Father, it’s time for me to go. But I’ll come again.”

One day, apparently overcome with emotion, the Bhagavata held UG’s feet begging, “Appa, no one else cares for me. Only you can show me the way to moksha.”

UG instantly held him up trying to prevent him from holding his feet. And then he asked, “You spent so many years with Ramana Maharshi. Why didn’t you ask him?”

“At that time, I didn’t have either that interest or yearning. Now, I feel I don’t want anything else,” he answered.

UG said, “That’s the only thing I cannot give. It’s not something that someone can give and someone else can receive. You ask for anything else. I will give that.”

As soon as he said that, the Bhagavata, a shy smile creasing his lips, asked UG to get him a small ‘foreign’ transistor. Bhagavata’s interest slipped fast from liberation to a transistor. But UG did not laugh.

No prior appointments....

There is no need to wait for a fixed appointment or time to see UG, people come at different times. On Sundays, from morning until night various people continuously come and go. One day (in 1986) he was talking incessantly without a respite. The visitors came and left one after another. Even after it was past the time for lunch, the hall did not become vacant. When there was hardly any space for people to come and many stood out waiting to get in, U G stood up, and smiling, said, “This has turned into a barber shop. One after another, people come and get their hair cut. They have been coming since morning without a break.” Peals of laughter broke upon the crowd, but still no body showed any sign of leaving. And UG sat back, saying, ‘Anyway, This is how it should be. There should be no special duration, prior appointment, and such.’”

I like Madhvacharya the most because...

In 1972, along with Valentine, UG visited Udupi, a place famous for temples and monasteries. A senior swamiji of a famous Math who had heard about UG, invited him to accept his hospitality.

“If I come to your Math, would I have to wear clothing appropriate to your ritual rules? I wouldn’t be allowed with my pajama and *lalchi*. Besides, Valentine also will have to come with me. She is a foreigner,” said UG, trying to discourage the swami from inviting him.

The swami reassured UG that he could come dressed just the way he was and of course bring Valentine as well. “But, please don’t force me to sit with you to eat. That’s all I ask,” he said, repeating his invitation.

UG, Valentine and friends were treated to a tasty meal with twenty five delicious items. The swamiji sat in front of them while they ate their lunch. Later there was a discussion on many things. At one point, after listening to UG for a while, the swami said to his disciples, “That Krishna and this Krishna say the same thing.”

Then UG remarked, “Among the three Acharyas, I like Madhvacharya the most.”

The Adamara Math Swami was flattered with this remark, believing that UG was admiring his Guru and their tradition. “Why, UG, why?” he asked with excitement.

“It is because of Madhvacharya that Udupi restaurants sprung up all over the world. Whether we go to New York or London or some other place, thanks to those restaurants, I can find the *idlis* I need.”

A Parliament of dacoits

Once, a noted journalist brought along a VIP who was responsible for the surrender of six hundred dacoits. The VIP spoke about his good work and how with great struggle he could get the dacoits surrender to the government. When he was finished there was profound silence and then quiet murmurs of appreciation from the little crowd. But UG looked at the man and asked simply, “Yes, but what about the six hundred dacoits you have put there in the Parliament?”

The man rose in a hurry, saying, “I will return when you are in a better mood.”

No need to touch anybody’s feet, not even your own

Once, a pious old man, after listening to UG, with tears in his eyes, went down on his knees to touch UG’s feet. Quickly UG withdrew his legs preventing the man from touching his feet. But the old man, not willing to give up, kept persisting. It was quite a funny tussle: one old man trying to touch the feet and the other doing his best to stop him.

At last, UG said, “No, don’t do that, sir. Not only to me but to anyone else either. No one is worth that, believe me. How can I convince you that there is no power outside of you? I never touched anybody’s feet, not even my own.”

Therapy is the disease

One morning, Dr. Modi, a renowned eye surgeon who had performed many eye operations free by setting up camps all over India, came to see UG. After a long chat over spiritual matters, the good doctor said, “Sir, I am fully blind. Please help me see.”

UG humbly replied, “I am not competent enough to do the operation. I can only tell you that there is nothing wrong with your eye and no operation is necessary.”

But when the doctor persisted that UG should suggest some therapy for his spiritual malady, UG said, “Sir, the therapy is the disease.”

*

One day, a long-time admirer and friend of UG declared grandly that he thought UG was the only reliable and dependable friend he had in the whole world, and that he trusted UG so much that if at that minute UG asked him to jump from the window he would obey him blindly. UG immediately said, “Really? Let’s go on the terrace. That’s high enough for you to jump from.”

*

One day, while having meal, UG poured some ghee in his *rasam*, looked at Shanta and said, “See how the ghee floats on this *rasam*! This reminds me of how your Shirdi Baba performed the miracle of lighting lamps on water. Obviously this is how the layer of oil must have floated in the tin pot.”

*

Once, an old friend and schoolmate of UG, recalling his days with UG, recounted the night they both went to see the film *Harishchandra*, and how he was quite surprised to see tears rolling down UG’s cheeks at the plight of the honest King Harishchandra. This did surprise many in the crowd and they stared at UG as if to ask if it was true that he shed tears. UG smiled and replied, “I was crying because of the poor Indians who have to live up to Harishchandra’s lofty ideal.”

*

A childless couple once came to UG asking for his blessings for a child, and UG as usual replied, “You don’t need *my* blessings. All you need is to go to the doctor, to find which of you needs medical help.”

*

One evening, surprising everyone sitting around him in the room, UG got into a playful mood. Louis, an American was sitting by his side. He was a tall, broad-shouldered, muscular guy, who looked more a WWF wrestler than a spiritual seeker. That day, he became the target of UG’s mischief. One had never seen UG getting so childishly

mischievous. Without his dentures, he looked a grandma playing pranks with her overgrown grandchild. He kept nudging, poking and hitting Louis all over his bulky frame. At one point, suddenly he stretched out his hand and ordered Louis to read his palm. Sometimes UG plays this game with palmists, asking, 'Tell me, where will I get my money from and how much?' We were all familiar with this game of UG and so was Louis. Promptly now, Louis held UG's palm and then screwing up his mischievous eyes, said, 'Look here, the lines here are in the shape of **MW**. Ah, **M** for money and **W** for wealth. You are lucky!' 'No,' bellowed UG, '**M** means murder, and **W** means whacking.' And he started whacking Louis hard on his tonsured head and bulky frame.

*

Once, a religious man, who believed in miracles as the sign of the existence of God, asked seriously, 'UG, what do you think of Jesus Christ walking on water?'

Smiling, UG replied, 'Jesus walked on water probably because he did not know how to swim. Fortunately for him and unfortunately for others the water was only knee-deep. And in the story of the multiplication of the loaves of bread and fishes, he probably cut the bread into many smaller pieces.'

*

"Are there any boots to walk on thorns."

UG's reply came back crisp and direct, "There are no thorns."

Unsatisfied, the woman pursued, "The thorns are very much there for me!"

With quiet patience he answered, "Stop looking for roses and there will be no thorns."

*

Once a very famous man in the USA was very curious to meet with UG to find out why some of his friends were going gaga about him. And one evening he did meet him in a friend's house. He asked UG straight, 'I have heard quite a lot about you. I'm really curious. What do you do?'

UG replied simply, 'I'm retired, sir.'

'Retired?'

'Yes, I was born retired.'

*

A sweater for the spider

Once, an American friend had to leave to India with UG and was caught in a dilemma over the safety of her spider friend who was keeping her company over the past few weeks. She didn't want the spider hanging in her bath room, with one of his legs missing,

to be killed by the cleaning woman the next day. So, carefully, delicately she picked the spider and put him outside near the steps. It was quiet cold and suddenly the spider seemed frozen out there. Worried she asked UG his opinion. UG scoffed at her insensitivity about American boys (soldiers) dying in the Middle East deserts and fussing over the safety of one spider in the bathroom.

The American friend said, 'But I don't condone sending soldiers anywhere, don't condone anything my government does. It's just that I have grown attached to my spider.'

UG said, 'Why don't you knit a sweater for the spider?'

*

Once, hoping to be commended for his brave act, the friend told UG that he had taken down all the guru pictures in his room, all his ex-teachers, Zen masters, including a photo of UG.

UG laughed and said there would therefore be fewer lizards on the walls.

*

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