

MYSTIQUE OF LOVE

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WHY NOW?

This e-book is about an intense period of my life. I never thought my life would head in this unique direction. While I was in the midst of it, it seemed like I was swallowed by some earthquake and constantly jostled around by its intense tremors.

It has been a few years since, and I find myself having some spare time during the Covid lockdown to pen my thoughts and piece my writing together into this e-book. It is a loose chronicle of those times and also includes my backstory, what I was seeking for, what moved me passionately and whose doorstep it brought me to. Although the incidents mentioned here are from my past (which is all we can recall, really), its effects are felt in every aspect of my day-to-day living. I could not imagine what an incredible impact one person could have on another in such a powerful and wonderful way. The person I am referring to is Dr. Sabyasachi Guha. His friends fondly address him as Guha or G.

One may ask, "Why write now about what happened in the past?"

I have a few reasons from my perspective:

- It is a unique story
- It is closely connected to a wonderful friend, G, who seems to create a strong impact on people wherever he goes. Perhaps if you are lucky, your paths may cross
- There are so many charlatans peddling 'spirituality' in the market place...I felt compelled to write about my first-hand experience to highlight that there is a whole different power that a human body possesses. It is capable of addressing and perhaps resolving some core issues and conflicts within us so we can function more efficiently and in a balanced manner.

MYSTIQUE OF LOVE

INTRODUCTION

In search of Enlightenment...I discovered something else...

I used every ounce of my imaginative faculties to dream of what an enlightened state would be. I pursued it with singular passion and drive but unfortunately it took me nowhere. Frustrated, saddened, yet with a never-say-die, desperate attitude I landed at the door of Sabyasachi Guha. He went about trashing one citadel after another of my imagined peaks and highs. As my wonderful goals came tumbling down I crashed and burned with nowhere to turn. From these burnt ashes of my pile of dreams emerged something that was very unexpected, potent, vibrant and life-abiding. My life as I knew it, had changed forever. Each day continues to be filled with new surprises, wonderment, and simplicity. I wonder how we get so convoluted and myopic that something so simple and natural can't get our attention anymore!

In my interactions with Sabyasachi Guha, who I refer to as G, I observed how a simple person can be fully capable of perceiving the complexities and the intricacies of life and its functioning. We have been brainwashed to believe that to be simple is to be gullible, unintelligent and low performing. In fact to perceive things AS IS needs much deeper order and functioning. To be simple requires an extraordinary amount of talent and focus. Simplicity is a prerequisite to see things as they are!

MYSTIQUE OF LOVE

PROLOGUE

On August 21st, 2020 G texted me:
G: Mystique of Love

Me: What is that?

G: It is the title of your book.

Me: YESSSSSSSSSS!!!! 14 Letters!!! Like my name and phone number!!! (Those close to G will understand the inside joke of the number 7 and its multiples).

G: Is it? Oh yeah! That's a coincidence!

A beautiful discussion ensued between us thereafter which is reflected in some of the content below.

When I refer to “Mystique of Love”, it is not a romantic tale. It is a story of immense labor pain. It expresses the helplessness of a mother’s condition as she goes through hell and/or is in the midst of an ocean of pleasure. Her system develops a choiceless focus on this new energy that is developing within. She has no choice but to focus on the growth of this emerging life within and do whatever it takes to nurture it. This growth is in the realm of the unknown and there is no expression for it. Nothing that I have ever read or heard could come remotely close to explaining this physical phenomenon or the growth. The system innately recognizes the source of it and the supporting structure it needs to provide an optimal and nurturing environment for this energy to grow and ultimately thrive. The system gravitates towards this supporting structure/person in the most natural manner by releasing a profusion of chemicals.

In my case, my system found the source and the supporting structure to be G. The inexplicable flow of chemicals from me seemed to effortlessly hone in on him. The tug of various chemicals alternatively highlighted the nightmarish physical pain that seemed unending and the sheer ecstasy that was like the

ultimate pain balm. Perhaps these brief moments of acausal joy and ecstasy are what seekers term as “bliss” but I certainly didn’t find anything eternal or unending about it. Since the primary focus was on the growing energy within, the secondary focus was on G. Night and day, day after day, I relentlessly stalked and sought his presence, his voice, his face, his audience, whatever was possible. There would be times where it felt like I fell into a bottomless abyss of despair if I couldn’t be with him or see him or hear him for a few seconds. I thought this was love. The kind of love that the poets and writers sought but could only imagine. Wrong! Then I thought it was one-sided love flowing from him to me as he was the perfect man. Wrong again!! Both of them could be construed as, “Mistake of Love” - mistake on my part labelling the hitherto unfamiliar and intense emotions and actions as love. It simply boiled down to this: the energy that was growing within me found its food for sustenance from G. He could provide this from any part of the world, night or day, in sickness or in prime health. This nourishment had to come from him and no substitutes or replacements worked; not that there were any available for me on this planet. Fortunately, my ideas of love and hate and everything in between, were completely immaterial and irrelevant to this unfolding process. The body had enough innate intelligence to seek what it needed and was often quite relentless about it. It shushed my world of useless ideas and thoughts quite effectively for its own good.

One of the delightful side effects of the so-called “Mistake of Love” was that along the way, I got to experience it in many different colors - love for a parent, love for a friend, love for a master/guru, love for someone very child-like and last but not the least - love for an intimate lover. I vaguely recall these have been categorized and catalogued somewhere in the Hindu literature. However, here they sprang forth very naturally and beautifully in me. One phase ended leading to the next, one more beautiful than the other, completely enveloping and drowning me in it. Each of these dunks colored me completely in its hue and the only constant in it was G leading me in and out of it. To me, he epitomized every kind of love but later he completely debunked them all. I felt it was my system that somehow wanted or needed to experience each chapter fully before closing it firmly. All of this took place in my mental landscape of course and sometimes the actions followed from it. As G often quoted U.G. Krishnamurti,

“Attraction is the action!”; it seemed like if the system was attracted, it could generate the appropriate action as well.

In this journey, from “Mistake of Love” to “Mystique of Love”, the person that I was, started crumbling and devolving quite rapidly. Everything that represented me or belonged to me seemed to take a massive hit. It came from every direction. The changes weren’t merely physical but on the mental, emotional and relationship landscapes as well. I was completely at the mercy of the cocktail of chemicals concocted and dispersed by my system. It felt as if I had to hang on to G for my dear life! He was at the receiving end of my volatile emotional ups and downs that at times bordered on raving lunacy. Each and every time he did whatever was needed and appropriate for that time. Nothing more, nothing less; with either a scientist’s precision in a science lab or a butcher hacking, whacking and chopping the meat! He did temper it with a lot of patience and kindness because he knew I was fairly helpless, clueless and physically hurting a lot. Although he dropped a lot of hints about what was happening to me and within me, I was too busy trying to come up for air in the swiftly swirling whirlpool of my existence for anything to really click in my head at that time. Would it have helped if it had clicked? I don’t know. I did not realize for a long time that everything in my life was taking a backseat and the only thing that took priority was the survival, growth and the subsequent blossoming of this new energy. During this entire process, the intelligence of the body sought G repeatedly for his helping hand, in a way using him as a means to an end. If there is anything called love in this process it is the maternal one that has one-pointed focus on this new emerging energy. It does not allow any societal rules, mores, values and acceptance to stand in its way. Eventually all of it is destroyed in its blazing fire including the one with the “maternal love”!

During this phase a lot of the communication between G and me was through the voluminous exchange of texts. Since I don’t delete any of the texts from and to him, they became a chronicle of my day to day upheavals and G’s and my take on them. This detailed exchange became the primary source and an integral part of this book.

“Mystique of Love” is my attempt to give a peek into my life and some of its significant highlights. Meeting G infused me with new life and a new rhythm. Just when I felt that I had no more

questions to ask (other than the practical ones) and nothing more to seek other than his enjoyable company, something was triggered within me. I can never say what exactly it was but it felt like a huge physical upheaval, like an earthquake. The after-tremors of this quake could be felt for years and they continue to date. When I asked G, “When does all this pain and twisting and turning end?” he responded, “Never! It is extremely dynamic and it goes on for as long as you live! Your life is no longer your own, my dear!”

CHAPTER 1

Unexpected Trip to Chicago

G called me on January 12, 2015 and talked about traveling to Chicago via my city. He asked me if I was going to be free to meet him and possibly join Julie and him on a road trip to Chicago. There were a couple of other friends that wanted to join him but he wasn't sure at the time as to who all would be able to. I was very excited at the thought of meeting him. Then he also invited me to join the group going to Chicago. He said, "Think it over and let me know. It's ok if you cannot make it". I really wanted to go but wasn't sure about how things would work out at home and my job.

A close friend of mine, Monica, knew of G and had also met him in 2012, encouraged me to go. She said, "What are you wondering about, just go! An opportunity like this won't come again. Just tell G that you are going and if some problem comes up at the last minute you can always cancel. Anyway it is a road trip and you have nothing to lose." After some internal debate I decided to go on this trip. I called G and let him know that I would very much like to join him and we discussed travel arrangements. I told my family that I would be joining some friends in Chicago and I also took a day off at work.

The next couple of days, I scurried around to make reservations at the local Hampton Inn and in Chicago for all of us. I tried to figure what they might like to eat for lunch and dinner, and then focused on finishing up my work and chores at home. The excitement created tremendous adrenaline pumping through my system. The hours and days flew by in a blur as I eagerly waited for them to arrive.

In hindsight, it was the best decision I ever made and I cringe at the thought that this trip almost didn't happen. January 16th, 2015 was the most unusual and significant day of my life. Of course I didn't know it then but the things that unraveled after that evening changed the course of my life very dramatically and in the most unexpected ways. But I am jumping ahead of the story right now.

1/15/2015

G, Julie and Nandini drove in on Thursday, January 15th. They made the road trip in the middle of harsh winter with very little advance planning. One of G's friends even asked him why he was going to this god-forsaken place in the dead of winter. It was a very spontaneous idea that G had and things fell in place effortlessly. For those few days, weather and road conditions were very co-operative.

As they were nearing the hotel where they were going to stay they called me and I rushed over to receive them with unbridled joy. After all of them were comfortably settled in their rooms, I was able to have a one-on-one discussion with G. I don't recall much about what was said but I could feel an overall sense of excitement to have him before me. Julie and G didn't want to eat dinner and since they were going to stay at the hotel, Nandini and I headed back to my place.

I had forgotten my phone in G's room. He called me on Nandini's phone and asked me if I needed it for the night and I said I would be fine without it and he could just communicate on Nandini's phone if he needed to let me know something. (Had the same thing happened a few months later I would have rushed back to his hotel, not so much for the phone, but to have an excuse to hang out with him for some more time and extend the evening). When we got home my husband said that he had tried to reach me a few times on the phone and I said that I had forgotten it in my friend's room. He remarked, "You take your phone even to the bathroom, how did you forget it behind?" When I mentioned this to G the next day he laughed.

1/16/2015

The next morning, Friday, January 16th, we met early morning and had breakfast together and some discussion. My friend Monica also joined us for an early lunch. Afterwards the four of us - G, Julie, Nandini and myself headed to Chicago. This was my first road trip with G in USA. He was talking a lot and very animatedly. This was also the first time I heard him talk so continuously. Half the things he said went over my head. I was content to be around him in the car and hear his voice.

Late afternoon we stopped off for some coffee at a local grocery store that had Starbucks. As we were waiting for coffee and drinks I found myself alone with G for a few minutes. We had an intense conversation that left me inexplicably agitated and disturbed. Chalking it up to over-excitement and very little sleep over the last few days I put it aside. After coffee, we headed towards the Expressway. We had another stop as we were near Lake Michigan and took some fantastic photographs with G. One of them was used in his Bengali book, *Utsarito Alo*. We continued the drive and G's talk in the car became more like a rant. I had always seen him so mild-mannered, gentlemanly and saying so little that all this talk from him was a bit much and seemed too intense. I kept wondering if the windows of the car would crack with his intensity. Julie assured me that it was a brand new car and we were ok.

We headed to Chicago's famous and iconic Drake Hotel where we would be staying. The hotel is set in the prestigious Gold Coast neighborhood very close to the Magnificent Mile. It is a gorgeous hotel that holds quite a bit of history.

After checking in at the Drake Hotel, we met up with Radhika who had flown in to Chicago from New Jersey earlier that afternoon. We had booked 3 rooms: one for G, one for Julie and the third one was going to be shared by Radhika, Nandini and myself just for that night. Nandini had made some alternate arrangements for the following days. The rooms were so huge and grand that having three people in the room was hardly an issue. We quickly dropped our bags, freshened up and rushed to G's room which was appropriately called the King's Room! A regal name, delightful ambience, a wonderful view of the cityscape from the window, it seemed like the stage was set.

CHAPTER 2

The Final Straw

All five of us - G, Julie, Nandini, Radhika and myself sat down in G's room. He was on fire and gave an intense talk and the same uncomfortable feeling that I had at Starbucks earlier in the day, started again in the pit of my stomach. Unbeknownst to me, I accidentally recorded thirty minutes of this conversation. I only discovered it a couple of months later. Strangely and fortuitously this was my first recording ever of G talking and it happened to be of the thirty most significant minutes of my life. It was like a gift from nature.

The following is the edited transcript of the 30-minute recording of the talk that G gave on the evening of January 16th, 2015. The italicized words describe what was happening to me at that time.

G: We have a sense of self and a sense of intention that is always very devious. On one hand you have a very good friend and on the other you are not really seeking a true scenario wherein the friend is doing well - better than you. You can't handle that. So on one hand you say friend but you really don't want his best. This is a very devious nature. We don't understand it. I tell my friend, "You know why you are excited when you hear that your friend is not well? Because there is a subtle demand inside you that wants to find him that way. When the friend is doing fantastic, well and very good, then there is a certain subtle amount of sorrow that descends in you (laughs). You don't jump in joy, "OMG my friend is so happy; but you jump when your friend is in a dire situation. It is not that you want to help. There is a subtle, funny sense of pleasure that is working there. It comes out of jealousy, competitiveness and other vices for the sense of intention. This is the reason that you can't stand your friend's true happiness unless it is really related to you. It is very funny. So you never discover yourself that deeply. Never! You don't want to. You are myopic about that sense. It was a very painful thing for me to discover many such things – how subtle this is. I learnt this maximum around UG. Although we were all good friends superficially with each other, on the inside I always wished that I should be the one that gets and not the other one. It's funny. The one thing that is standing in your way; you came to that man where that which is

standing in your way needs to be obliterated; yet for some reason you are completely governed by that, governed by that movement of that self. It is the sense of self that is doing these things. Somehow UG's energy would always pump it up and you would see two guys will be fighting over a girl like kids openly or fighting over him or wants his attention or one guy is wishing on the inside that the other guy shouldn't be there. I should be the only one there.

Me: What is it about UG's presence that enhances that?

G: What happens is that – it is like a cat when it is cornered, it becomes very aggressive. So it is with the sense of self also. When it is cornered, the energy inside your body is trying to put the sense of self where it belongs. Which means it (sense of self) is no longer the authority. But the sense of self is so habituated to being the boss and has a myopic understanding about itself that it is the boss, it runs the show, it is the controller, its liking, its happiness, is all that matters. Nothing to do with the system. Okay. There is some energy that is trying to provide fuel to the system to put where the sense of self should be - as an assisting mechanism and not the controlling mechanism. But when the struggle increases and becomes too much, then the sense of self senses fear. You won't believe what happens. It just goes crazy about sex, about buying things, thinking about its glory, it is all a part of the movement of the sense of self in a way to keep its dominance going including the energy that comes and empowers you. To stop that empowering energy you will even say that this is not godly energy. The sense of self will buy god, will buy everything to protect itself. You won't even know. It wants to keep its authority by hanging on to other things. Towards the end you become dependent on gods, images, the words that are trying to tell you about some pleasure movement, something that can keep the sense of self going. All our struggles arise from this movement.

The whole point is that there is an order inside the human being and when that order is exhibiting its powerful existence it also enhances the power that is necessary to protect itself. It is like this – I have an immune system that is always trying to maintain some number of bacteria in its place. If the number of bacteria is larger, then the body will get sick because it will be impossible for the immune system to keep it in check. The body is always trying to

maintain that number below a certain level. Now what I am talking about is the struggle with the information that is working in your head. For the information to work itself out by itself in your head, it needs energy for that movement. That energy is coming directly from the source in you that produces it from your breathing and food. This is the way the oxygen and the nutrition are distributed. To think, even to think, you need oxygen supply to your brain. So now what happens is – say somehow there is a radical change that is occurring in the system – the system now is a boosted immune system. The neurobiological circuitry has arranged itself in such an efficient manner that any thought that is not purposeful to itself which can create long term instability or which draws too much energy or goes in a direction which is detrimental to the mental health of the organism – it understands it and puts it in check. It does not allow it to grow. Similar to the immune system, it keeps a constant check. To boost the constant check and train the immune system you sometimes introduce a foreign bacteria like vaccination. Like that the system is constantly - as soon as it becomes sensitive it understands the nature of thought and its pleasure – either to self-aggrandize or a pleasure movement that is given to the body – somehow it tries to keep it in check. If you like to eat something that is not good for the body then it will create a peculiar allergy to itself. It will not be acceptable. The system will let you know that this food is not suitable. You will have an itching sensation in your ear or something or another. Same thing happens with the thoughts too. The body will identify them as not being congenial for the well-being of the system. If the system is somehow very smart and achieves that quality wherein it can keep the thinker in its place; it can never ever allow it to reverse the role again. It will never ever think that the thinker is the controller of this body leave alone controlling others. When that situation occurs, you now have a system where you don't know who the boss is. You obviously think that your thought induced pleasure, your will, whatever you want, whatever primary movements you have been brainwashed to believe you should have, your all pleasure, your all happiness everything that has been registered by the brain due to its demand is the most important thing. This reverse role, is trying to impose because it doesn't know who is commanding, it tries to put the command into wherever it is interacting. So if I am talking to you, you are defending your belief structure and faith and everything will obviously give a situation where you are imposing yourself on me through your thinking, your ideas, your mentation, and this

system because it came to know what is detrimental to itself is not going to buy it. The only way it can keep itself healthy is to give energy to the other so that, that system also gets a similar boost and keeps the other things at bay. It is the only way it can protect itself. For example if there is a bug that overtakes your body then its number is going to spill over and overtake the body. But if the bug is controlled by your immune system then I am set. So this situation is like that. What happens with people like UG is that if you are in that field of interaction you as you know yourself is being constantly hammered and cornered by the new leash of energy in your body that you don't understand.

Me: Yeah tell me about it. I was bouncing off the walls at 2:00 am this morning.

G: So what happens is that the sense of self creates a very peculiar, hopeless, depressing situation for itself. Depressing because it is not getting its usual satisfaction. Its satisfaction is in the reward movements. The mental satisfaction and happiness is nothing but information matching. I am good. I did very well. Everything that is in the field of information is just a matching sensation when I know that this information has been introduced inside you as a good happy sensation, it feels happy. Other way it is unhappy, just the opposite. So all the movements of good and bad are still a movement in the sense of self. So when it matches something it feels excited and happy. If it does not then it is sad and depressed. But it is all in the information field. It's just khabar – iske paas kya khabar hai jisse woh kush hoga? Aur kuch nahi hai. (Its just information, what does this person have that makes him happy? Nothing else)

Q: If the bug spills over like whatever she has gotten, that energy will never accept that because it is not good for its well-being. But how can it stop that?

G: It cannot. There is no way. So what happens is that the energy is too (*claps his hands fiercely at me and stares at me*) ...If energy is too much then what will happen then is that they will separate out.

Me: What does that mean?

G: That means the system will somehow convince itself that it is not a congenial situation to keep the show going.

Q: If your body has something and you put a foreign body in it and it gets reversed because of the foreign body, how can it not be addressed the same way?

G: It is addressing. This conflict now is translated by the information center as a bad situation. So somehow I have noticed so many different things. When this energy starts pouring out they feel energetic, then they don't know what action to take with that energy. It becomes jittery. The brain only knows few ways to release the energy. It doesn't know that if it doesn't do anything then that energy is the energy that is going to empower the body by a total – that is the radical transformation that is known to human being. It will radically begin to change the system if you don't do anything with it.

Me: So instead of trying to ask, “What to do with it? You just chill.

G: You just chill. It may be very uneasy. Very jittery (*I am saying yes, yes because I am really jittery at this point and wondering if he knows what is going on inside me*), it will be so energetic that you don't know what to do with yourself.

Me: I think we talked about this...(*both of us laugh*)

G: At that time if you are engaged with somebody and there is a fight you will be a monster because your body now has enormous energy. The best is to be non-confrontational. That is a technique by itself.

Me: So you just mind your business and go?

G: You say that anything that you do is a waste.

Me: I guess first you have to know that for yourself, right?

G: When you are confronting somebody, it is still in the field of sense of self.

Me: It is not as if you can plan.

G: NO you cannot. They are so smart, they are the tip (peak) of the body's intelligence because it is the latest circuitry - the new cortex. It is highly organized and very smart. That's what they used to say – it was a pet subject for J. Krishnamurti. Don't underestimate the part of the body's cream intelligence that is being utilized by the sense of self to keep itself going and be there.

Me: How sad is that? The best of me is being consumed by me.

G: No the best of you has completely forgotten that the best of you is supposed to help it and not kill it. The best of you is working against you. The capacity that we have created like pleasure - now to take care of the body the pleasure has taken over the body's need and has become the greatest enemy to the body.

Q: Now there is a field of energy that is actually addressing it so why can't it reverse?

G: It is trying its best. You are always falling back. It is like a circuitry you know. Like *nala n idhar hai na zameen ke upar* (like little rivulets all over the place) – like that you have created a lot of small, small paths. As soon as you put water, water will go through the known paths. The brain is also like that. The path that is there – the path that used to derive pleasure in you before by telling yourself what is good, by telling you how you should be happy, people should tell you that you are great, you should feel happy because you get enormous physical experiences that gives you a high – all these things, everything that you know that creates a sense of high inside you – it is the only on these known paths that the thoughts can run. There is word in neurobiology that when circuits were put together, the more they are put together the more efficiently they run and that is Revathi – the sound creates the whole I call it the firework of the neural network - ME. Because that is the one that responds to the system the best. I AM GOOD. I AM THAT. That is the highest response. Total foolishness!

Me: I feel very stupid to say this. Right now, I don't know why but I have a very, very strong visual and desire of taking the biggest stick and whacking the heck out of you. I really don't know why, but it is such a strong visual that I can't get over it. *(G laughs. Although I am trying to sound funny – inside I was seething with jittery energy that just wanted to lash out at G. I*

looked around to see if anyone else was getting impacted the same way but they all looked fine and not unduly perturbed). I don't have the stick. I supposedly like you and that's why I am here. If there was no need to be civilized or a price to pay, then that is really what I want to do. (G is really cackling away).

G: Beat me up! No loss to humanity!

Me: I know I would not do it. I have enough control not to do it but I don't know why I even have that image. I am here totally voluntarily. *(G laughs even more)*

G: Sure go ahead and beat me up! *(still laughing like a mad man)*

Me: But that won't solve anything! Otherwise I would have tried that! *(laughter all around).*

(Although there is still laughter and conversation happening right at this instant, something inside me starts to crumble. There was such fury mixed with jittery energy built up to this point – fury because I was feeling very cornered like an animal ready to be killed. I felt I was physically suffocating and the only way was to lash out at him. I really wanted to beat the shit out of him with the biggest stick I could possibly wield. When I voiced this in a humorous way to mask the fury that I was feeling and he responded, "Go ahead and beat me up!", it just completely undid me. It was the final straw. Over the next 10 minutes while the conversation continued my breathing pattern began to change. It became labored and one can actually hear that in the recording. After about five minutes, cold shivers were running up and down my spine. This wasn't a case of feeling cold. I could actually feel extremely icy cold currents running up and down my back and I started shivering. G too seemed to be aware that something was happening and was watching me very keenly through the conversation. I really wanted to breakdown and cry at this time but some inhuman strength was making me sit there and continue asking questions with an air of nonchalance. At about this time my attention moved directly to G and away from what he was saying. What was happening? He is talking intensely but some funny business is happening within me. How can I feel all these heightened emotions all at once? There was also a primal fight or flight response but in an instant I was completely disarmed. This was replaced by a heightened sense of perception of things around

me that didn't go away. However this new perception seemed to be very honed on him and his effect on me. It was like we were the only two people in that room, for that matter on this planet, although others were there and talking).

G: No it won't solve anything for you and nothing will happen to me either. I will protect myself.

Me: Actually I am just saying what is in my head. I am not even saying – does it make sense...It is just a visual. *(G is still laughing away – goading me even more)*

G: I challenge her...See God has no power!

Me: Actually, I am finally there where I get that there is no god or some superpower. Took a while to get there.

G: Because I can get away by using all vulgar words to all images, all gods, goddesses, everything and I know nothing can touch me. NOTHING! Absolutely 100% sure! What will happen is when those words reach a particular head that is protecting their faith, they are all going to group together and kill me. It is only human.

Me: I remember the first few times when I met you, you used to say, "That b***** Saibaba or that b***** Kali; I would cringe and think, "Can you just not say that? I know he wants to beat that idea out of me but does he really have to use those swear words?" Now I shrug and go, "Whatever".

G: We have created that problem.

Me: You know what, it is really great that you use it because when it really bothers a person a lot it forces them to really reconsider do I really want to be around this person. If the answer is no then they go away and if the answer is why or what, it tries to seek the next solution.

G: Also one reason why I say that is at least you throw that question to yourself – What is it that bothers me? If somebody tells me that UG (U.G.Krishnamurti) is a MF it just doesn't bother me at all. You won't believe it. I won't defend him. I don't defend anything. I don't defend any ideas. I will just show you systematically, what is it that you are trying to defend. How your

words are coming out? What is the whole idea of what you are trying to do? What is the fundamental motivation behind it? That is the most important aspect. Once you see that, our problem deep down is a much deeper, core problem and this core problem is actually something to do with our imaginary faculty. Out of that imaginary faculty we created something called will. Without will there is no thinking.

Me: Really? I thought thinking precedes will.

G: Nooo! It is together. It is the will that created a thinker and then it became automation now. Simultaneously they are creating together.

Q: Free will and will are the same?

G: There is no such thing as free will. What is free will?

Me: See I am not there, where I can just accept your word.

G: Don't do that.

Me: So that is why I want to know more, why?

G: It is like this, for example, if you do not try to understand what I am saying these words are going to go and not make any sense to you. It is your effort to understand what I am saying is when Revathi is wanting something. That is what is called will. Will is a function of thinker. I...if I don't complete the sentence there is no movement. It is going to grope for sometime and then vanish. I want...that I that wants is the generator of that will. Without this will there is no thinker. So if you put yourself in a total choiceless situation, then there is no I. Actually and factually. But this will is the one which has created all this information. This is not bad. See we human beings, we are in such a situation that we will have no choice but to grow those characteristics in the brain because the baby has no choice. It has to accept a stamp on him or her as his or her name. There is no choice. By the time this process of the will that is generated within oneself has become a torture to the system, that is the time they will begin to reflect if that is so. If that is not so then there is no need for botheration. Those tortured people, whose conflicts are somehow translated in a way that they feel tired or cornered or have some sense of dissatisfaction that is never

translated to appropriate action, that will go and try to solve the problem. Actually the problem is associated with our sense of self. It is the sense of self that has created a difference between two human beings. Two human beings are different but their capacities may also vary. But that is nothing compared to the difference created by the sense of self. It is an enormous difference that it creates, which is kind of false. It does not accept the uniqueness. It only accepts its specialty and greatness. That is the main problem. There is no other problem. How do I know this is the problem? I have no doubt about that. Absolutely no doubt about that! I also have no intention to convey this to somebody else that I have no doubt about it. It is not that I have a cocky confidence and I am going to convey this confidence to everybody to show that I am somebody. I have no ideas like that. I also have a very good idea that most of your problems are translated from that source. That your wants and whatever you brainwashed yourself to believe that somehow it is not in your hand, has nothing to do with the way your system is unfolding all the time. They are two different things and they are conflicting with each other. If you don't agree, I don't care. Take it or leave it. I don't mind anything. Whether you accept it or not doesn't bother me at all. But I know where this problem is in the sense that even though I make you understand that this is the problem, even accepting what I am saying is also not going to solve your problem. It is that bad a situation. You really constantly keep yourself in a corner where you as you know yourself...(speaking to me and sensing my extreme discomfort) you want to lie down? Go ahead.

Me: Its ok

G: Drink some water. Let us all have some water.

Everyone goes looking for water and we break up after that.

The recording stops here.

At this point my shivering became visibly more intense and G asked me if I wanted to lie down for some time. I felt too embarrassed to lie down on the bed in his room and too racked by shivers to go to my room. He asked me to drink some water and said let's go get some dinner.

Another strange thing happened that evening. The intense discussion triggered my menstrual flow which was a huge surprise for me. Typically my periods occur in a clockwork fashion every 28 days. Since my teens it has maintained this consistency. The only two times it was ever off schedule was when I was pregnant with my two kids. The day after I missed my period I knew I was pregnant both times. When I mentioned this to my gynecologist back then, she said it was impossible to know that so early. But I was in perfect tune with my body at least in that respect and I knew that I was expecting. I wondered if my body was going through some kind of severe stress to trigger all this. However my menstruation stopped later that night and it has never returned since. This heralded a huge change in my hormonal system. I would later discover that this wasn't the only system to be significantly impacted. The peri-menopause and the menopause phase that usually can last months and years for women lasted minutes for me. Such was the intensity of this man that evening!

I went to our room and freshened up. Then we all walked to the nearby Indian restaurant. G suggested that I have some warm soup for dinner and ordered some rasam for me. I was still feeling very edgy and the heightened perception that was triggered in the room continued to stay with me. It never actually went away but eventually got channeled in a different direction. I distinctly recall shivering through the entire dinner. After we got back to the room that I shared with Nandini and Radhika, I could not sleep a wink that night. Radhika and I spent most of the night talking and poor Nandini couldn't catch much sleep despite her best efforts. My nerves were so jangled and there was incredible and irrepressible energy coursing through my system. I was hyper-alert and hyper-sensitive. In the dead of the night I felt like doing cartwheels around the room and in the hotel lobby but thankfully common sense prevailed.

CHAPTER 3

A Seed Of Change Was Sown

1/17/2015

The next morning we all trooped in for an early morning conversation and G asked me how the night was. When he heard that I was up all night he asked if by any chance I was running down the hotel hallway laughing hysterically? I thought his question was very strange and assured him that I was very much in the room and not running anywhere and my roommates vouched for that too. I asked him what he meant by asking that question and he said that during the night he had a vision that I had flipped and was running down the hallway laughing like a mad person. He said that he even got up and opened his room door to check but nothing was out of place. I asked him what he meant by “flipped” and he said, “gone crazy”. I said as far as I knew I wasn’t crazy yet but I felt very revved up.

Perhaps it was this dream flash of his that made him keep a close eye on me over the next few years as I reached the brink of insanity many times. This was a known and familiar path for him but for me I didn’t even know what had hit me the night before.

It was very clear to me that something new had been triggered. I could not stop staring at G. Whatever he did, even simple things, I could not take my eyes off him. It hadn’t been like this before yesterday. I had been fascinated with him before but this intense eye-balling had certainly not been there. It felt as if we were the only two people on this planet and looking at him was my only occupation and preoccupation. Many times I didn’t even know I was doing it until he pointed out to me. He said that my jaw had dropped and I was looking at him with such ardor and no one else had ever done that before. I don’t know about him but this was super weird for me. I had no desire or mental ideation to hold him or for that matter anyone else in any exalted position. I felt I was infused with some new kind of energy and alertness that I had never experienced before. My entire focus of attention and existence very naturally fell onto G.

Later in the day, Kamal, a close friend of G's whom I had met a few years prior, joined us and we all explored the city of Chicago. We went up the Willis Tower and checked out other landmark buildings and moved around the city. Somehow my attention was riveted on G and he seemed to be aware of it too. He would smile each time he caught my eye and ask, "What is it? What is it?" I found myself either shrugging my shoulders or not knowing what to say.

That evening G referred to an anonymous letter that was written in the late eighties about UG. It shows up in the UG website in the book "No Way Out" in Chapter 11. He asked Julie to read it aloud and asked us to guess who the author might have been. Different names were discussed and all were vetoed. Finally I asked G what his guess was. He felt that it was written by UG himself. He said the clarity of the words in that letter was so good and every word so intelligently chosen – no one other than him could have written that. I asked him why would UG write an anonymous letter about himself. G said that perhaps it was because UG wanted people to have a flavor of what he was about. Or maybe there was some other reason. It was pure speculation what it might be but he seemed sure that it was written by UG and Julie concurred. There was a time between the years 2002-2007 that I devoured every single word written about UG in various websites. For the moment, however, the man before me consumed all my attention and I couldn't drum up sufficient interest in the letter.

We then headed to the same Indian restaurant close by that we had gone the day before. As we ordered food, I found tears falling from my eyes. They started flowing like a river. I felt bad and embarrassed that I was crying like this without any reason and Julie kept grasping my hand to console me. G was quiet and looked intensely at me. I kept apologizing for crying but the damn tears would not stop. I couldn't think of a single reason that started the water works but I felt as if I was shedding tears of a lifetime. I said I didn't know why I was crying like this and G leaned over and whispered, "Maybe something touched you deep in your core". I didn't know what to say to that, but eventually the tears died down and we ate our dinner quietly. I had rasam again.

We disbanded for the evening and back in the room I was still wide awake. This was very unusual for me because I need my beauty sleep every night and can usually fall asleep as soon as I hit the

sack. Events of the day clearly registered in my memory and I felt myself naturally thinking about G every minute.

1/18/2015

The next morning was bright, sunny, and a cold Sunday. We were six of us – G, Julie, Radhika, Nandini, Kamal, and myself. G was generally chatting and then out of the blue he turned towards me and asked me to talk about myself. Feeling surprised I asked him what he wanted me to say. He said, “Tell everything, right from your childhood, to all your spiritual pursuits, when you came here, everything...anything”.

I started haltingly and it slowly gained momentum. Through tears, laughter and with much emotion I uninterruptedly laid out my life story for more than an hour. My attention was primarily focused on G and he just stared at me the entire time with rapt attention. He had not heard about many events in my life before. Most of it was about my desperate and pathetic search for enlightenment. After I finished telling my story he remarked animatedly, “Oh my god, I just could not look away from you or stop listening!”

After that all of us had a sumptuous breakfast and it was time for me to be dropped off at the train station so I could head home all alone. G carried my bag and walked as far as he was allowed to at the train station. As I was saying goodbye he said, “Please read that UG letter again in the train and call me”. He repeated that instruction again as he noticed that I was not paying much attention. My thoughts were more on the fact that I was going away from him and the three-decade old letter didn't mean much to me at that time. I said ok and went to board my train. As I sat in the train I thought maybe I will catch up on my sleep but surprisingly there was no trace of any sleepiness despite not having slept the two nights before. I still felt all my senses on hyper-alert and my perception continued to be heightened. I was thinking of the events of the last 2-3 days when suddenly my phone buzzed and got me out of my reverie. It was G and he asked how I was doing. I said I was fine and he asked me if I had read the letter and what I thought of it. Feeling surprised at his persistence I said I hadn't read it but would immediately and then get back to him. I read the write up and was very surprised at how well written it was. I called him and said that I had read it and that it was good. He said to read it again with more care and then to call him back

for further discussion. Now I found this really strange. Normally I would be the one calling him repeatedly and he would be the one responding as and when he chose. But now it seemed like he was encouraging me to call him and was actually interested in hearing my viewpoint about something. This was a huge shift. Eager to have a reason to call back I re-read it again with nothing new really registering. He talked very animatedly and seemed to be happy to have a longish conversation. He asked how I was doing and this was the second time in two hours. I was very touched by his concern and said I was doing great. Then he said read the letter one more time – this was the third time he was asking me during this train ride. I told him to fill me in on what it is that he thought I was missing since I didn't seem to be getting it right. He said there was nothing to get – just read for time pass. None of this seemed like casual time pass to me but hey if he was inviting me to call and talk to him, I certainly wasn't going to question the gift horse.

He kept in touch with me via phone calls and text until I reached home. He seemed relieved to hear that I had made it safely home.

The following day I resumed work.

A couple of years later I concluded that the letter and the discussion were just ploys for G to keep tabs on how I was doing. Although I didn't know it then, he was aware that something had kick-started in me and my world was about to change in a very drastic way and that I was quite clueless about it. Another plausible explanation might be to an insight into G himself. I didn't know much about him at that time, so this letter also gave the hang of what he could be about. Clearly I was one of the dunderheads for whom this letter was written. I never asked this question of him because I knew he would never answer directly. At best he might say, "I don't know what you are talking about, I am not UG!"

CHAPTER 4

My Back Story

This was the life story o that I told G and friends on morning of January 18th, 2015.

Buddha Influence:

When I was in fifth grade, in my history class, I was introduced to the topic on influential Indian leaders. Amongst them were Mahavira and Gautama Buddha. I was quite fascinated by Gautama's story. Here was a handsome young prince, doted on by his parents, loved by his kinsmen, inheritor of a kingdom, with a beautiful young wife and brand new baby boy – and he left it all in search of something. That search led him to his Enlightenment. This was the first time I had come across this word. Years later when he returned to his kingdom for a visit and saw his wife and son and subjects, he had no desire to resume his old life. What he had discovered for himself seemed to make him very self content. This story just blew my mind as a young fifth grader. I remember being introduced to this chapter on a Friday afternoon and during the whole weekend the story just churned in my head. What was it that he found that was so great? What did this enlightenment mean? I thought perhaps the word meant – a holy man or a wise man. So Monday morning back at school I told two of my friends how the events in my life were going to unravel up to the age of 30 as if i was looking through a crystal ball. What made me say that all those years ago I have no clue but it seemed like all of it came true. Perhaps the memory retrieval process works in ways that are selective. I don't know. I distinctly remember saying that my first born would be a boy and I would name him Rahul after Buddha's son Rahula. Both my friends who listened to my crazy rant, laughed and asked me, "Why – are you going to marry someone like Buddha?" I said, "No I AM going to be the Buddha". They almost fell off the classroom benches laughing and said that I had lost my mind. Feeling utterly humiliated I buried my life plan deeply into the recesses of my memory. I never thought about it again until decades later. After that day both those friends didn't want anything to do with me and the friendships died an instant death.

Transition to Adulthood:

Sometimes the old has to make way for the new. I met a group of girls who became thick friends and I really connected with them. We forged a strong friendship and it continues to this day despite us being in different continents, without internet for few decades, etc.

I subsequently did well in my academics, moved to USA, got married early, bought a nice house and cars, had kids and then an excellent job in a large international company. I was good at multi-tasking and did well in all aspects of my life. I was living the so-called American dream.

Death Of A Dear Friend:

In the year 2000 a close friend of mine died suddenly of cancer and it was heartbreaking. I was very close to her and knew her through school and college. She passed away after a lot of suffering and I had a rough time handling it. She was one of the nicest people I ever knew and didn't have one mean bone in her body, was strong and fit, and everything about her was perfect. Why did she have to die so young and that too in such a painful way? What was the point of living a good life then? I was always taught that good things happen to nice people that do good to others, Law of Karma, etc. Where was that justice here? Rumbblings of dissatisfaction began. Why did I have to do good and be good if there was no guarantee for happiness? Why do corrupt, inept and mean people have lots of wealth and the poor, sad and hardworking people live out their lives working like pack mules? The established framework of ideas didn't work for me. They were pat answers that people quoted but had no depth or understanding either for them or for me. Was her death in vain? Am I going to die like that?

Devastating Accident:

In the following year, in August 2001, I was involved in a bad road accident. I was driving with a friend on a clear, sunny day at the permitted 75 miles per hour on the expressway. My van was nicked in the rear by some speeding vehicle sending it careening towards the 4 feet tall solid wall of concrete median and hitting it at high speed. All the air bags blew up and fortunately both of us

were wearing seat belts. The impact was so strong that the front of the van on the driver's side came crushing into my body. It forced the van to spin around and head towards the oncoming traffic where the vehicles were going 75-80 miles per hour. I tried to steer the vehicle out of the way but my steering wheel was disconnected from the chassis and nothing could be done. The airbags that had inflated were meant for single impact and had started deflating. My rudderless van was heading into traffic and I could see an 18-wheeler truck-trailer coming straight at us. "Oh My God" I thought and time slowed down and moved as if in slow-motion. I couldn't get out of the way and neither could the truck as all the three lanes of the expressway were packed with traffic. The impact happened at almost 130-135 miles per hour. I could actually see the driver's eyes bulge out just before impact. The front of car which was already bashed in on the driver's side was now completely crushed in the front and we spun round and round on the expressway careening crazily. The car stopped to the side of the road in a small ditch. A few more yards and it would have been a deep and final plunge off the road but luckily that didn't happen. Both of us seemed ok. I was badly pinned and couldn't open the driver's side door. Fire trucks, ambulances, cop cars all joined the melee along with roadside onlookers. I think I was pulled out by "jaws of death" (special vehicle for this purpose) The expressway was shut down. I was amazed that neither one of us had any major injuries. We had seat belt burns across the chest and minor scratches on the legs. My knees had borne the brunt of two impacts, both fairly severe. The ambulance drove us to the nearby hospital.

I was lucky to survive the accident. I felt that I had received a new lease on life and that perhaps this opportunity was given to me by the universe for some special reason. What reason I did not know but whatever it was I would give it my all or die trying. Maybe it was the effect of narcotics they gave me at the hospital for pain management or PTSD hitting me - I was making grandiose resolutions. Right after my accident I began having strange visions. I couldn't figure them out and due to my association with the spiritual organization they took on a "mystical" reasoning and glow.

First, I had to get my knees in order and get back on my feet again. I underwent physiotherapy, diligently followed all the recommended exercises, did all the pranayams as sincerely as I

could and meditated like there was no tomorrow. I gave a 100% to whatever I did and then some. Over the years my knees improved significantly but they continue to trouble me. I can walk fine and also manage an occasional jog but it took years to get to that point.

Rough Patch Continues:

In November, 2001 I was hit by another traumatic event in my personal family life. I did not see it coming at all and was completely blindsided. My confidence was severely shaken. I was hurt and confused and did not know which way to turn. Where were the gods and the godmen when I needed them?

Barely had I recovered from these two setbacks when I was hit with a third one in January 2002. My 54-year old Mom who I just talked to the day before passed away quite suddenly and unexpectedly. I was devastated and traumatized. She went exactly the way she wanted: without any pain for herself and placing no burden on anybody else, cooking the family meal right up until she passed away. I was quite close to her and it hit me real hard. Oddly, all her life my Mom kept saying she would pass away at age 54 just like her Dad (my grandpa) did. Was she prophetic or did she have some strange will power? What happens after death? I had lots of questions but no answers.

I was desperately looking for a silver lining.

CHAPTER 5

In Search Of “Enlightenment”

First Experience With A Spiritual Organization:

I was suffering from terrible allergies. Spring and Fall were particularly brutal. My eyes would itch and burn, skin would peel off my face, throat would be highly irritated and scratchy and I would be sneezing all the time. I couldn't sleep well and was fairly dysfunctional because of it. Allergy medications made me sleepy and sluggish and I couldn't drive whilst on it. I tried different things to bring some relief but nothing worked. In April 2001, a friend mentioned about a spiritual organization, that she was part of that promoted health benefits of yoga and I was interested. During the class pranayama, meditation and Hatha yoga (Raja yoga) were prescribed as a sure fire path to enlightenment. That word “enlightenment” came back into my life again. It was only at this time that I looked back at my life until then and realized that everything I had said to those two classmates in fifth grade about how my life events would unravel, all came true. I had completely forgotten about it all these years. This spiritual organization put forth the goal and methods to achieve it.

I experienced some personal benefits in my health as the allergies that had plagued me for years went away in one evening and 98% of them have not come back to date. I was simply “wowed”. It is as if I got a fresh lease on life. My allergies were almost gone and doing these practices helped me feel healthy and vital.

I took all their classes and performed whatever they prescribed with utter sincerity and diligence. They fueled the idea of becoming enlightened as the ultimate life goal. After being with them for two and half years I was no closer to salvation than when I started. Their path of *Asathoma Sadhgamaya* - from unreal to real - seemed to be geared toward looking for recruits to spread the word of the organization and make it grow. I had no problem with their goals but I was really looking for something on a more personal level.

Around this time in 2004, another friend introduced me to a gentleman who she was thoroughly impressed with. She kept

saying there was something so divine about him. Her husband thought she had gone crazy and asked me to talk to her. When I did talk to her I was impressed with the beautiful glow her face acquired when she talked about “Mike”. The name sounded very western but he was from Andhra Pradesh, India. He happened to adopt the western name to fit in the workplace in the Information Technology world in California. Before long, I attended one of Mike’s classes. They were full of powerpoint slides and made for a very boring class. However there was something to this guy that piqued my interest. It was not in his words or demeanor but at the same time I could not pinpoint what it was. He was able to fan tremendous amount of emotions without even trying. I felt guilty at not exhibiting “loyalty” to the first organization. I didn’t have to worry about it for too long as both of them left me dissatisfied and burnt out. One good thing that came out of the “Mike” business was that it knocked me off the first spiritual organization bandwagon and secondly the idea of “loyalty” as a virtue lost its value and sheen for me.

So now I was back to square one. Didn’t know where to move or what to do? Actually I was worse off. Now I had more ideas and more questions muddying up my head. It devolved into serious existential crisis for me. I began to question my life’s goal, how to live, etc. I continued working and my home life was going along fine, but inside there was a tremendous thirst born out of deep discontent and sadness. Isn’t there one genuine guy out there that can lay it down straight for me?

CHAPTER 6

U. G. Krishnamurti

Each morning I would enter my work place, check for urgent messages and then google the words “enlightened masters” and see what popped up. Needless to say it opened a huge can of worms. The spiritual market place is rich with many, many self-proclaimed enlightened ones, each with the perfect formula on how to get there. Eventually they all proved to be useless to me. I was looking for one live person that could help me or guide me in this search. I scoured lot of them, made cold calls, messaged, etc. Each sounded more pathetic than the other but that didn’t stop my momentum. It was almost like a challenge - if I am looking this hard then there has to be someone out there.

One of the names that I came across very early on in 2002 was that of U.G.Krishnamurti and a website that was dedicated to him *well.com/jct*. I was really blown away as I kept reading about him. He said some radical things that seemed to challenge my status quo. He bashed anything and everything but did not offer anything in return. There was no ideology, method, teaching or instruction. I wondered where he found this tremendous confidence to deny everybody and everything. What did he have or find that allowed him to so authoritatively state that there was nothing to find and nothing to enlightenment, nothing to get, etc.?

There was something about the way he talked that made logical sense but at the same time he was bashing ideas and dreams that I cherished and held close to my heart. This created an enormous disturbance within me triggering headaches and depressive moods. When I stepped away from reading about him for a couple of months my headaches went away and my mood improved. Then like an addict I would go back to reading his words. It would trigger another cycle of headaches and bad moods and again I would withdraw. This repetitive cycle went on for a few years. This did not happen when I read about other people. It only happened when I read about UG because he was the only one that denied anything called enlightenment. I also liked his words that said, “Don’t take my word for it, find out for yourself!” So I told myself that I would keep at it until I found this out for myself – whatever ‘this’ was. I wanted my conclusion to be my discovery

and not someone else's hand-me-down. This was the best takeaway I got reading about UG.

UG of course dismissed the very idea of enlightenment and the possibility of anyone getting a fictitious state. Yet he seemed to me to exhibit the very traits that I felt were a hallmark of an "enlightened person". It wasn't enough that I read about him. I also wanted to meet him. He seemed so genuine and authentic. He wasn't worried about what people said or thought about him. He said his piece and it was just too bad if someone didn't like it. He certainly wasn't pandering to his audience, that much I got. I tried sending emails to the website but I didn't get any response.

When I first started reading about UG in 2002, I was still with the first spiritual organization. One particular incident sticks out in my memory. This happened in 2003. I had just read about UG being in Sivananda ashram and catching the Yoga Master devouring pickles behind the closed doors. UG was so disgusted with this hypocritical behavior that he walked away from the organization. That same evening I had a one-on-one meeting with the head of the spiritual organization that I was part of. In those days it was a very coveted appointment. Now of course you have to cough up huge sums of money to get that 'privilege'. Anyway when I went in for the appointment I was asked to wait in the living room for the 'Master'. As I was waiting I was reminded how lucky I was to get this appointment for free. As I was talking to the attendant I got a fishy smell from the kitchen. I asked what was going on. The attendant walked towards the kitchen and asked me to stay back in the living room. Curiosity overtook me and I followed. I saw some fish being stir-fried. I said, "I thought the Master was a vegetarian". I was informed that the Master was very much a vegetarian but his brain had gone through tremendous stress with some transformation and needed 'special' brain food. Fried fish and special brain food sounded really fishy to me. Having read the UG-Sivananda-pickles episode just that morning it seemed like a deja-vu with different set of characters! I certainly had no problem with someone eating fish as some of my own family members did eat meat. But to have someone proclaim to one and all about the need to give up meat to be a yogi and touting about himself being a vegetarian and then discovering that he did this behind the scenes was quite eye-opening. If he had said openly I eat all kinds of meat and everything that moves I would have had no issue with it.

My search was not for someone with a particular set of food habits. The incident left a ‘fishy’ stink in my brain for sure.

Same thing happened with this Mike guy as well. He talked about bringing peace and harmony into the world but seemed daggers drawn with his family all the time. The following year he went off to India and I think he ended up doing some prison time as well due to some disagreements with his family. So that chapter ended in 2005. None could withstand against the backdrop of UG reading. At this time I also saw the negative and ugly side of the first organization when they realized that I no longer wanted to be part of them. I was sincere in my search for enlightenment but extremely naïve. Both experiences left me frustrated and burnt out.

Through all this and in the next subsequent years I would read UG avidly and I tried to get in touch with someone who could tell me how to meet him. UG’s words, “there is conflict between what they say and what they do” struck a very strong chord within me in the light of my own recent experiences. At least UG wasn’t selling an idea or a how-to technology. As I mentioned earlier, reading about UG was not easy for me and I had no doubt that reading about him was having a strong effect. I also knew why - It seemed like he was squashing my dreams and ideals and the perfect goal of enlightenment and that seemed unpalatable to me.

I had first heard of *naadi* astrology while reading about UG and so tried to find one and see where to go with this. The readings sounded great but they were not going to solve my immediate existential crisis. I didn’t particularly care for what the next or the following years would bring forth as per *naadi* astrology. I wanted to know about NOW.

My internet browsing and ‘spiritual’ reading were not restricted to UG. I read about all so called spiritual or enlightened masters that were alive. I would try to see what was the key they held that allowed them to experience those states that they talked about. I was only interested in the live ones because I felt perhaps I could talk to them and glean some information that would be helpful to me. Every morning I would start reading about them and the rest of the day I would intersperse my work and play with this reading. If someone caught my interest I would invariably send an email or call them if their contact information was provided. Either they

didn't respond or if they did, something didn't feel right and I would cross their names off my list. Soon I started exploring the dead ones too, both Western and Eastern. While their stories were very interesting and engaging I felt they did nothing for me. I wasn't looking for the "upliftment of my petty mind"...I wanted that so-called "enlightened state" and I wanted it bad! I was getting seriously desperate.

All these so called spiritualists came and went – the only one that stuck around was UG. Since UG discarded everything there was nothing in what he said that I could discard. But those headaches and mood-downers were just terrible. Yet I kept at it in short bursts from 2002-2007. Around Feb 2007, I had just read the most recent updates of UG and went through my worst bout ever of headaches and sadness. So I decided that I am not getting any closer to meeting this guy despite trying so hard, let's forget about him. So I did not look at his website for the next few months.

Then towards the end of June 2007 when I was at work, something made me peruse UG's website again. I was stunned to find out that he had passed away in March. I was absolutely devastated and cried like anything. My boss passed by my desk and looking at my condition asked me what happened. I said that I had just found out that someone I knew had passed away. I didn't elaborate further and my boss told me to take a break and go home. Through streaming tears I drove home and cried the whole afternoon, evening and night. The one genuine person who I finally could trust despite not having met him had passed away! I realized that I had never cried like this for anyone including my own mother who I was extremely close to and who had passed away quite suddenly a few years ago. What made me experience this complete devastation over the death of an old man that I had never met? No answers came – just endless tears and frustration.

Out of that utter devastation – a name popped up in my head quite suddenly. The name was Guha and the rest of my story is pretty much all about him!

CHAPTER 7

Finding Guha

Back in mid-2007 very little was written about Guha. In fact the only place that I could recall where his name showed up was when I read Mr. Chandrashekar's "Stopped in the Tracks - Series 2". His "Stopped in the Tracks - Series 3" was not out yet. But somewhere there is a mention that Guha was desperately trying to reach UG and UG was not making himself available. I don't know if the mention was for Julie or Guha but in my head it registered as Guha. I felt, here is a man that desperately was trying to reach UG. He also wanted to quit his job and was prone to depression. In my sorrow-befuddled head it translated as - such desperation could either lead to madness or perhaps he found something for himself. I connected it my own desperation and now felt that I must reach out to Guha.

Then began the craziest of searches for the man named Guha. I relentlessly searched night and day for this person. I would google his name and go down the list of all the Guhas. I didn't know which country he was in at present or where he worked or lived. I searched for him in yellow pages, people in Bengal (lots and lots of Sabyasachis and Guhas there), I even contacted the office of a costume designer and it took me nowhere. I called many people with the first name of Sabyasachi or last name of Guha. All cold calls stayed cold. Every waking moment was spent trying to figure out how to reach Guha. Such was my state. I even looked up names of his wife and children to see if something would show up. Nothing that could help me track him down ever did.

Then in the second week of September, while still searching for Guha intensely in the internet, I came across a newspaper clipping in New Jersey community news that carried a review of the Bharatanatyam dance of Shilpa Guha. I knew this had to be the daughter of *The Sabyasachi Guha*. This was my first lead in almost two months. But no contact address for the Guhas was mentioned. However I was able to find the reviewer's phone number. I called her and asked for the Guhas – either Sabyasachi or Lakshmi. She said that she knew the family but could not give

out their private information. I left my name and phone number with her and asked her to pass it on to them and have them contact me about some super urgent matter if they would. A year later Lakshmi did confirm that she got that message but since she didn't recognize my name she didn't follow up. So that lead didn't go anywhere.

I was able to find out that Guha had worked at Rutgers University and I contacted the department of Physics. Based on who he published research papers with I was able to contact someone from his department. When I talked to this colleague I was delighted to find out that he worked in the same office area as Guha. But then I discovered that Guha had recently resigned from the University. Seeing my hope flicker away I asked him if by any chance he could give me Guha's phone number as I needed to reach him urgently. He said he could not hand out personal information like that. However if Sabya (Guha was called Sabya at work) called the office for any reason then he would pass on my name and number. I doubt very much Guha ever called him back. This was another dead end.

I continued to scour websites related to UG to see if I could glean anything about Guha or who might know his whereabouts. From somewhere the phone number of Julie Clarke Thayer popped up. I immediately called her and said that I had read about UG for years. She said that's wonderful. I couldn't wait to get to my next question which was, "Do you know a person called Sabyasachi Guha?" She said that of course she did. At this time I didn't realize that these two were best friends and lived within ten minutes of drive time of each other. I asked her if she could help me reach him and she said absolutely she could. I just started crying. Julie, still raw from the recent death of UG also started crying on the phone. Then she said that Guha was in India and gave me his email id to reach him. She also gave me his wife, Lakshmi's phone number if I wanted to know more about UG as she had also been close to him. I immediately called Lakshmi up and said hello and promptly burst into tears. I knew I was being a nut case but I couldn't help it. Thankfully Lakshmi could see my genuine interest and spent a lot of time talking about UG. She too cried a little while talking about him. It was turning out to be quite a tears-fest. I asked her if it was okay for me to try to contact her husband Guha. She said it was fine and gave me the same email id that Julie had given me.

After two intense months of searching I was glad to get his email id and finally try to reach out to Guha. What would I ask, would he respond, how should I phrase it so I could hear back from him.....with these thoughts circling my head - I sent out my first email to Dr. Guha!

Hello Mr. Guha-

I found reference to your name while reading up on UGK. I need to communicate with you as soon as possible. Could you please email me back if you receive this email.

Thanks.

Revathi

I kept it very short because I didn't want to say something in my first email that might make him decide that it was not worthwhile calling me back.

Guha had promptly responded, but I only saw the email a couple of days later as I was traveling out of town.

Dear Revathi,

Please tell me what you would like to know. I will be glad to answer your questions, if I can.

Sincerely,

Sabyasachi Guha

I asked him for his phone number and if I could talk to him in person. I wanted to listen to the sound of his voice. He emailed me his number and I heard his voice for the first time. I stuttered and stammered in saying my hellos....didn't know whether to say Dr. or Mr. or address him by his first name or last name and so I said, "Hello Dr. Mr. Sabyasachi Guhaji". He immediately put me at ease and said, "Call me Guha, just Guha".

I was dying to hear from this man and now that I had him on the other side of the phone line, all coherent words and thoughts fled from my head. Then came the rainfall of tears...I told him to

please be patient with me as I was finding it difficult to talk. I don't know what he thought at the other end but said something like he was in the foothills of the Himalayas (Siliguri area) right now and moving around quite a bit. He said that normally he doesn't check his email when he is traveling like this but somehow he happened to check it and came across my letter. I was hearing him and knew that I had to say something soon or the phone conversation was going to end. Nothing came as words choked up and the conversation ended. He said I could always email him the questions and if and when he could, he would try to respond. For the last few months I had desperately tried to reach this man, all my energies had been focused on reaching him, but never once did I ask myself what would I say to him if I did reach him. Not once!

There were a few more email exchanges. I asked about UG and about Guha's experiences with him. He did not respond much. He just said if you want to hear about UG – Julie and Lakshmi could tell me what I wanted to know. He didn't want to talk about himself at all no matter how I posed the questions. He asked me what I wanted. I danced around using the word enlightenment as I was well aware of UG's antipathy to that term. I figured Guha wouldn't like it either but whether you call it one thing or another, you are still referring to a state. Guha said that since UG was dead and he didn't know of any state other than being in the state of New Jersey he couldn't tell me anything. He also said he didn't know how long he would be in India or where he would be. It seemed like he was living the life of a vagabond.

It seemed like anything I asked him hit a brick wall. He didn't seem to either want to answer or was very derisive of my question itself. On his own he was not forthcoming with any details either. So I would call Julie and Lakshmi. Both of them would talk about UG very affectionately and explained their own personal equations with him. I would also try to glean information about Guha and his interactions with UG. Julie sent me all her personal diaries and I read them very avidly. But Guha was very mum. He said that if I came to New Jersey or New York I could meet him.

Then in 2008 an unexpected opportunity presented itself. A distant relative of mine was hosting a family event in New York and sent an invitation to our family. I asked Guha if he would be available if I came to the city during that time. He said sure he would make himself available. Feeling thrilled at the possibility of meeting him

I called my distant relative and said that I could make it to their function with my daughter. I think this relative was quite surprised to hear from me (probably was still trying to figure out who I was) but masked it well. In all these years he had lived in this country I had never reached out to him and now I was actually showing up to this family event. Last minute flight tickets were unavailable. I thought maybe this trip would not happen but fortunately we found some bus tickets. Soon we were on our way to New York City (NYC).

6/23/2008

The family event was over the on June 22nd and I had made plans to meet Guha and Julie in New Jersey (NJ) a few days later as my uncle was going to drop me there. In between the filler time the plan was to go around and explore the city with my cousin. My only interest in this trip was to meet Guha and so I was really counting down the hours. Playing tourist with my cousin, I suddenly got a call from Julie and I excitedly exchanged hellos with Guha. Apparently they were in the city too but in a different borough. I immediately sent a heartfelt wish into the universe that if there is anything real to this guy called Guha, any particular state that he is in that means something/anything, then please have them call me back and invite me to see them today. To increase the degree of difficulty for the universe to prove to me that there is something to Guha I also wished that they would invite me to stay over in NJ. The chances of both these things happening were practically nil. But over the last few months I wanted to see or get some sign that this guy was unusual. Lo and behold Julie called me right back and asked me if I wanted come over and see them today. I said, "Yes, of course". So the first part of my fervent wish was granted. Then after a very brief conversation in the background with Guha, Julie asked if we wanted to come stay at her house in New Jersey and said we were very welcome. I could not believe this was happening! Not only do I get to see Guha but I was also going to be driven over and stay at Julie's place. Before it was a gut feeling, now I was convinced that Guha was special as the universe told me so. I knew I was being pretty giddy-headed but what are the odds of this happening? I immediately cancelled all my plans with my cousin. He was just getting ready to eat his lunch. I made him pack it up and I hired a cab to head over to my uncle's house to collect our bags. Before they could blink in response, we were out the door and in another cab heading to the

address somewhere in Manhattan given to me by Julie. All this was accomplished in record time despite NYC traffic.

The address given to me by Julie belonged to the apartment of Luna Tarlo (author of *Mother of God* and the central character of *Guha talks to the Mother of God*). Julie came to the front entrance of the building and received us with a warm hug and a kiss. Saying a quick goodbye to my cousin we headed upstairs. As the elevator moved up my heart was pumping like crazy to meet Guha in person. I felt like all kinds of orchestra music was hitting crescendo levels like in the movies, while Julie and my daughter were exchanging pleasantries.

As we entered the apartment my eyes were drawn to G. (At this point Guha become G in my diaries as I had now met him). He seemed tall and slender and was wearing neat, crisply pressed white trousers and white shirt with a brown belt and matching brown leather shoes. He looked *tres chic* and classy. He had a pencil-thin mustache, no beard, his black hair tidily slicked back and smelled like delicate sandalwood. My eyes were opened extra wide to capture everything in the screen shot of my brain. He walked over to us and gave a beaming smile and greeted us with handshakes. In that instant I felt that this was akin to Henry Stanley's "Dr. Livingstone, I presume" historic moment. I caught myself before I blurted out, "Dr. Guha, I presume". What strange things the brain conjures up and throws out in moments of extreme emotion! We all sat down and exchanged pleasantries. Again I felt a bit tongue-tied in asking any questions. I was introduced to Luna and then we all had some tea/coffee and snacks. I recall my hands shaking a bit as I held the dainty tea cup. Conversation between Julie, Luna and G was quite general and he laughed quite heartily and very easily. It all felt very smooth. Actually smooth is a very bland word but unless one is actually there it is hard to describe it. After that we all headed out.

G asked Julie to take us through downtown NYC so we could see the cityscape by night. Everything felt enchanted and spectacular. I was ecstatic. Eventually we made it to Julie's place. We had a light dinner together and G invited us for lunch at his place the following afternoon so I could meet Lakshmi and the rest of his family as well.

I was too wound up to sleep but eventually I did. I had my first UG dream that night and the details of it are very clear even today. In the dream UG was wearing white kurta-pajama and sitting in the balcony of Julie's apartment. I was sitting right next to him and he was talking to me animatedly for hours. At the end of it he gave me a piercing look and said, "You will not remember a word of what I said in the last four hours". That was the end of the dream.

6/24/2008

I woke up the next morning and when Julie enquired if I slept okay I briefly mentioned about the dream. She seemed really happy and made me repeat it to G when he joined us for breakfast. Then all of us went for a walk by the canal and G taught my daughter how to flip stones across the water so that it would hop many times and create beautiful ripple effects. The scene was simple and mesmerizing to watch. He showed us around Rutgers Garden, Rutgers University where both Lakshmi and G started their careers in US and the office building and lab where he worked. I asked him if his Chinese officemate still worked there. He was really taken aback at my question and asked me how I knew. With a foolish grin I told him that I had reached out to his officemate the year before and also the lady who wrote the newspaper article in my efforts to find his whereabouts. G shook his head and laughed and asked me again what made me reach out to him. I shrugged and said that I felt compelled to do so.

After our walk, we got ready and headed to G's apartment to meet the rest of his family. Lakshmi received me with a warm hug and introduced my daughter to Shilpa and Sumedha. Since I had already talked to Lakshmi quite a few times on the phone before, this meeting did not need for any ice-breaking conversation. The girls bonded over music and movies while the rest of us talked. Lakshmi had made a sumptuous lunch of items that UG used to like. Before we sat down to eat lunch, G asked Lakshmi to bring a box of dessert from the refrigerator. When Lakshmi said that she would bring it out post-lunch, G was very insistent that we should begin lunch with the dessert. The dessert was *malaai sandwich* and G personally handed it to me. *Malaai sandwich* is a famous Bengali sweet-dish made from milk and soft Indian cheese. I don't know why but in that moment it felt like I was getting a formal initiation in to something undefinable and grand. I know I was trying to fit all his actions into some traditional model but I was

not doing it consciously. It spontaneously brought up that kind of imagery. After accepting that *malaai sandwich* from G that day, which also happened to be my favorite Indian dessert, I refused to eat it again in the subsequent years as I wanted that last time to be etched in my memory forever. The next time I had it was years later in Kolkata in 2016 when it was again handed to me by G.

At this luncheon I also met another lady, Golda, that used to be around UG and now liked being around G. Over the next few years I would run into her on different trips with G and talk over the phone many times. She would always be a voice of encouragement in all matters related to G.

After lunch there was a small singing session where G's daughters and mine sang some songs and then went off to watch some movies online. We watched a few scenes from the movie *Species II* as Julie's son had acted in it. Lakshmi shared some video clips of when UG first came to their house in 1996, when they made family trips with UG and also a clip of UG just before he passed away in 2007. It was very obvious how closely this family had bonded with UG.

G asked me yet again what brought me to him. He kept saying there isn't much written about him in the internet, so what made me come specifically to him? At that time there was no website or literature about G out in the public. Also in all the UG literature in public domain at that time there were so many people that were mentioned a lot more extensively as compared to what was said about G. I said I didn't know. Some internal push and pressure that wouldn't relent. I told him that I had never looked or searched for anybody or anything like I did for him and that I was perplexed by my own actions. He said, "Life finds its way". Funnily enough, years later, that became the title of a book written on him by Nandini Kapadia.

He also asked me when I had come to this country. Normally when people ask me that question I mention the year I entered the country. But for some strange reason I gave him date, month and year when I came to the USA. He literally jumped out of his chair and said, "You know what? I came to the country on the exact same date, month and year - November 14th, 1988". That was a very interesting coincidence indeed! We both landed in the

country same day but our lives certainly had taken very different directions.

Couple of hours after lunch it was coffee/tea time. While everyone was buzzing around putting away lunch and starting the coffee/tea business, G was sitting and chatting with me. Then Lakshmi handed him a cup of coffee and he complained that the sugar wasn't right. So Julie ran and got some sugar for him. Then he complained that the milk wasn't right. So Golda brought some milk. Then he complained that the coffee had grown cold. So Lakshmi warmed it up for him. I watched all this very keenly and with bemusement as everyone was on their toes getting G the perfect cup of coffee. A thought went through my head – I was searching for enlightenment and had devoured all books and articles written on UG because I was attracted by the manner in which he empowered and encouraged people to stand on their own two feet. This man who had three women running to make him a cup of coffee did not seem to represent the idea of someone that stands on his own two feet, let alone help me with that. It left a slightly discordant note in my otherwise picture perfect trip. Nevertheless it rankled.

I felt the need to mention this incident in this book for two reasons: Firstly, it highlights how each one of us have our own ideas of how a person in an “evolved” state should be. Although G repeatedly said that he was just a simple man that followed UG around for 10 + years, in my mind he had something special in him. But his expression of that didn't meet my so-called ideas at that point in time. Secondly, because G thought it was hilarious and insisted that I must include it. So I have included it, quite sheepishly.

In every way possible G, Lakshmi and Julie played wonderful hosts during that trip. When G asked when I was going back, I said a couple of days later. I didn't have a ride from New Jersey to New York but was hoping to catch a bus or a train. He immediately offered to give me a ride to the NYC bus station. I was again stunned by the spontaneity of that offer. On my day of departure, he was joined by Julie and Golda and we had a wonderful conversation on the ride to the city. I thought these people must really like me for the three of them to come to the long ride to the bus station. I didn't know then that wherever G went all his friends liked to go too, sometimes in multiple cars and for the most mundane errands. I have been guilty of the same in

later years but back in 2008 it was all new to me. Apparently this used to happen around UG as well but having never met the man or the people that interacted with him I didn't know of it.

As I said my goodbyes to them I felt a twinge in my heart that I was leaving. I thought maybe it was because a good trip came to an end. I was so jacked up that I could not sleep a wink during the entire bus ride home. G dominated my headspace the whole time.

A few days later I called G back and for some odd reason I cried a lot. Golda enquired in an email what made me cry. I said that I did not know.