



# Inner Engineering

A YOGI'S GUIDE TO JOY



*Sadhguru*



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One man’s “magic” is another man’s engineering.

—**ROBERT A. HEINLEIN**

### **The Four-Letter Word**

Once it happened...A customer walking into Shankaran Pillai’s pharmacy saw a man outside hugging a lamppost, his eyeballs rolling wildly.

When he walked in, he asked, “Who’s that man? What’s wrong with him?”

Shankaran Pillai replied, unperturbed, “Oh, that guy. He’s one of my customers.”

“But what’s the matter with him?”

“He wanted something for a whooping cough. I gave him the appropriate medicine.”

“What did you give him?”

“A box of laxatives. I made him take it right here.”

“Laxatives for a whooping cough! Why on earth would you give him that?”

“Oh come on, you saw him. You think he dares to cough anymore?”

Shankaran Pillai’s box of laxatives is emblematic of the type of solution being peddled all over the world today for those in search of well-being. It is the fundamental reason the term “guru” has become a four-letter word. Unfortunately, we have forgotten the real meaning of the word. “Guru” literally means “dispeller of darkness.” The function of the guru, contrary to popular belief, is not to teach, indoctrinate, or convert. The guru is here to throw light on dimensions beyond your sensory perceptions and your psychological drama, dimensions that you are currently unable to perceive. The guru is here, fundamentally, to throw light on the very nature of your existence.

There are many spurious and dangerously misleading teachings in vogue in our world today. “Be in the moment” is one of them. The assumption is that you could be somewhere else, if you wanted. How is that even possible? The present is the only place that you *can* be. If you live, you live in *this* moment. If you die, you die in *this* moment. This moment is eternity. How are you going to escape it, even if you try?

Right now your problem is that you suffer what happened ten years ago and you suffer what may happen the day after tomorrow. Both are not living truths. They are simply a play of your memory and imagination. Does this mean then that in order to find peace you must annihilate your mind? Not at all. It simply means you need to take charge of it. Your mind carries the enormous reserves of memory and the incredible possibilities of the imagination that are the result of an evolutionary process of millions of years. If you can use it when you want and put it aside when you don’t, the mind can be a fantastic tool. To shun the past and neglect the future is to trivialize this wonderful faculty. So “be in the moment” becomes a crippling psychological restriction—it denies our existential reality.

“Do only one thing at a time” has become another popular self-help slogan. Why would you do only one thing when the mind is a phenomenal multidimensional machine, capable of handling several levels of activity all



at once? Instead of harnessing and learning to ride the mind, why would you want to obliterate it? When you can know the heady joy of mental action, why would you opt for a lobotomy, for voluntary cabbage-hood? The other phrase that has hardened into cliché through overuse is “positive thinking.” When it is oversimplified and used as some quick-fix mantra, positive thinking becomes a way of whitewashing or sugarcoating your reality. When you are unable to process real-time information and control your psychological drama, you seize on “positive thinking” as a tranquilizer. Initially, it might seem to imbue your life with new confidence and optimism. But it is essentially limited. In the long term, if you deny or amputate one part of reality, it gives you a lopsided perspective of life. Then there is the time-honored business of exporting human well-being to the heavens and claiming that the core of the universe is love. Love is a *human* possibility. If you need a refresher course, you can take lessons from your dog. He is full of love! You don’t have to go to outer space to know love. All these puerile philosophies come from the assumption that existence is human-centric. This single idea has robbed us of all sense and made us commit some of the most inhuman and heinous crimes throughout history. These continue to perpetuate themselves to this very day. As a guru, I have no doctrine to teach, no philosophy to impart, no belief

to propagate. And that is because the only solution for all the ills that plague humanity is self-transformation. Self-transformation is not incremental self-improvement. Self-transformation is achieved not by morals or ethics or attitudinal or behavioral changes, but by experiencing the limitless nature of who we are. Self-transformation means nothing of the old remains. It is a dimensional shift in the way you perceive and experience life.

Knowing this is yoga. One who embodies this is a yogi. One who guides you in this direction is a guru.

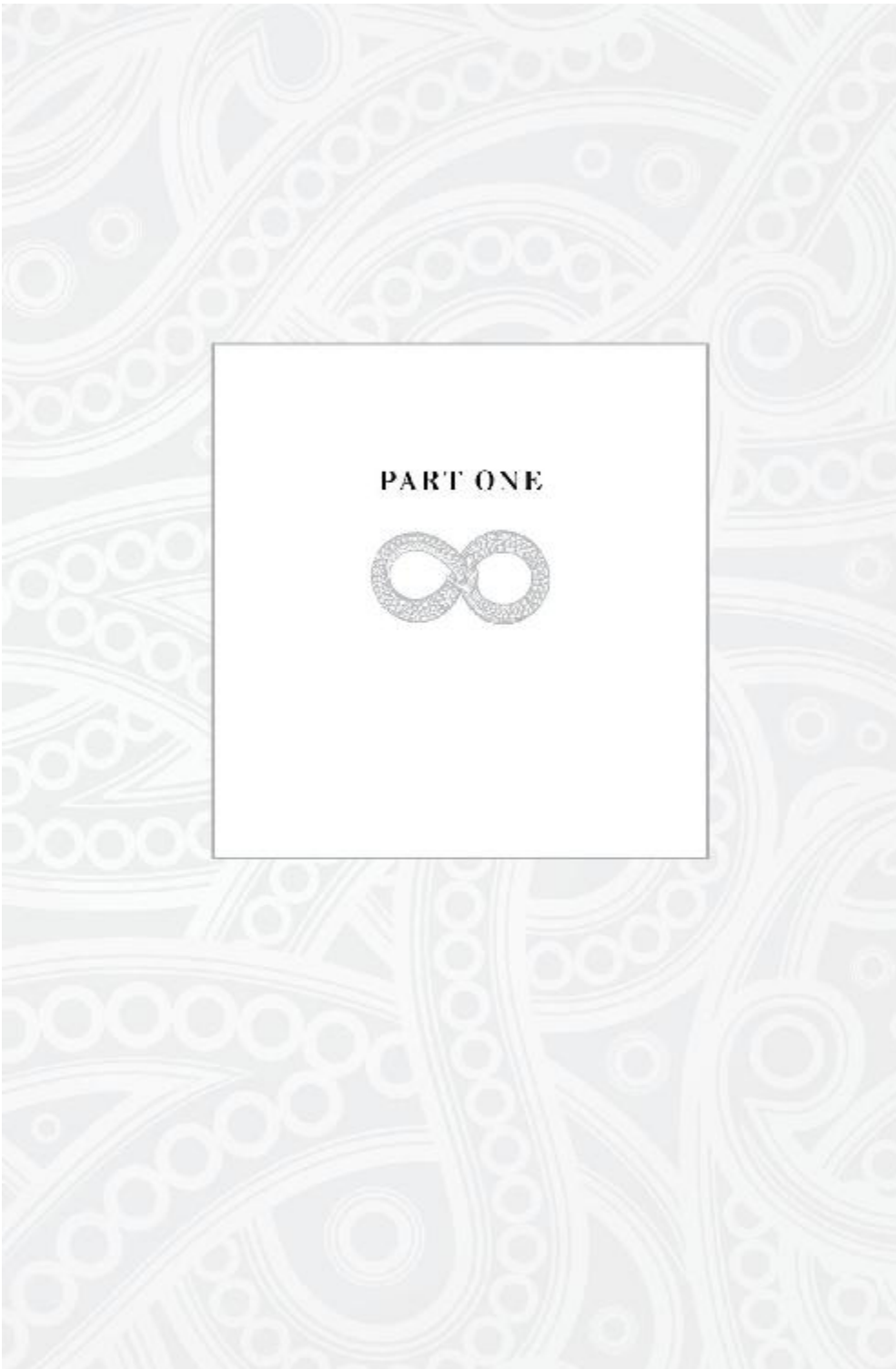
My aim in this book is to help make joy your constant companion. To make that happen, this book offers you not a sermon, but a science; not a teaching, but a technology; not a precept, but a path. It is now time to start exploring that science, working the technology, walking the path.

On this journey, the guru is not the destination but the road map. The inner dimension is uncharted terrain. If you are exploring terrain that is unfamiliar to you, isn't it better to have signposts? You could find your own way, but who knows, it could take lifetimes. When you're on unfamiliar terrain, it's just sensible to take directions. On one level, that is all a guru is—a live road map. GPS: Guru Pathfinding System!

And *that's* why there exists that infamous four-letter word.

Just to make things doubly easy for you, I thought I'd make it eight...

...Sadhguru



**A Note to the Reader**

There are many ways to approach a book of this kind. One way would be to plunge directly into practice, to take a headlong dive into do-it-yourself mode. But then this book doesn't claim to be a self-help manual. It has a strong practical orientation, but there's more to it than that.

Another way would be to turn theoretical. But this book is not an exercise in scholarship either. I have never read any of the yogic treatises in their entirety. I never had to. I come from inner experience. It was only late in my life when I skimmed through some of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, those significant yogic texts, that I realized that I had a certain access to their inner core. This is because I approach them experientially, rather than theoretically. To reduce a sophisticated science, like yoga, to mere doctrine is just as tragic as turning it into a cardiovascular workout.

And so, this book has finally been divided into two sections. The first maps the terrain; the second offers you a way to navigate it.

What you are about to read in this section is not a display of academic expertise. Instead, this section seeks to offer a series of fundamental insights—insights that lay the foundation or bedrock on which the architecture of the more practice-oriented second section is built.

These insights are not tenets or teachings. And they are most definitely not conclusions. They are best seen as signposts on a journey that can be

made by no one but you. They are core perspectives that have emerged as a consequence of the state of heightened awareness that has been mine since a life-transforming experience thirty-three years ago.

The section begins on an autobiographical note. This is so you know something about the authorial company you will be keeping, should you choose to read the rest of the book! The section then unfolds into an examination of certain basic ideas, exploring along the way some commonly used (and misused) terms such as destiny, responsibility, well-being, and even more fundamentally, yoga.

One of the chapters in this section closes with a *sadhana*. The word “sadhana” in Sanskrit means a device or a tool. These tools for exploration offer a chance for you as a reader to put the ideas discussed in those pages into action and see if the insights work for you. (These sadhanas will recur much more frequently in Section Two.)

I am often told by people that I seem to be a “modern” guru. My response to that observation is that I am neither modern nor ancient, neither new age nor old age. I am contemporary, and that is how every guru has always been. Only scholars, pundits, and theologians are capable of being ancient or modern. A philosophy or belief system can be old or new. But gurus are always contemporary.

A guru, as I said earlier, is someone who dispels darkness, someone who opens the door for you. If I promise to open a door for you tomorrow or I opened it for someone else yesterday, it is of no relevance. Only if I open a door for you today is it of some value.

So, the truth is timeless, but the technology and the language are *always* contemporary. If they weren't, they would deserve to be discarded. No tradition, however time-honored, deserves to live on as anything more than a museum piece if it has outlived its relevance. So, while I will be exploring an ancient technology in this book, it is also a technology that is flawlessly state-of-the-art.

Personally, I am not interested in offering anything new. I am only interested in what is true. But I hope that the following section will offer you some moments when the two converge. For at those junctures when the conditions are right—when an insight is articulated from a place of inner clarity and when it meets a reader at the right moment of receptivity, an age-old truth turns explosively alchemical. All of a sudden, it is fresh, alive, radiantly new, as if uttered and heard for the very first time in history.

## *When I Lost My Sense*

*Then I was a man*

*I only went up the Hill*

*As I had time to kill*

*But kill I did all that was*

*Me and Mine*

*With Me and Mine gone*

*Lost all my will and skill*

*Here I am, an empty vessel*

*Enslaved to the Divine Will*

*and infinite skill*

In the city of Mysore, there is a tradition. If you have something to do, you go up Chamundi Hill. And if you have nothing to do, you go up Chamundi Hill. If you fall in love, you go up Chamundi Hill. And if you fall out of love, you *have* to go up Chamundi Hill.

One afternoon, I had nothing to do, and I had recently fallen out of love, so I went up Chamundi Hill.

I parked my motorcycle and sat on an outcrop of rock about two-thirds of the way uphill. This was my “contemplation rock.” It had been for some time now. A purple berry tree and a stunted banyan had put down tenacious roots into a deep fissure in the rock surface. A panoramic view of the city unfolded before me.

Until that moment, in my experience, my body and mind was “me” and the world was “out there.” But suddenly I did not know what was me and what was not me. My eyes were still open. But the air that I was breathing, the rock on which I was sitting, the very atmosphere around, everything had become me. I was everything that was. I was conscious, but I had lost my senses. The discriminatory nature of the senses simply did not exist anymore. The more I say, the crazier it will sound because what was happening was indescribable. What was me was literally *everywhere*. Everything was exploding beyond defined boundaries; everything was exploding into everything else. It was a dimensionless unity of absolute perfection.

My life is just that moment, gracefully enduring.

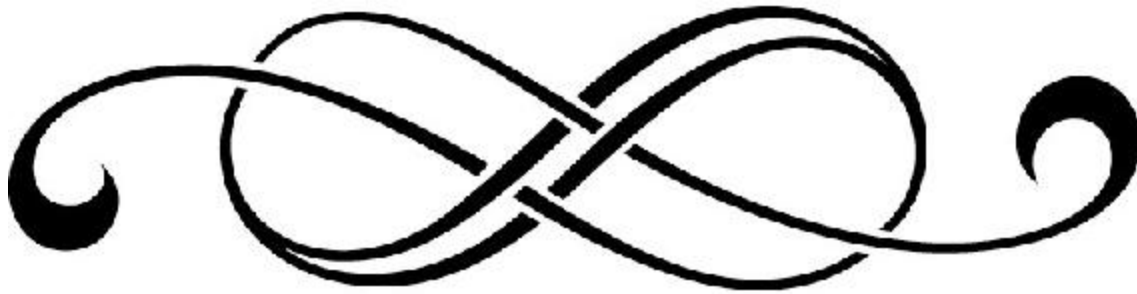
When I returned to my normal senses, it felt as if just ten minutes had elapsed. But a glance at my watch told me that it was seven thirty in the evening! Four and a half hours had passed. My eyes were open, the sun had set, and it was dark. I was fully aware, but what I had considered to be myself until that moment had completely disappeared.

I have never been the teary kind. And yet, here I was, at the age of twenty-five, on a rock on Chamundi Hill, so ecstatically crazy that the tears were flowing and my entire shirt was wet!



Being peaceful and happy had never been an issue for me. I had lived my life the way I wanted. I had grown up in the sixties, the era of the Beatles and blue jeans, read my share of European philosophy and literature—Dostoyevsky, Camus, Kafka, and the like. But here I was exploding into a completely different dimension of existence of which I knew nothing, drenched in a completely new feeling—an exuberance, a blissfulness—that I had never known or imagined possible. When I applied my skeptical mind to this, the only thing my mind could tell me was that maybe I was going off my rocker! Still, it was so beautiful that I knew that I didn't want to lose it.

I have never quite been able to describe what happened that afternoon. Perhaps the best way to put it is that I went up and didn't come down. I never have.



I was born in Mysore, a pretty princely town in southern India, an erstwhile capital, known for its palaces and gardens. My father was a physician, my mother a homemaker. I was the youngest of four siblings.

School bored me. I found sitting through class impossible because I could see that the teachers were talking about something that did not mean anything to their lives. Every day, as a four-year-old, I instructed my housekeeper, who accompanied me to school in the morning, to drop me off at the gates and not enter the building. As soon as she left, I would dart to the nearby canyon, which exploded with an incredible variety of life. I started accumulating a vast personal zoo of insects, tadpoles, and snakes in bottles obtained from my father's medicine cabinet. After a few months, when my parents discovered that I hadn't been attending school, however,

they seemed singularly unimpressed by my biological explorations. My expeditions to the canyon were dismissed as messing about in a rainwater drain. Thwarted, as I often was, by what I regarded as a dull and unimaginative adult world, I simply turned my attention elsewhere and found something else to do.

In later years, I preferred to spend my days roaming the forest, catching snakes, fishing, trekking, and climbing trees. I would often climb to the topmost branch of a big tree, with my lunch box and water bottle. The swaying motion of the branches would transport me to a trancelike state, where I was asleep but wide awake at the same time. I would lose all sense of time on this tree. I would be perched there from nine o'clock in the morning to four thirty in the evening when the bell rang and school was done. Much later, I realized that unknowingly I was becoming meditative at this stage in my life. Later, when I first instructed people into meditations, it was always swaying meditations. Of course, I hadn't even heard of the word "meditation" at this point. I simply liked the way the tree swayed me into a state beyond sleep and wakefulness.

I found the classroom dull but I was interested in everything else—the way the world is made, the physical terrain of the land, the way people live. I used to take my bicycle along the mud roads in the countryside, riding a

minimum of thirty-five kilometers a day. By the time I came home, I'd be caked with layers of mud and dust. I particularly enjoyed making mental maps of the terrain I'd traveled. I could just close my eyes when I was alone and re-draw the entire landscape that I'd seen that afternoon—every single rock, every outcrop, every single tree. I was fascinated by the different seasons, the way the land changes when it is ploughed, when the crops start germinating. That is what drew me to the work of Thomas Hardy: his descriptions of the English landscape which go on for pages on end. I was doing the same in my head with the world around me. Even today it is like a video in my head. If I want I can replay the whole thing, those years and years of all that I observed, with vivid clarity.

I was a diehard skeptic. Even at the age of five, when my family went to the temple, I had questions—lots of them. Who is God? Where is He? Up there? Where is up? A couple of years later, I had even more questions. In school, they said the planet was round. But if the planet was round, how did one know which way was up? No one ever managed to answer these questions, so I never entered the temple. This meant they were compelled to leave me in the custody of the footwear attendant outside. The attendant held me by the arm in a viselike grip, pulling and tugging me around with him as he did his business. He knew that if he looked the other way I'd be

gone! Later in my life, I couldn't help noticing that people coming out of restaurants always had more joyful faces than those coming out of temples. That intrigued me.

And yet, while I was a skeptic, I never identified with that label either. I had lots of questions about everything, but never felt the need to draw any conclusions. I realized very early that I knew nothing about anything. That meant I ended up paying enormous attention to everything around me. If someone gave me a glass of water, I stared at it endlessly. If I picked up a leaf, I stared at it endlessly too. I stared at the darkness all night. If I looked at a pebble, the image would rotate interminably in my mind, so I would know its every grain, its every angle.

I also saw that language was no more than a conspiracy devised by human beings. If someone spoke, I realized they were only making sounds, and I was making up the meanings. So, I stopped making up meanings and the sounds became very amusing. I could see patterns spewing out of their mouths. If I kept staring, the person would just disintegrate and turn into a blob of energy. Then all that was left was patterns!

In this state of absolute borderless ignorance, just about anything could hold my attention. My dear father, being a physician, began to think I needed psychiatric evaluation. In his words, "This boy is staring

unblinkingly at something all the time. He's lost it!" It has always seemed to me odd that the world does not realize the immensity of a state of "I do not know." Those who destroy that state with beliefs and assumptions completely miss an enormous possibility—the possibility of knowing. They forget that "I do not know" is the doorway—the *only* doorway—to seeking and knowing.

My mother instructed me to pay attention to my teachers. And I did. I paid them the kind of attention they would never have received anywhere else! I had no idea what they were saying, but on those occasions when I attended class, I stared at them, unwavering and intense. For some reason, they did not find this trait particularly endearing. One particular teacher did everything possible to elicit a response from me. But when I remained silent and taciturn, he seized me by the shoulder and shook me violently. "Either you're the divine or the devil," he declared. He added, "And I think you're the latter!"

I was not particularly insulted. Until that moment, I had approached everything around me—from a grain of sand to the universe—with a sense of wonder. But there had always been one certainty in this complex web of questions and that was "me." But my teacher's outburst triggered another line of inquiry. Who was I? Human, divine, devil, what? I tried to stare at

myself to find out. It didn't work. So, I closed my eyes and tried to find out. Minutes turned to hours, and I continued to sit, eyes closed.

When my eyes were open, everything intrigued me—an ant, a leaf, clouds, flowers, darkness, just about anything. But to my amazement, I found that with my eyes closed, there was even more that grabbed my attention—the way the body pulses, the way different organs function, the various channels along which one's inner energy moves, the manner in which the anatomy is aligned, the fact that boundaries are limited to the external world. This exercise opened up the entire mechanics of being human before me. Instead of leading me to a simplistic answer that I was “this” or “that,” it gradually brought me to a realization that, if I were willing, I could be everything. It wasn't about arriving at any conclusions. Even the certainty of “me” collapsed as a deeper sense of what it is to be a human being started opening up. From knowing myself as an autonomous person, this exercise melted me down. I became a nebulous being.

Despite all my wild ways, the one thing I did manage to do in a strangely disciplined fashion was my practice of yoga. It started one summer vacation when I was twelve. A whole bunch of us cousins met every year in my grandfather's ancestral home. In the backyard there stood an old well, over 150 feet deep. While the girls played hide-and-seek, the regular game

played by us boys was to jump into the well and then climb up again. Both jumping down and climbing up were a challenge. If you didn't do it properly, your brains could become a smear on the wall. While you were climbing up, there were no steps; you simply had to clutch at the rock surface and claw yourself up. Your fingernails often bled out of sheer pressure. Just a few of the boys could do this. I was one of them and I was pretty good at it.

One day a man of over seventy years of age appeared. He watched us for a while. Without a word, he jumped into the well. We thought he was finished. But he climbed out quicker than me. I cast aside my pride and asked him just one question: How? "Come, learn yoga," said the old man. I followed him like a puppy. And that's how I became a student of Malladihalli Swami (as this old man was known) and got into yoga. In the past, waking me up every morning was a family project. My family would try to make me sit up in bed; I would keel over and fall asleep again. My mother would hand me my toothbrush; I would stick it into my mouth and fall asleep. In desperation, she would push me into the bathroom; I would promptly fall asleep again. But three months after starting yoga, my body started coming awake at three forty every morning, without any external prompting, as it does even today. After I woke, my practices would simply



happen, no matter where I was and in what situation, without a single day's break. This simple yoga—called *angamardana* (a system of physical yoga that strengthens sinews and limbs)—definitely set me apart in any group of people, physically and mentally. But that's about all. Or so I believed.

In time, I lost all faith in structured education. It wasn't cynicism. I had enough zest and life in me to keep me involved in everything. But my dominant quality even at this age was clarity. I was not actively looking for inconsistencies or loopholes in anything I was taught. I just saw them. I have never looked for anything in my life. I just look. And that is what I am trying to teach people now: if you really want to know spirituality, don't look *for* anything. People think spirituality is about looking for God or truth or the ultimate. The problem is you have already defined what you are looking for. It is not the object of your search that is important; it is the faculty of looking. The ability to simply look without motive is missing in the world today. Everybody is a psychological creature, wanting to assign meaning to everything. Seeking is not about looking for something. It is about enhancing your perception, your very faculty of seeing.

After high school, I embarked on a self-study program at the Mysore University Library. I was the first person there in the morning at nine and the last to be shooed out at eight thirty at night. Between breakfast and

dinner, my only sustenance was books. Although I was always ravenous, I skipped lunch for a whole year. I read widely, from Homer to *Popular Mechanics*, Kafka to Kalidasa, Dante to Dennis the Menace. I emerged from that one year more knowledgeable, but with more questions than ever before.

My mother's tears compelled me to enroll grudgingly in Mysore University as a student of English literature. But I continued to carry the cloud of a billion questions, like a dark halo around me, all the time. Neither the library nor my professors could dispel it. Once again I spent most of my time outside the classroom rather than in it. I found that all that was happening in class was the dictation of notes, and I was definitely not planning to be a stenographer! I once asked a lecturer to give me her notes so I could photocopy them; it would save her the trouble of dictation and me the trouble of attending. Finally, I made a deal with all the teachers (who were more than happy not to have me in class). On each day of the month, they would mark me present in class. On the last day of the month the attendance was registered. That day I would enter and just make sure they were keeping up their end of the bargain!

A group of us started meeting under a huge banyan tree on the campus grounds. Someone named it the Banyan Tree Club and the label stuck. The

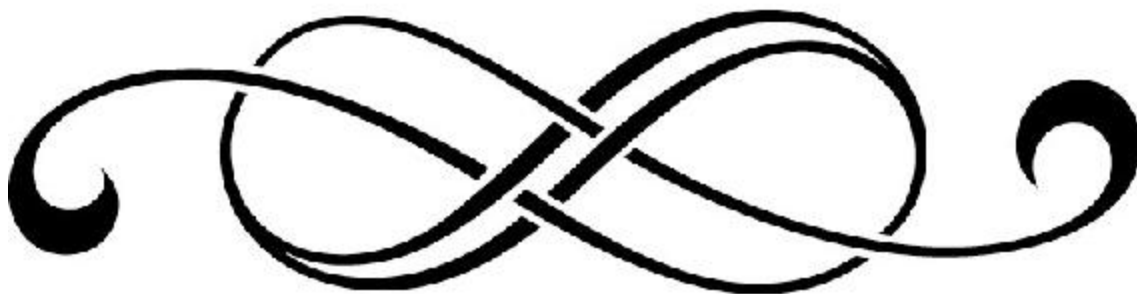
club had a motto: “We do it for the fun of it.” We would assemble under the tree on our motorcycles, and talk for hours on a variety of subjects—from how to make Jawa motorcycles go faster than they did to how to make the world a better place. Of course, we would never get off our motorcycles at any point. That would have been sacrilege!

By the time I was done with university, I had ridden all over the country. Initially, I traveled South India on my bicycle. Later I crisscrossed the entire country on my motorcycle. Then it was natural to cross the national borders. But when I reached the India-Nepal frontier, I was told that my motorcycle registration and driving license weren’t enough. I needed more papers. After that, it became my dream to somehow earn enough money to travel the world on my motorcycle. It wasn’t just wanderlust. The truth is I was restless. I wanted to *know* something. I didn’t know what and I didn’t know where I needed to go to get it. But in my innermost being, I knew I wanted more.

I never considered myself particularly impulsive; I was just life-oriented. I measured the consequences of my actions; it is just that the more dangerous they were, the more they attracted me. Someone once told me my guardian angel must be very good and perpetually working overtime! There was always in me a longing to test the border, to cross the edge. *What*

and *why* were never questions for me. *How* was the only question. When I look back now, I realize that I never thought about what I wanted to become in life. I only thought about how I wanted to live my life. And I knew that the “how” could only be determined within me and by me.

There was a big boom in poultry farming at the time. I wanted to make some money to finance my desire for unrestrained, purposeless travel. So I got into it. My father said, “What am I going to tell people? That my son is rearing chickens?” But I built my poultry farm and I built it single-handedly, from scratch. The business took off. The profits started rolling in. I devoted four hours every morning to the business. The rest of the day was spent reading and writing poetry, swimming in the well, meditating, daydreaming on a huge banyan tree.



Success made me adventurous. My father was always lamenting that everyone else's sons had become engineers, industrialists, joined the civil service, or gone to America. And everywhere everyone I met—my friends, relatives, my old school and college teachers—said, “Oh, we thought you'd make something of your life, but you are just wasting it.”

I took on the challenge. In partnership with a civil engineer friend, I entered the construction business. In five years, we became a major construction company, among the leading private contractors in Mysore. My father was incredulous and delighted.

I was exuberant and sure-footed, adrenaline-charged and itching for a challenge. When everything you do is a success, you tend to start believing that the planets revolve around you, not the sun!

And that was the kind of young man I was that fateful afternoon of September 1982 when I decided to get on my Czech motorcycle and ride up Chamundi Hill.

I had no clue then that my life would never be the same again.

Later, when I tried to talk to my friends about what had happened that day up on the mountain, all they could ask was, “Did you drink something? Did you pop something?” They were even more clueless than I was of this new dimension that had suddenly exploded into my life.

Even before I had begun to process what it meant, the experience returned. It was a week later. I was sitting at the dinner table with my family. I thought it lasted two minutes but it was seven hours. I was sitting right there, fully aware, except that the “me” I knew as myself was not there anymore; everything else was. And time flipped.

I remember various members of my family tapping me on the shoulder, asking me what happened, urging me to eat my meal. I simply raised my hand and asked them to leave. They were accustomed to my strange ways by then. They left me alone. It was almost four fifteen in the morning when I returned to my “normal” senses.

The experience began to happen more frequently. When it occurred, I neither ate nor slept for hours on end. I simply sat rooted to a single spot. On one occasion, the experience lasted for up to thirteen days. I happened to be in a village when it began—this state of overwhelming and indescribable stillness and ecstasy. The villagers gathered around me and started whispering to each other, “Oh, he must be in *samadhi*” (a blissful state of being beyond the body, well-documented in Indian spiritual traditions). India, being the country it is, there was a traditional understanding of spirituality to which they were heir that I, with my blue denim-wrapped brain, had no clue about. When I emerged from that state,