



# GONER

The final travels of UG Krishnamurti

Louis Brawley

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This book is possible thanks to Mukunda, Balaji, Mahesh, Anirban,  
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GONER

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*You are trying to present me as a religious man, which I am not. You are failing to comprehend the most important thing that I am emphasizing. There is no religious content, no mystical overtones at all, in what I am saying. Man has to be saved from the saviors of mankind! The religious people—they kidded themselves and fooled the whole of mankind. Throw them out! That is courage itself, because of the courage there; not the courage you practice.*

**goner** ['gɒnə]

*n*

*Slang* a person or thing beyond help or recovery, esp a person who is dead or about to die

Collins English Dictionary—Complete and Unabridged  
HarperCollins Publishers, 2003

UG often professed a liking for American underground slang. More than once he told the story that while he was down and out in London with his 'head missing' he would sit in the British Library in the chair where Karl Marx wrote *Das Kapital*. He spent hours reading a tome called the Dictionary of American Underground Slang to pass the time. *Goner* was one of his favorite words to describe the people who 'hung around' him.

## CHAPTER 1

On March 13, 2007 I walked out the door to what we called his 'cave' knowing it was the last time I would see him alive. A life of constant travel with a sage was coming to an end and I was so exhausted I couldn't think. After spending day and night with him for almost eight weeks the door clicked shut behind me and a five-year encounter with oblivion ended, or so it seemed at the time. The curtains were pulled against the fresh smell of the garden where the grass was glistening with dew and the scents of a lush Italian garden. The two-hundred-year-old palm tree in the middle of the garden threw a long cool shadow across the sparkling green lawn where for eight weeks UG Krishnamurti spent his final days sitting up long enough to shout at us, collapsing after increasingly shorter bursts of invective against everything mankind thought, felt and believed.

He monitored his own death with indifferent curiosity.

"How am I doing, doc?" he would ask any one of his medical friends.

Yet, unlike the recovery after his last fall, he grew gradually weaker each day. He seemed incapable of or uninterested in doing anything that might 'prolong the misery'; that was his assessment of the usual medical treatment we seek in order to sustain life in a constant battle of ideas verses the natural order. Seeking medical help in any form was out of the question, so it took a while to realize that he might actually die, because of his indifference to the outcome of his situation. To the end of

his days there was a wild card up his sleeve. He'd come close to dying more than once in his life already. The fact is, by all accounts he'd already died and been re-born years before, not spiritually, but literally, physically.

Our last meeting was silent. He allowed me to come on the condition there would be no talking. For days I'd been thinking I should thank him, tell him what he meant to me, how lucky I was to have met him, but the timing never seemed right. Old friends were professing their love, giving heartfelt testimony about the gratitude they felt, asking for final blessings or just saying goodbye, yet I'd been in there with him every night and day for weeks and I knew that he knew everything I was thinking and feeling. It was unnecessary.

Suddenly I was out in the garden, swept into a new life on a fierce current. That was it. The human tornado that had been blowing through my life was gone.

Mahesh was waiting for me in the driveway. It seems fitting that a Bollywood director was taking over for the final days of 'packing him up'. Everything about the most obscure man in the universe was a contradiction that made perfect non-sense.

"Well?"

"That's it. He gave me everything I need; asking for more would be ridiculous."

"I know it doesn't look like it now, but when you look back on this day it will be the most important day of your life."

I wasn't so sure about that, but after Mahesh's pep talk, walking across the garden to the apartment, a warm fear wormed right up my spine. It felt like I was walking off a cliff.

I knew I was already lucky to have met, let alone spent so much time with a man like him. It was a stroke of dumb luck in an otherwise ordinary life. He had everything I wanted, or so I thought as long as I was sitting in front of him. He was a human wilderness, fearless and unpredictable. The first day I met him he confirmed my darkest suspicions about the bullshit world

## GONER

surrounding me; at the same time he was an affirmation of life at every turn. His words were simple and baffling, hilarious, repetitive and boring at times, but his actions were clear as a bell ringing in a forest.

When I left his side that day, I carried the words inside me where he left them like gifts to be opened later. His company was a teaching. He was so alive there was no room for understanding. He was too quick for that sort of crap.

I sensed all this more than I understood it from the first encounter with him. Very soon after meeting him I knew I'd stumbled into something like a cosmic lottery win. As my misery intensified, I stuck it out, knowing damn well that whatever happened to me as long as I was around him would be for the best. For a bunch of crazy reasons I was able to get close to him almost immediately and from then on my life raced in unforeseen directions like a log broken loose from a jam and thrown over a waterfall.

What can I say? Hanging around with him was just like that.



## CHAPTER 2

*My background is worthless: it can't be a model for anybody, because your background is unique in its own way. Your conditions, your environment, your background—the whole thing is different. Every event in your life is different.*

I was born and brought up in small-town America at the height of the cold war and the explosion of capitalist pop culture. Being Catholic in my family meant attending church every Sunday which was more than enough to turn me off religion as a kid. Parochial school and the sadistic nuns who went along with it the rest of the week sealed the deal. By the time I escaped the clutches of that school I had lost any interest in religion or god, at least for the time being. Public high school was a relief from the force-fed religion my mother took more to heart than my father, for whom being Catholic was a matter of pride. My father was also proud of being Irish like the Kennedys and wore Brooks Brothers' suits and spit-shine wing-tip shoes. Being middle class in any country is like being sandwiched between a tortured urge to be rich and the terror of being perceived as poor. My response to my father's bullshit ambitions was juvenile delinquent behavior. Heavy drinking, drug consumption and shoplifting were my remedies for being habitually annoyed by adults and chronically short of cash.

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## GONER

Yet among other things (like a talent for excessive drinking), I inherited my father's obsession with reading. As a teenager I read Herman Hesse novels, Carlos Castaneda's mystical trickster books, and Aldous Huxley's *Doors of Perception*. It was the same stuff a lot of teenagers were reading back then. I also spent a lot of time at the school library poring over art catalogues and at an exclusive local art museum where I got the idea of being an artist. Maybe you're just born with that ridiculous idea. At the time I was mainly interested in anything other than what my parents were interested in. My father wanted me to be a lawyer or a golf pro. Safe to say I was heading in the opposite direction from those professions.

During my last year of college an art professor handed me a book by a man named Jiddu Krishnamurti. Having escaped the Catholic church, the last thing I wanted to do was get involved with a guru, but I read the book out of respect for her. The book surprised me. Here was a so-called spiritual man stressing that doubt was an essential tool for approaching life, truth, and so-called spirituality. His manner and expression gave me the impression that he'd had a spiritual transformation of consciousness. It sounded like what I'd read about enlightenment, an idea that seemed unusual to come across in modern times. He didn't quote other people when he spoke, and there *was* a certain quality to what he had to say. Could there actually be a man like Siddhartha out there?

*Religion is the skeptical enquiry into the whole of our existence, which is our consciousness. If there is fear your meditation is utterly meaningless. A free mind is essential for enquiry and when there is fear there is no freedom.<sup>1</sup>*

The tone appealed to me, he was taking a new approach to the whole issue of religion that bothered me. I mean, there must be something to religion, but what? The references to his experi-

ences with some kind of ‘immensity’ were interesting in the sense they sounded like something real and reasonable. “Don’t accept a thing the speaker is saying,” he repeatedly emphasized, encouraging real enquiry, which was something I never encountered in the Catholicism of my youth; any questions I had about religion were met with stock answers, so unconvincing I dismissed them out of hand.

While reading a dialogue in one of J. Krishnamurti’s books with a physicist named David Bohm, I felt as if someone had reached into my brain and twisted things in a new direction. There was an eerie sensation that someone was watching me which made me freeze in my chair. The world was suddenly irreversibly different in every way, but what that was I had no idea.

*No time. Then what takes place? What is happening? Not to me, not to my brain. What is happening? We have said that when one denies time there is nothing. After this long talk, nothing means everything. Everything is energy. And we have stopped there. But that isn't the end.*<sup>2</sup>

Reading the careful dissection of the mechanics of time and thought, the unusual precision and insight of their exchange had a profound effect on me. I’ll never forget the shabby little kitchen table where I sat reading that book. Until that moment, spirituality had been just a theory: suddenly it was frighteningly real. I was gripped by the sensation as if someone I couldn’t see was staring at me from somewhere in the room. I couldn’t explain these feelings, let alone ask someone about them. As a result of that experience I turned a corner and there was no way back; despite myself, I set off down that pathless path Jiddu Krishnamurti was talking about, just as blind as could be.

At the first opportunity I went to see the impeccably dressed elderly Indian man give a talk. He emerged from behind a huge curtain in Madison Square Garden looking slightly lost, took

## GONER

a seat on a simple folding chair in front of a packed hall and placed his shaking hands neatly under his thighs. Scanning the audience with a slightly stiff neck, he sat quietly for a few minutes until the audience began to applaud at which point he became visibly annoyed:

“Why are you clapping, sirs? This is not an entertainment!”

Then again, closing his eyes and gathering himself, he hesitantly, slowly, began to speak:

“Can we take a journey, like two friends, walking together?”

For the next hour and a half you could have heard a pin drop. In a very proper sounding British accent with a faint Indian lilt to it, he engaged the audience with carefully chosen words, encouraging us to see if they rang true for us. Addressing the troubles of mankind and the search for freedom, happiness, and truth, he urged the listeners to look into these things with him, using great attention as we did. He proceeded word by word urging us to be ‘choicelessly aware’ of our reactions to what he was saying.

*Do you know what it means to learn? When you are really learning you are learning throughout your life and there is no one special teacher to learn from. Then everything teaches you—a dead leaf, a bird in flight, a smell, a tear, the rich and the poor, those who are crying, the smile of a woman, the haughtiness of a man. You learn from everything, therefore there is no guide, no philosopher, no guru. Life itself is your teacher, and you are in a state of constant learning.<sup>3</sup>*

“See for yourself, sirs! Don’t take my word for it!”

It was the same message contained in his books, but listening to the man, whose story was by then familiar, had a certain excitement to it. He was a rare individual who had the guts to walk out of a worldwide organization, the Theosophical Society,

just as he was about to take over as the world teacher.

After seeing him in person, I convinced the art professor to come with me to his talks in Ojai. We camped in the mountains nearby. It was my first encounter with the Rocky Mountains. The hills were full of lavender and the road signs were full of bullet holes. At the talks it was disconcerting to enter a huge parking lot and stand in line after paying for the privilege of witnessing the former world teacher speak to his 'friends'.

*If you examine the nature of organized religion you will see that all religions are essentially alike, whether Hinduism, Buddhism, Mohammedanism, Christianity—or communism, which is another form of religion, the very latest. The moment you understand the prison, which is to perceive all the implications of belief, of rituals and priests, you will never again belong to any religion; because only the man who is free of belief can discover that which lies beyond all belief, that which is immeasurable.<sup>4</sup>*

While we were there, rumors were circulating about a rift between J.Krishnamurti, and Rajagopal, his former manager, who still lived on the grounds. What I didn't know at the time was that I was carrying on with an affair in much the same way this non-guru turned out to have carried on with his manager's wife for 28 years. Unbeknownst to me, there were striking similarities between our situations at some point in time, but back then I was in the first flush of an infatuation with a 'godly' man.

As before, he sat on a slightly raised platform, his hands trembling with Parkinson's Disease, occasionally wiping rheumy tears from big soulful eyes with a neatly folded white handkerchief. A slight breeze blew through the oak grove as a packed crowd listened to his every word. He started more or less the same way.

## GONER

*In listening to the speaker, if you merely interpret the words according to your personal like and dislike, without being aware of your own tendencies of interpretation, then the word becomes a prison in which most of us, unfortunately, are caught. But if one is aware of the meaning of the word and of what lies behind the word, then communication becomes possible. Communication implies not only a verbal comprehension, but also going together, examining together, sharing together, creating together.<sup>5</sup>*

He was a master performer, commanding attention from the huge crowd, but I was disturbed. The fact is I was bored and distracted.

*Now, what has happened to the mind, to the brain, that has listened to all this—not merely heard a few words, but actually listened, shared, communicated, learnt? What has happened to your mind that has listened with tremendous attention to the complexity of the problem, with awareness of its own fears, and has seen how thought breeds and sustains fear as well as pleasure? What has happened to the quality of the mind that has so listened? Is the quality of this mind entirely different from the moment when we began this morning, or is it the same repetitive mind, caught in pleasure and fear?<sup>6</sup>*

It was even hard to concentrate while thinking about what I must be missing. The notion that he was beyond all that only made me feel worse. When I left the talks I was depressed at my lack of moral fiber. By this point I'd given up drinking and drugs, but I had the distinct impression that he was a more pure human being than I could ever be. The idea of applying for a position in one of his schools, or leading a celibate life, occurred to me but that would have meant dropping my ambitions as an

artist and leaving the woman who had introduced me to him. The idea of becoming a celibate was a convenient excuse to distance myself from her, but her tears were all it took for me to drop both ideas.

My life went on as usual, but changed. I was young, insecure, poor and unaccomplished. I was lost.

Eventually J.Krishnamurti's books started gathering dust on my bookshelf. I occasionally dipped into them, trying to 'get it', maybe from another angle, maybe after a month, or a year, or two years.

*If you have not given your attention, everything you have, to find out what thinking is, you will never be able to find out if it is possible to observe without the 'me'. If you cannot observe without the 'me' the problems will go on—one problem opposing another.*<sup>7</sup>

No matter how much I tried, in the end it was like playing a game of hide-and-seek with the unknown. Shaking myself loose from the grips of that man once and for all took another twenty years and another Krishnamurti.

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1. Lutyens, M. 1988. *Krishnamurti: The Open Door*. London, John Murray Publishers Ltd. p 37.
  2. Krishnamurti, J. and Bohm, D. 1985. *Ending of Time*. New York, Harper and Row
  3. Krishnamurti, J. 1989. *Think on These Things*. New York: HarperOne. p 10.
  4. Ibid p 149.
  5. Krishnamurti, J. 1972. *The Impossible Question*. London: Victor Gollancz, p 32
  6. Ibid p 36
  7. Ibid p 29

### CHAPTER 3

*I was just telling the people here: the worship of the bull there in the temple, and the worship of Shiva—you know that yoni and lingam business—has come down from the original man: to him sex was the highest kind of pleasure that he knew. Later on man experienced the bliss, the beatitude, and all that moved over; but, originally, sex was the most important thing. Even the cross is a phallic symbol.*

Despite all my attempts to escape my troubles over the years the story of my life was strung together by one reaction after another to people, for things I imagined they had done to make me miserable. It hadn't occurred to me that what I was doing to myself was far worse. Once the relationship with the professor fell apart I moved through a string of others, unable to commit. It seemed the end was in sight even as I entered them. I don't know whether I was unable to afford the trappings of marriage or unwilling to, but it always felt like a trap to be avoided. It wasn't the women I felt trapped by, so much as the social pressure to participate in all the things I was running from.

After languishing in Philadelphia, painting pictures no one ever saw for too long, I moved to New York to pursue a career as an artist. I got a masters degree in fine arts and continued to seek girlfriends and therapy as solutions to my personal problems. Frustrated with the endless navel gazing uselessness of therapy I discovered that a Twelve Step program helped with the nuts and bolts anxiety of life, but the persistent current running underneath everything in life seemed to elude me. I



tried meditation for eight years, read endless books about spirituality, spiritual people and philosophy in search of something that seemed missing.

After attending a second Zen retreat upstate that reminded me of Catholic school, I finally went back to Jiddu Krishnamurti (JK) in search of answers. He seemed to be the one man who lived what he spoke. Unfortunately, or fortunately as the case may be, not only was he long since dead, the story of his sex scandal came to my attention for the first time. I had to laugh. It was old news to the folks in the JK discussion group I was attending. The foundation even admitted the stories were true, but I brushed all that aside. After all, his lover was a close friend, even if she was the wife of his manager. I rationalized all this with the idea that he never said sex was wrong. After all he never spoke highly of marriage so why not? It was even a relief to realize he was human after all; a man with real drives, almost like me. Despite this evidence that he had not been living the 'celibate life' he pretended to be when he said things like, "The thought of sex never even enters my mind." He was too elevated in my mind to fall from the pedestal I didn't quite realize I had placed him on.

Once again I spent hours poring over his books at home, at work or on long subway rides. I ordered audiotapes, listening as 'K' went 'slowly, sanely, logically, step by step' over word after word. I hung on each phrase, sure that with the proper attention I could grasp the '...possibility of transforming that which is', as he put it in his talks. When I look at them now I'm amazed that I could stand it.

I attended an annual celebration of his birthday in Ojai. It was strange to revisit this place after so many years. The professor was now long dead, JK was dead, my life was different, yet some things remained naggingly the same. Hope had not died, but the once bustling compound around the Oak Grove was a dusty remnant of its former glory. The mire of institutional

## GONER

power struggles in the schools and organization established 'to preserve the teachings in their pristine purity' had overgrown the place like weeds.

I met people who had moved to Ojai to be with the great teacher and stayed on long after he died. They expressed bitterness and disappointment with him, with the school, with the teachings. How could that happen? One of his old houses was turned into a study center that smelled like a church retreat. His personal papers were stored in a climate-controlled vault that sounded like a power station buzzing away behind the hedges of manicured lawns.

Despite this lifeless dead end, I decided to go to India to see what was happening in the schools he'd started there. Maybe they held some clue to the real heart of the teaching. I mentioned this in the chat room (where I spent most of my work hours stealing corporate time at the office), and a former teacher from a JK school said they were full of rich brats who only went at the insistence of their parents. There was something wrong with the picture.

I just couldn't put my finger on it.

## CHAPTER 4

*You see that is the trouble: you dare not question that basic thing, because that is going to destroy something there which is very precious to you: the continuity of yourself as you know yourself and as you experience yourself.*

The day before I was supposed to leave on my first trip to Asia I checked the weather in India online. Temperatures in Delhi were soaring into the hundred-degree range. I felt panicky. I was going halfway around the globe out of curiosity and the Krishnamurti scene was on increasingly flimsy ground. The discussion group I had been attending in the west village was full of members of what he called the 60-year club and the occasional nut-job. The JK chat room was full of self-congratulatory 'understandings' springing up like weeds and clogging the hours of office boredom with another kind of boredom. This news about the weather in Delhi was the final straw that inspired me to abort the trip. I cancelled, lost \$100 and felt relieved.

Weeks later I was still browsing the JK site when I found a UG Krishnamurti listed in a website just beneath his. I wondered if it was a relative riding on the coat tails of his famous spiritual uncle. Spiritual imitators are a dime a dozen, yet sheer mental suffocation forced me toward this window of entertainment opportunity. I opened the link with no idea and little hope of what lay beyond.

The site featured photographs and quotes and I recall my acute disappointment with the fey appearance of a man sitting with his legs gathered to one side in a long flowing garment. I

learned that UG Krishnamurti was at one time a follower of J Krishnamurti, not a relative. Krishnamurti was a name as common as Smith in India. People on the JK chat dismissed him as 'an imitator' and after glancing through the site I posted my own sarcastic note about the UG site on the JK chat. I'd read nothing.

A message came back from someone who knew both men and said JK used to ask him each time he visited UG, "What is he saying?" I was impressed to have connected with a person who actually knew JK well enough to have spoken to him face to face. This was already a glimpse into the inner circle so to speak, deeper by far in a few words than I'd gotten in months, maybe ever.

There was another site linked to the first, posting his books on line for free. I'd spent ungodly sums of money on JK material that year already so this was a break. Unlike JK, I noted that UG didn't write the books and took no money from sales of them. They consisted of recorded conversations with no mention of a foundation, schools, seminars, or retreats. The only thing written by the subject of the book was a disclaimer on the opening page in the first book called *The Mystique of Enlightenment*.

*My teaching, if that is the word you want to use, has no copyright. You are free to reproduce, distribute, interpret, misinterpret, distort, garble, do what you like, even claim authorship, without my consent or the permission of anybody.*

The next page got right to business.

*People call me an 'enlightened man'—I detest that term—they can't find any other word to describe the way I'm functioning. At the same time, I point out that there is no such thing as enlightenment at all. I say that because all my life I've searched and wanted to be an enlightened man, and*

*I discovered that there is no such thing as enlightenment at all, and so the question whether a particular person is enlightened or not doesn't arise. I don't give a hoot for a sixth century BC Buddha, let alone all the other claimants we have in our midst. They are a bunch of exploiters, thriving on the gullibility of the people. There is no power outside of man. Man has created God out of fear. So the problem is fear and not God.*

I don't think I've ever opened a book about spirituality where the person dismissed the idea of enlightenment without sneakily replacing it with some transparently newfangled word for the same thing. I read on in search of the carrot. What I didn't realize until much later was how well I had been prepared for what was about to come at me in this man's words. JK's approach to spirituality was a radical departure for me from the previous definitions of either spirituality or philosophy, since he spoke directly to his audience without reference to other texts or practices. His life story impressed me as much as his words. Since his death, the story of his affair had put a dent in my image of him but the content of what he was saying was still impressive.

What I encountered in UG's words was a step further, more like a quantum leap that was so subtle at first I didn't realize what it implied about JK's teachings. One thing that troubled me in JK's early career was his poetry full of mushy Victorian-sounding phrases about the beloved and the otherness. There was something suspiciously sentimental about these beginnings, but that style had been eliminated as he matured, presumably a result of the 'process' whereby some kind of influence referred to in still mystical terms, but mostly privately, continued to 'prepare the mind' for the teaching.

In the opening pages of *Mystique* a fresh voice came across in a tone of dismissal that cut through any hope of mystification,

with no patience for the sentimental meanderings of spiritual poetry like those still lingering in Krishnamurti's published journals, for example. Where Jiddu Krishnamurti radicalized spirituality, UG was a man wiping the slate clean of the word spirituality.

When pressed to comment on such things UG drew attention to the uselessness of careworn spiritual terms, which have always been a pet peeve of mine. It's so easy to throw words around, but if there was anything to something like enlightenment, how could it be contained in a word? All I'd been fed so far was words. So far there was nothing in direct contradiction to JK's approach, but there were differences in the implications of his comments that left JK in the dust.

At some point, of course, I wanted the prize, to be enlightened. Even if it was just an idea I'd picked up, the idea that someone could teach a thing like that seemed inconsistent with what it meant, no matter how many books I read. UG stated the origins of seeking in a totally new and simple light: "I didn't want to want what they wanted me to want." JK never promised enlightenment, that's for sure; in fact the more I read, the less likely it seemed to be possible, but the hope of it lingered between the lines of his talk. While he never promised anybody anything, he spoke of going together like friends, which implied leading you by the hand to a 'pathless land' to an unspoken reward that remained undelivered. UG dismissed the possibility that he could help at all.

UG Krishnamurti grew up in a religious home with wealthy grandparents who took care of him after his mother died in his infancy and his father left and remarried. As a child he practiced meditation and yoga, and had numerous mystical experiences between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one, dismissing them as he witnessed the hypocrisy of each of his spiritual teachers and saw the blueprint for his experiences in books he'd read. Second-hand experiences were not good enough for him. The

models being held up to him were leading him nowhere and he didn't take other people's word for the reason why.

*Everybody says, "Don't get angry"—I am angry all the time. I am full of brutal activities inside, so that is false. What these people are telling me I should be like is something false, and because it is false it will falsify me. I don't want to live the life of a false person. I am greedy, and non-greed is what they are talking about. There is something wrong somewhere.*

He spoke with rare simplicity of a life of frustration in the search for truth.

*I am a brute, I am a monster, I am full of violence—this is reality. I am full of desire.*

As a young man he met a famous saint in South India named Ramana Maharshi, who he said was the last 'holy man' he saw. A friend dragged him there and he asked a question:

"What you have, can you give it to me?"

"I can give it, but can you take it?"

He later said, and then denied, that this reply helped him to formulate the question that would percolate in him for the next 29 years: "What is that state these people are in?"

He never went back to see that man because he said his answer was too traditional. Given that he'd been brought up in the environment of the Theosophical Society, it's not surprising that Maharshi struck him as a traditionalist. Jiddu Krishnamurti was a stylish western-educated character with great charisma whose influence on UG I would not grasp for years to come.

When he realized that none of his spiritual practice could tame his sex drive, he married, and began a career as a public lecturer for the Theosophical Society. It was a natural career

## GONER

trajectory for a wealthy young man of his inclinations. The story of his encounters with JK was riveting for me, and if he said Ramana Maharshi was the last holy man he ever saw then what, I wondered, was JK to him?

In *The Mystique of Enlightenment* he explained:

*I inherited the Theosophical Society, J.Krishnamurti, and a lot of money from my grandfather.*

As it turned out, he was able to confront the man who had lured me into the seeking game at a time of his greatest vitality. He spent seven years participating in small private discussions and one-on-one conversation with JK. His young family seemed to have been favored with the man's attentions. At some point there was a frustration, a break with the older man, and UG's life started to fall apart in the wake of his intense scrutiny of the teachings. The price he paid for his inquiry spoke volumes compared to the armchair speculations and comfortable whimsy many people apply to these perennial questions. By the time of his 'calamity' UG's life had been, to all intents and purposes, destroyed. When people asked JK if anyone understood anything he was saying the answer was a resounding "No!" So what happened to UG? Was he staking a claim with his critique? Could this be a way of putting some distance between his own and the older man's business so he could open his personal chain of spiritual restaurants? On the subject of J Krishnamurti he said:

*He spoke of no teaching, no teacher, no taught, and then went around setting up schools and foundations to preserve the teachings in their pristine purity for posterity.*

It was an obvious point that never occurred to me. As I read on, it seemed someone had finally 'torn apart' the teachings



that baffled me for years. Preserving the teachings for posterity was so obviously the key to establishing a religion that I felt as though UG had only pointed out what was staring me in the face the whole time.

So what was UG doing?

## CHAPTER 5

*The whole chemistry of the body changes, so it begins to function in its own natural way. That means everything that is poisoned (I deliberately use that word) and contaminated by the culture is thrown out of the system. It is thrown out of your system and then that consciousness of life (or whatever you want to call it) expresses itself and functions in a very natural way. The whole thing has to be thrown out of your system; otherwise, if you don't believe in God, you become an atheist and you teach, preach and proselytize atheism. But this individual is neither a theist, nor an atheist, nor an agnostic; he is what he is.*

UG Krishnamurti followed the teachings of Jiddu Krishnamurti (JK) for decades and was highly critical of the world teacher. Had someone finally succeeded and 'torn apart' the teachings as JK implored his listeners to? His words shed light on a previously impenetrable chamber of confusion. Beneath the familiar words and phrases was something raw and crystal clear, quite unlike JK's hopeful leading methods of choiceless awareness.

UG spoke of his personal search with blunt, ruthless honesty. While JK often claimed memory loss about his early life after the 'process' took over, UG spelled out the steps of his disillusionment with spiritual concepts. The 'process' JK talked about in private was a heavily guarded secret, something he never discussed in public, let alone in a talk. UG spoke of having had a significant 'experience' in a Paris burlesque show whereas JK's 'process' involved fainting spells in the laps of beautiful women with whom he was intimately involved, at least as friends.

UG spoke of a fiery confrontation with the teachings of JK, something I had a keen interest in:

*Then (July 1967), there arrived another phase. Krishna-murti was again there in Saanen giving talks. My friends dragged me there and said, "Now at least it is a free business. Why don't you come and listen?" I said, "All right, I'll come and listen." When I listened to him, something funny happened to me—a peculiar kind of feeling that he was describing my state and not his state. Why did I want to know his state? He was describing something, some movements, some awareness, some silence—"In that silence there is no mind; there is action"—all these kinds of things. So, I am in that state. What the hell have I been doing all these years, listening to all these people and struggling, wanting to understand his state or the state of somebody else, Buddha or Jesus? I am in that state. Now I am in that state. So, then I walked out of the tent and never looked back.*

*Then—very strange—that question "What is that state?" transformed itself into another question, "How do I know that I am in that state, the state of Buddha, the state I very much wanted and demanded from everybody? I am in that state but how do I know?"*

*The next day (UG's 49th birthday) I was sitting on a bench under a tree overlooking one of the most beautiful spots in the whole world, the seven hills and seven valleys (of Saanenland). I was sitting there. Not that the question was there; the whole of my being was that question: "How do I know that I am in that state? There is some kind of peculiar division inside of me: there is somebody who knows that he is in that state. The knowledge of that state—what I have read, what I have experienced, what they have talked about—it is this knowledge that is looking at that state, so it is only this knowledge that has projected that state." I*

*said to myself "Look here, old chap, after forty years you have not moved one step; you are there in square number one. It is the same knowledge that projected your mind there when you asked this question. You are in the same situation asking the same question How do I know? because it is this knowledge, the description of this state by those people, that has created this state for you. You are kidding yourself. You are a damned fool". So, nothing. But still there was some kind of a peculiar feeling that this was the state.*

*The second question, "How do I know that this is the state?"—I didn't have any answer for that question—it was like a question in a whirlpool—it went on and on and on. Then suddenly the question disappeared. Nothing happened; the question just disappeared. I didn't say to myself, "Oh, my God! Now I have found the answer." Even that state disappeared—the state I thought I was in, the state of Buddha, Jesus—even that has disappeared. The question has disappeared. The whole thing is finished for me, and that's all, you see. It is not emptiness, it is not blankness, it is not the void, it is not any of those things; the question disappeared suddenly and that is all.*

*This non-event caused a sudden explosion inside, blasting, as it were, every cell, every nerve and every gland in my body. And with that 'explosion', the illusion that there is continuity of thought, that there is a center, an 'I' linking up the thoughts, was not there anymore.*

The simplicity of UG's depiction of the problems with JK's teachings was easily overlooked. He refused to give up his search until it was impossible to continue. His assessment of the situation one faces as a seeker was unlike anything I'd read before. His testimony spoke to his own shortcomings in the futile search.

Clearly I had fallen for the image of a man who was supposed to be living a life of celibate purity. That was one thing I

deliberately overlooked. The Foundation maintained this image after his death until the scandal with his manager's wife made it embarrassing to do so. UG made no attempt to paint a pretty picture of himself, instead he highlighted a one-night stand and a tendency to jealousy and violence. This was startlingly blunt material which read like a fire racing along out of control. It was mesmerizing.

In a private conversation JK implored him: "The house is on fire, sir! What will you do?"

UG's retort: "Pour more gasoline on it and burn the whole thing down!"

JK was a perfect set-up to UG, a perfect one-two punch to my solar plexus. It was unraveling so fast there was no choice but to read on. UG insisted there was no mystical or spiritual content in the physical changes that had occurred in his body as a result of the 'calamity'. It was not related to any practice, not even JK's 'choiceless awareness', a method he now went so far as to mock. UG took the position of no position to an absolute terminus. When he pointed out the fact that nothing he had done could have caused what happened to him, this in itself was a blow to the ideas of attentiveness and awareness I'd been hanging on to, consciously or not. All his attempts at understanding merely blocked the natural functioning of his body. In light of that, anything anyone said that promised a spiritual awakening was necessarily a lie. Awakening itself was a lie, an idea cooked up to promote teachers who 'thrive on the gullibility and credulity of the people'.

Until the sales pitch of enlightenment is thrown out of your system by the simple confrontation with its futility, it will continually mislead you, and once it is kicked out, you will see there is no need for it. What was baffling about his case as clearly as he articulated this, was that it appeared to have fallen away without his volition. He didn't know how it happened that he gave up. In this line he was not far from JK, who said the thought

## GONER

we were using to approach the problem was the problem itself and we were in danger of sharpening the very instrument that was the trap. Yet in life, JK's actions were another matter and in his talks there was always some shred of hope dangling; he never really pared it down to the brutal hopelessness UG went right to the heart of. JK spoke dismissively of gurus yet went on to establish schools in his name. UG established nothing but an irascible attitude that was highly appealing, refusing to soften the blows in order to give false hope.

*What you are looking for does not exist. You would rather tread an enchanted ground with beatific visions of a radical transformation of that non-existent self of yours into a state of being which is conjured up by some bewitching phrases.*

In the opening pages of his first book, *The Mystique of Enlightenment*, UG Krishnamurti blew up the elusive frustration I'd been grappling with for years. He later said the 'old man', as he would sometimes refer to JK, had implied that if such a thing happened it would devastate one down to every nerve, every cell in the body, which is precisely what happened to him. The state JK was in is anybody's guess; his talk of 'the beloved' and 'the otherness', describing the beauty of watching a solitary tree, listening to the river and watching the clouds, sound like the musings of a very high mystic.

UG's response to these aesthetically pleasing sentiments was severe:

*For the man who is expecting something like what they have described, this is a calamity!*

He said you couldn't even see the tree and if you did see it for once in your life, you'd drop dead.

JK was an expert at exploring the workings of the mind,

revealing the limits of thought with stunning clarity. UG was blunt, fierce and down to earth, but the effect was deeper, cleaner and subtler than I realized at the time. I thought I'd seen the limits of thought but UG made such obvious points about the futility of JK's approach that it was embarrassing to admit to myself I could have been so gullible. There was no poetry in what he was saying, rather he was going out of his way to demystify everything he could get his hands on.

*That is one of the reasons why I express it in pure and simple physical and physiological terms. It has no psychological content at all, it has no mystical content, it has no religious overtone at all, as I see it. I am bound to say that, and I don't care whether you accept it or not; it is of no importance to me.*

I was impressed but it was a daunting feeling, like having the rug pulled and tossed from underfoot. There were passages when he seemed just plain bleak. I have yet to come across a teacher, philosopher or guru who so boldly denied the tools of what I still assumed was his own trade. His indifference to ancient systems, scriptures and the value system of spiritual practice was a slap in the face.

JK hinted at a similar direction but went slowly, carefully, holding your hand in a way that later struck me as manipulative. UG raced along like a maniac with no regard for anything, no foothold, no reassurance except in the naked loneliness of a physical existence stripped of the trappings of comforting magical phrases.

*There is nothing to understand—that understanding somehow is there, and how it came about nobody knows, and there is no way at all of making you see this, and you ask "Why do you talk?" You come here. (that is why.)*

## GONER

My encounter with JK had given me the sensation that a finite 'me' could perhaps touch something infinite, giving the distinct impression that he was in touch with this infinite all the time. A lot of his teaching was designed to lead seeker-lemmings hand in hand off this cliff of self-inquiry into the void of 'choiceless awareness', a labyrinth with Escher-like self-contained frustrations.

UG denied the existence of a 'self' as anything other than a grammatical form:

*There is only the first person singular pronoun! I don't see any 'I' there!*

Reading UG Krishnamurti produced sensations in me from elation to a cold sweat. He highlighted the prison of 'self' with a terrifyingly claustrophobic clarity. As far as he was concerned whatever happened to him proved to him that the whole religious and spiritual pursuit was the cause of human suffering, not the solution.

Jiddu Krishnamurti was beginning to look like a hypocrite and so, with one monkey being knocked off my back, I had no idea of the scope of the three-hundred-pound gorilla about to grab me by my short hairs and yank me into the world.