

Urban Mystic

**Discovering the transcendent
through everyday life**

Ken Mellor



The Awakening Network Inc.
Seymour, Victoria, Australia

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Prologue

Suddenly, I was flying across the room, stunned by a blow to my head. I landed hard against the junction of the floor and the wall six feet away. Seeing stars and with ringing ears, I wanted to stay where I was to settle myself. But I knew I needed to get back into the struggle since I was still conscious, so I launched myself into the fray again, looking for what I could do to help.

Siegfried, a tall, gangly young man, was still trying to fight off the staff. Three of them were struggling to take him down, a task made more difficult because of their need both to stay clear of his flailing limbs and to get close enough to subdue him without hurting him. He was out of control and a danger to both himself and everyone within range. Fortunately, as I started back, I saw an opening and lunged forward. Because I'm small, I found my way through Siegfried's flailing and got a good hold. Then I hung on like a limpet.

Out of balance from the momentum of my impact and from my extra weight dragging him down, Siegfried folded to the floor where he continued to struggle for about half a minute. It seemed to occur to him then that he wasn't going to get free from us, so he stopped fighting.

I was a trainee in a private institute in the United States that worked with schizophrenic and other people with severe psychological disturbances. While there, I learned to use "the talking cure" instead of medication. This approach required that staff and patients alike directly face and deal with their personal reactions and issues. Given the life and death intensity of many of these issues, facing what was there understandably often took courage. Complete resolution—or cure, as we called it in those days—was our goal, which made the work much more demanding than if we had been willing to settle for less. My experience there helped to prepare me to meet the profound wonders and the uncompromising challenges of the spiritual processes I would encounter in the future.

More than ten years later, I was in an ashram in Calcutta (now Kolkata), India. My wife, Elizabeth, was asleep beside me. A thin cushion of air inside our blow-up mattresses separated us from the

concrete floor on which we lay. We were visiting and staying with a highly realized spiritual master. Although he lived on another floor above us, we were lying within twelve yards of him and so we were strongly saturated with his awakened consciousness.

It was pitch black to my physical eyes. However, after having meditated in the master's field for a long time that night, my inner eye was in control. And, what I saw was beautiful. Our room was filled with a translucent, dark blue light that made everything seem transparent and enabled me to see light shining both inside and outside all that was there. My body had that same translucent transparency, and I knew I was seeing the master's life energy and grace. Feeling very peaceful and fulfilled by all of this, I was nevertheless unexpectedly distracted by the high-pitched whine of a mosquito getting louder as it approached, a whine that ended with that distinctive crescendo as it landed.

The instant I felt it on my cheekbone, I swatted it hard with my hand. It was a total reflex—no thought, no feeling—just whack. And the mosquito died. But, that was not its only end. As it died, I saw an explosion of energy; a rapidly expanding sphere of light that quickly spread throughout the room. Somewhat lighter in color than the blue in which we were all suspended, and easy to see because of the contrast, I knew I was witnessing the life force leaving the physical form of the little creature I had just killed. I immediately felt the shock of its death as if it were my own, and an organismic regret at what I had just done that had me recoiling from my act.

For the first time in my life, I realized the preciousness of every living thing. I also realized how ignorant I'd been and how casual I was about the carnage I'd caused in my ignorance. When I grew up, insects were insects, nothing more. They didn't need protection; they were carriers of disease and ought to be eradicated so we were not put at risk. However, the instant my hand terminated this tiny creature, I realized how vulnerable we all are and the precious profundity of the life that animates the bodies we all wear. With this shift, I also learned how wonderfully obvious the aliveness in everything is, particularly when it is intensified in the awakened fields that surround true masters.

These lessons and many more would increasingly inform my life from then onward. At the time, the incidents involved would appear to have occurred by accident, as if unbidden by me. Yet when looking at the tapestry of my life as its different parts approached completion, I have often seen how clearly each stitch was called for by an unfolding design that was hidden from me as I was sewing it. I also knew I was helping to create the design. And, I don't think I'm unusual in knowing this. Many people sense that they contribute to creating the events through which they live.

At the same time, most of my life has been taken up with the mundane and coping with day-to-day living. I'm an ordinary bloke (as we say in Australia), and as a child, like everyone else, I also needed to learn the basics about living life. Not doing this as well as many of my peers as I grew up, prompted me to learn all that I needed to know later on. As will become obvious, there's no doubt that this need to learn strongly influenced what I did in my early adulthood. The reason why I became interested in the extraordinary realities and exchanges that underlie everyday appearances from very early in my life is still unclear to me, however. What is clear is that I did.

Exploring these interests transformed my life. And some of the consequences of what I've done as an ordinary bloke are far from ordinary. Like the mosquito, all of us in our very ordinariness are extraordinary beings with capacities and potential that far exceed our understanding, to begin with, at least. The primary point of this book is to share with you how this transformation in me took place.

While many of us don't know yet how to realize our potential, we can all learn. Most important, we can learn this while we live our everyday lives. The key is to act in ways that shape what happens to us day to day, instead of passively allowing events to shape us. For example, by learning how to embrace all our experiences, we become strengthened, expanded, and spiritualized by them, and our extraordinariness then emerges.

I now know that we participate in creating everything we experience: the people we meet, the feelings and other experiences we have, the events through which we live, the crises we need to face, and the wonders of life itself. I find this very exciting, because we can learn to claim our creativity and learn to apply it consciously and deliberately.

This book is also the story of how I laid claim to life—at least to some extent. It is about new beginnings, hopes and dreams, mistakes, mundane events, mastery, false starts, unknowing, extraordinary awakenings, excruciating challenges, and completion. It includes passion, boredom, excitement, and the beauty of love expressed and shared. It's also about enduring commitments and successes, and about unrealized hopes. In other words, it's about everyday life.

In sharing my story with you, I hope you will find encouragement to keep going when you face challenges; that you will realize how everyday people have the talent to fulfill extraordinary potential, and, whatever your current state of personal and spiritual development, that you'll go on to realize completely your inherent nature. I also hope that, just as I've often found encouragement, insight, and support from other people's experiences, mine may be useful to you.

At the same time, I offer this story to you as a fellow traveler. I'm still a work in progress and learning more every day. Everyone I meet is another source for learning, a reality that remains true even after having met thousands of people both in my professional practice and while teaching meditation. The vast majority of them have been interested in making the most of themselves and each has had a different starting point. They've been clients, students, workshop attendees, trainees, friends, acquaintances, and complete strangers. Some have been psychologically well balanced, some emotionally disturbed, and some physically ill; while others have hungered for spiritual fulfillment, felt blocked in their spiritual practice, or, although already spiritually advanced, have valued the companionship that comes from shared experience.

From my exposure to this rich diversity of people on their life journeys, it is clear to me that while there are similarities in the paths many of us tread, the path to spiritual awakening for each of us is unique. Our courses through life are the products of the places and times of our births, the unique talents and quirks we have when we arrive, and the people and opportunities available to us as we live. Your life had a different start and a different course from mine, so your path to your awakening will need to be different, too. As you read my story, therefore, instead of imagining that you'll need to go through similar experiences to mine, I hope that you find support and

inspiration to live in the way your spiritual unfolding will require, that you celebrate and persevere until your journey's end whatever you face, and that you discover some practical suggestions to assist you along the way.

Because this story is about full awakening, it is also about the truth in each moment. Accordingly, I have written openly about my experiences. To the best of my recollection, what's written here is what actually occurred. I haven't tried to hide inconvenient or unflattering aspects of my responses. The truth has far more impact than contrived stories. Nevertheless, I have camouflaged the identities of some people while preserving the essence of the events that related to them. For others, I've used first names with few exceptions. Since most of what I've written is complimentary, I hope that all who read the book will appreciate what wonderful contributions all of them made to me and to many others.

In addition, my overall hope is that everyone will understand why I'm sharing so directly. I imagine my intention will be clear and easy to accept when what you read is to do with beauty, transcendence, and things about which you feel comfortable. When I openly share my questioning of some people's reliability or their difficult qualities, however; my intention may seem less clear and less acceptable. What is important then is to remember that the perceptions I am sharing with you about the past were purely mine. They were not necessarily the truth. This is something I have striven to make clear throughout the book.

I've included these perceptions because they played an important part in the awakening process through which I went. They also involved challenges and impasses that many people experience and need to learn to manage during long-term and intense awakening. So I want to be clear: I've included these responses to illustrate conflicts I encountered from which I learned important lessons; but they're not criticisms of those involved. The people may not have been doing, thinking or feeling what I thought they were. In fact, the person who I had the most difficulties with is the one who was undoubtedly the most involved in my spiritual progress and the one who gave most

generously of his time and energy. I remain filled with gratitude to him and to all the others who contributed in any way to me.

Finally, I take responsibility for what I've written. I've done my best to remain accurate. Nevertheless, I recognize that the passage of time distorts what we think may have occurred. I hope, therefore, that you, all other readers, and anyone involved in this story understand that this book is meant as an honoring of life and living, and a thank you to all who have contributed. I also hope that what's here helps others along the way.