We may each have our own conception of the goal of spiritual life, but at least we can agree that day by day and moment by moment we are called upon to make numerous, skillful midcourse corrections. The longer we delay in making such corrections, the harder it is to get back on the path as we define it. Eternal vigilance and skillful means.

When I look back over the last decade, I appreciate two features of my daily life. I appreciate all the glimpses of one or another aspect of the goal, all the moments when I cry out inside, "This is It!" And I appreciate everything I have learned about how to maneuver my way out of the dry spells, the egoic brushfires, the lethargy and the arrogance that take me away from That. It's a logrolling contest, with my ego at the other end of the log, and what sustains me is all the times I make the necessary maneuvers to keep me in the game. I would like now to put into words a few of the glimpses and a few of the maneuvers that have led me to love my life, as it is.

A glimpse. I can't force it. I can't even anticipate it. It transcends whatever a video camera might record, and it is neither just in here or just out there. It enlivens everywhere and everything. I feel inclined not to perceive it but to become it. I feel poised at the balance point for dramatically sustained durations of time. I may be doing something, but it is, at some deeper level, a time of nowhere to go and nothing to do. The tiniest fragments of my body and the very air around me seem fuller, each now more a universe unto itself. I am alive. I am home.

A maneuver. I need to create and revisit a sanctuary. I can sometimes forget that I have ever glimpsed anything, so I am particularly grateful for the routines and the familiar places that offer my best chance at sensing that the goal has gone nowhere, even if I have. I am most likely to find that sanctuary when I join a few fellow seekers, with whom I feel at ease and by whom I feel inspired. How many thousand times have I chanted the Guru Gita? Seven thousand? Eight? From the many ways I am changed by this ancient practice I have come to learn what brings me home. I am affected by the fact that these words were recorded centuries ago, were arranged into this form by Baba Muktananda, and may well exist many centuries into the future. I have long since stopped quibbling with the verses that jar with my modern, Western habits of mind. The treasure chest opens, and the gentle light glints off of one memory after another: chanting with Baba in the darkened hall, sitting at the back of the swami section in Guru Chowk, glancing up to take note of Gurumayi's passion and precision. One incarnation after another of the Ann Arbor
community. But then treasure chest remains open to receive what we will leave behind today. And another verse absorbs me.

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A glimpse. Not all the amazing things I encounter along the spiritual path bring to mind words like supernatural or sacred. At such a moment all I can say is we're not in Kansas anymore. Whatever enables me to understand my sensory-based, memory-driven world has reached its limit, and now I might be inclined to join my undergraduate students in simply declaring, "That's weird. That's crazy." I have to struggle to accept the idea that it happened. For example, I am sitting in a little, basement room in Mason Hall running an experiment in which the subjects are assigned the task of sensing or imagining where one of their classmates has gone. Even he doesn't know where he's going until he walks away from us and randomly picks the target for that day. My only assignment is to keep track of the time. I am sitting quietly in my little room, my eyes are closed, and I have started repeating my mantra. Suddenly, my visual field is occupied by a vision of ten brilliantly colored bowling pins all set up in an alley which I am viewing as if I were only three or four feet away from the pins. I hear a rumbling noise and I see the pins fly in all directions. The arm of a big machine comes down, sweeps away the deadwood, and sets up the three remaining pins: the one, the three, and the six. Half an hour later, when I and the subjects and the “outbound” undergraduate went to retrace his steps, we ended up at the bowling alley in the basement of the Union. No one was bowling, and the undergraduate reported that no one had been bowling when he was there, but as we left, the lights on one of the alleys went on. A woman got up and bowled her first ball. The pins flew all around, and the machine set up only the one, the three, and the six pins. Weird. Crazy. Half an hour earlier while I was sitting there repeating a mantra, I saw on my inner screen exactly what was going to happen half an hour later. What I had to know after that glimpse beyond my ordinary world was that, by some unknown mechanism, my proximal reality included events from a place and a time that I never would have previously called here and now. No wonder people start coining phrases like the subtle body or the astral plane. Scientists who study this call it remote viewing and precognition. But on a much more personal level, the familiar boundary between what I called the imaginary world and the real world was dissolving. Not something I wanted to forget, even if I couldn't understand it.

A maneuver. Sometimes, when I pause amid a frustratingly inconclusive effort to comprehend something as subtle and complex as these experiences, my thinking mode is suddenly replaced by a visual enactment of how else I might approach them. It's as if I were trying to break through to some better way of framing the whole situation. And the visualization that takes me over turns
out to be carrying a suggestion, as if it were saying, "You might try thinking about it like this." Here then is my most recent vision-like suggestion and the good sense it made to me.

It was Turkey Day. On the first cold, clear day in November, in the late forties, when the ice on Turkey Pond was thick enough to support hundreds of excited teenage boys, the Rector would interrupt Announcements by declaring it was Turkey Day. We would cheer and bang our desk tops as loudly as we could and begin our skating holiday. In my mind’s eye all I could see was the black ice skimming beneath my skate. It was as if there was a straight line stretched forward across the expanse of ice, and by pushing off the blade on my left foot I would glide across the line until it was time to push off on my right foot, back-and-forth. The duration of each glide grew longer and longer. The rhythm and beauty of these moments out of time encoded an inner suggestion: You might try thinking about it like this. I had been puzzling over why repeating my mantra seemed instrumental to my precognitive experience of the bowling pins, the one, the three, and the six. At first I tried staying within a scientific framework, joining Isaac Newton and contemporary physics in positing that the effect of an event propagates in all directions: forward, simultaneously (or non-locally), and backward in time. Even the time when I knew where Sharon was going would typically be interpreted by scientists today as the result of my pre-cognitive anticipation of the occasion when I would visit the target and see it for myself. I enjoy this kind of speculation. I write and teach within this mode of thinking on a regular basis, but it always seems to extract such a small portion of what is meaningful in such an experience. Noble and productive as it is, science is but one of two noble and productive ways of addressing the meaning, to say nothing of the implications, of our experience.

With one leg, as it were, I push off in the direction of scientific exploration, but eventually the allure of a complementary, divergent direction presses for my attention. I inevitably launch forth on the other leg, letting a more poetic, metaphoric, and spiritual mode of contemplation have its turn. I know well the satisfactions of a coherent theory and testable hypotheses, but what I also find satisfying is coming as close as I can to what it feels like to experience something as uncanny as knowing the future. Even if I know that I am the one who had this experience, everything I know about my abilities seems to suggest that there has to be something more to all this than just me. To jump to a radically different mode of understanding, I might think, "Well, Joseph knew about the seven fat years and the seven lean years because he had a dream, and the true origin of the dream was God." The accurate prediction, in this story, was a gift from the Lord. It wasn't some ability of Joseph’s. It was a blessing. Or I might think, "The goddess, Kundalini Shakti, awakens and climbs upward through the sushumna until it opens the chakra that is the basis of such powers as prophecy.” We humans don't have this ability unless we are awakened from within by the serpent power of the Goddess. Does that seem right? Is that how it feels to suddenly know something you have no way to know, no right to know, without help?
What's helpful about this way of framing such an experience? It honors the source of my experience and avoids the conceit that comes from thinking I have some special power. I feel grateful. Any and all of the ways to name and glorify the heart of this experience, the not me part, make me smile with relief.

Invoking this esoteric, scriptural, mythic mode is the maneuver that I sometimes deliberately employ, and sometimes it starts up on its own. Looking less for a rational explanation of precognition as a phenomenon. Seeking less the pleasure of referring my experience to the severely limited set of scientific terms and concepts now in use. Rather, looking more for a way to express my inchoate intuition, more for a way to welcome other people’s poetic imagery, or the language of tradition. Enjoying more the implicit permission to use my own poetic voice to portray the experience I am striving to remember experience in its fullness. I don’t have to choose between the scientist and the poet in me.

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A glimpse. More often than not, we Westerners tend to begin reminiscences about our early days by saying, "I certainly wasn't looking for a guru." If that was the case, why did we show up? It's only a speculation, but my guess would be that we were after something that was missing from our lives, something we had once known or something we were hearing about lately, but we had no idea how to reach such a goal. We wanted help, we wanted someone to teach us, but we didn't want a Teacher with whom we might stay with for years, or a lifetime. We may at first have settled down among the many strangers who were equally absorbed with this central figure. We may have felt reassured that we were anonymous onlookers, separated by a safe distance. But for those of us who stayed around Baba, it didn't take long to be deeply affected by his charm, power, and warmth. But even more importantly, our inner worlds were becoming almost unrecognizable. What were these tears? When had I ever wanted to fill my house with as many pictures as possible of one man? It seemed to me that I had never loved anyone the way I had come to love Baba and, later, Gurumayi. No question about it, these relationships would come to strain even the metaphor of a roller coaster. For every set of expectations, there were precipitous disappointments. For every set of concocted idealizations, there were painful realizations that such imagery was simply the work of my own fairy story taking on a life of its own. I could soar, but I could also crash for months or years at a time.

In retrospect I would say I got what I wanted. I did want someone to teach me, to help me realize – to help me make real – Spirit, in all its forms. I have become like a homing pigeon. I don't set the course, exactly. Wherever I am, in all six directions, I know that I will eventually find the current that heads me home. I got what I wanted. I wanted these teachers, but what I wanted even more was that their transparency would allow me to sense, by seeing through them, the ultimate
Guru behind and/or within their presence, their words, and their guidance. I know what it feels like to be home, or to be heading home. This is why I sought out a teacher in the first place. The teachers I found, or who found me, exemplified the possibility of self-awareness and self-possession. And contentment. And benevolence. To name but a few of the sublime possibilities.

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I am leaving my former home in not only the world of science but also in the world where I feel obliged to make some new contribution. On any given day, I can be fascinated by some story or some study, but I don't have to rejoin the world of their authors. I can spend time today reading about lucid dreaming or OBE’s, but I want to bring part of what I have read back into my rabbit hole. I want to play with these stories and findings, but then move on.

What then do I want to stay faithful to? To the highest arc of my own life. The deepest principle of my own life. It is the Other that is equally the Self, and equally me, right here and now. Sometimes I am inclined to name this the Guru principle.

In the world of scholarship and science, having someone say about your work, "It's been done" is the ultimate negative verdict. But in my world, that verdict is neither negative nor necessarily positive. All it suggests is that I am among the array of fellow human beings who are experiencing and celebrating the kinds of things I am also absorbed with.

So, for today, let me jot down a developmental sequence that helps me make better sense out of the direction of my life:

1) 1) There is no Light, no More, no Other, just this, no That.

2) 2) Now something crucial has happened. I see or know the Light, More, Other, That. And my experience inspires me to find ways to capture and record it for my own purposes.

3) 3) The Light sees or knows me. My sense that I am being seen and being known and loved is an integral part of my experience.

4) 4) Now the locus of That, of the Light, has moved from out there to in here. I have learned how to turn within to find That.

5) 5) Finally, there is no Other that it is separate from or even different from me. The truth is: I am That.

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My karma is my destiny being constantly created and manifesting as my present condition. The number and quality of the next squares I might step onto are thus partially determined by my past: my habits and addictions, my attractions and aversions. But there are always other squares
Their source is the future, their source is grace. Possibilities appear that are beyond my capacity to create. You are the source of the grace in my life, and for all the times I went in a direction I had no idea even existed I can only express my gratitude and try to recognize the possibilities that you continue to create specifically for me.

The timeless field of consciousness is self-organizing. It attracts me and liberates me. The field of consciousness is heterogeneous, designed to maximize not one but a whole series of desiderata. From my necessarily limited perspective, it appears that I am being pulled into the future. The idea that there is no such thing as time is just that, an idea, and it sometimes gets in the way of capturing my direct experience. One viable category system that helps me be aware of all the good and useful paths for my own maturation is the chakra system. Another is Jacob's ladder. Yet another is Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The esoteric tantric system suggests that all of the seven attractors pulling me forward should be fully operative. Each chakra represents a crucial aspect of my own development. While it is true that for the highest energy center, the sahasrara, to open and stay open on a regular basis, all the so-called lower centers must be fully open. Initiation and other such great transformative moments allow me to glimpse my future in all its glory. An unforgettable preview.

I am like a child on an Easter egg hunt, being guided by a parent’s kind intentions: “Warmer… Warmer… Uh-oh, colder…Oh, hot…Hot!” I too am being guided. Not verbally, but something about me is being maximized. The implicit kind intention within the totality of Consciousness is heterogeneous. One way of elucidating the many goals toward which I am being guided is to examine the seven energetic subsystems known as chakras. Each chakra is a point of articulation between my human form and supreme consciousness. And each of the seven chakras, when open, is like a whirling vortex, fully manifesting a distinct aspect of my full development. The so-called lower chakras are not of lesser importance, they are fundamental.

I can tell the difference between being pulled and being pushed. To me, the Guru feels more like a pull, an enticement. God seems more like a pull. The direction in which I actually move is my response to that and all the other pulls I choose to yield to. Some days and some years the Guru’s pull seems to affect my course more than at other times. My goals sometimes converge with the Guru’s goals for me and sometimes they diverge, leaving me to aim for different destinations.

We will undoubtedly use different names and invoke different mechanisms, but could we attempt to make a list of some of the necessary ingredients for a useful, common framework?
We need:

1) Some name for and appreciation of this “ordinary” state of consciousness (e.g., its noise level, linearity, emotional interference, level of cognitive development, cultural filters)

2) Some name for and appreciation of a radically different state, or more than one (e.g., waking, dream/subtle, deep sleep/causeal, supracausal/turiya; or conscious, personal unconsciousness, collective consciousness)

3) Some name for and appreciation of a vast reservoir that precedes, infuses, and is altered by one’s current state (e.g., Consciousness or the implicate order or the morphic field)

4) Some name for and appreciation of how the past affects the present moment (e.g., the play of cause-and-effect, karma, retarded waves, entropy)

5) Some name for and appreciation of how the future affects the present moment (e.g., morphic fields operating retro-causally, advanced waves, syntropy)

6) Some name for and appreciation of how the field of potential states self-organizes and forms into one or more fields retrocausally influencing the present; the set of final causes (Cosmic consciousness, the seven chakras, Jacob’s ladder, Wilber’s hierarchy)

7) Some name for and appreciation of the mechanisms that underlie the successive iterations producing convergence on any such final cause (e.g., how the chakras are affected by their intersection with the morphic field of possibilities: by opening and spinning with more energy; by cybernetic feedback loops)

8) Some name for and appreciation of how openness of each chakra affects the openness of all the other chakras (Kundalini rising, mutual enlivening of the array of chakras, a nested hierarchy)

9) Some name for and appreciation of how one’s current state of consciousness affects how one responds to final causes (interference, blockage, primal ignorance, original sinfulness, or knowledge, paradigm shifts, receptivity, creative bursts)