



un MIND

a graphic guide to Self-realization

WRITTEN BY SIDDHARTH TRIPATHI | ILLUSTRATED BY KALYANI S. NARAVANE

I am the Self, O Arjun, seated in the hearts of all creatures.
I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all beings.

~ Chapter 10, Verse 20, Bhagavad Gita

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Written by Siddharth Tripathi

Illustrated by Kalyani S. Naravane

Based on the teachings of

Sri Ramana Maharshi & Sri Ramesh Balsekar

Introduction

Ken Wilber describes Sri Ramana Maharshi (1879 - 1950) as the 'greatest sage of this century and, arguably, the greatest spiritual realization of this or any time'. Maharshi's teachings carry tremendous spiritual strength; a few lines from him are enough for a ripe soul to attain Self-realization. He recommended the practice of Self-enquiry, which for many seekers, remains one of the most effective methods to attain enlightenment.

Ramesh Balsekar (1917-2009) was influenced by two spiritual giants – Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj and Sri Ramana Maharshi. Ramesh codified Advaita wisdom in a manner that answers many questions that modern seekers struggle with. His teachings put emphasis on non-doership as the key to understanding the Self.

My spiritual journey found its shore when I discovered the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi and Sri Ramesh Balsekar. I believe bringing the spiritual insights of these two masters in an accessible, visual format can be of great benefit to the serious seeker.



All human pursuit is born out of a longing for happiness (or peace of mind*). But we invariably attach conditions to this happiness – I'll be happy when I get a million dollars, or, I need to change jobs to be content, or, I am at peace when I'm in the hills alone, and so on. We keep hoping for an event or a change that'll make us happy. And there are times when we find happiness, but these are, sadly, only temporary conditions, bound by time and place – inevitably followed by frustration and pain.

Is that how it's supposed to be? Is there a way to lasting peace?

If one asked this question to an enlightened sage like Sri Ramana Maharshi or

* these two terms are interchangeable, if you have peace of mind then you are happy, if you are happy you have peace of mind. Having uninterrupted peace of mind is being enlightened or Self-realized.

Ramesh Balsekar, their response would be, 'Yes, there is a way out, but to get there you must first find out who you really are'.

Who am I?

We rarely ask ourselves this question and even if we do, very few turn inward to seek the answer. The gurus simply point out that we haven't looked in the right direction; that if we turned inward and looked for ourselves, it would lead to Self-realization. There is no need for years of prayer and meditation, no need to do anything at all. Just this knowledge once experienced leads to complete peace of mind.

However, it's not as easy as it appears to be. A significant part of the teachings go against everything you believe in and hence, you'll find them intriguing but hard to accept. Eventually, your personal experience and reflection will enable you to truly understand what the masters had to say.

We hope this book is able to plant a tiny seed of understanding that helps with your seeking.

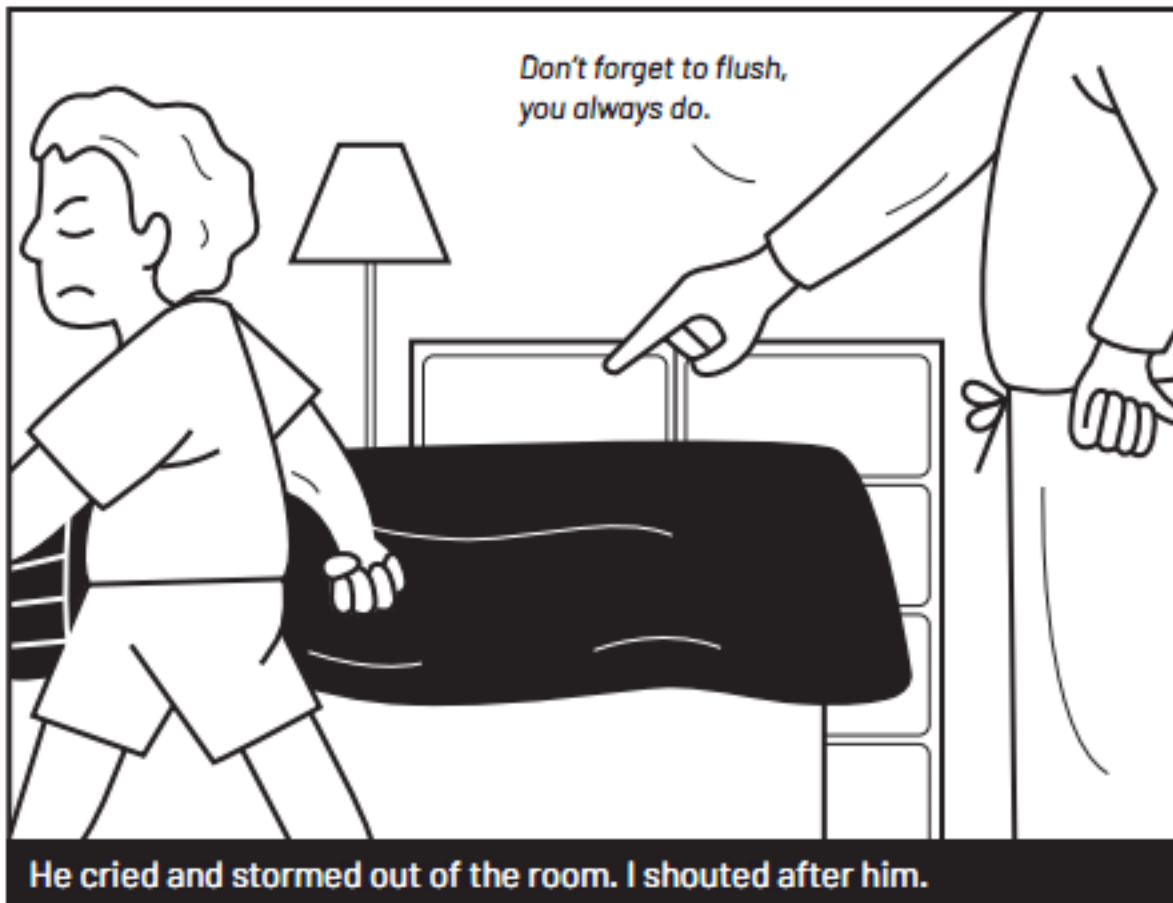
PART 1

THE GRAND ILLUSION

1.

WAKEY, WAKEY,
RISE AND SHINE





He cried and stormed out of the room. I shouted after him.



We met again at the dining table.



So much time had been lost in waking him up, I had to feed him quickly. I pushed a big bite into his mouth.



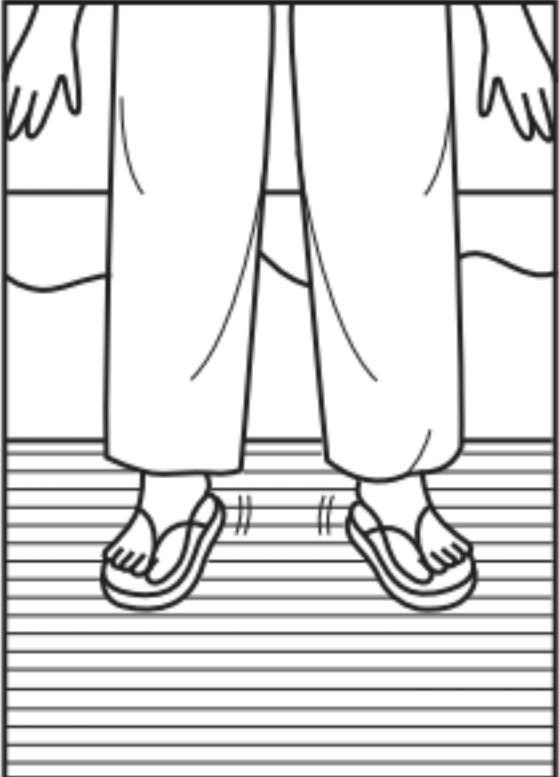
He has a small mouth. He couldn't keep it in, and puked on the plate. The egg and toast was ruined.



I lost it. I lectured him on how he should be grateful that I get up early in the morning to get him ready for school. He cried through the tirade.



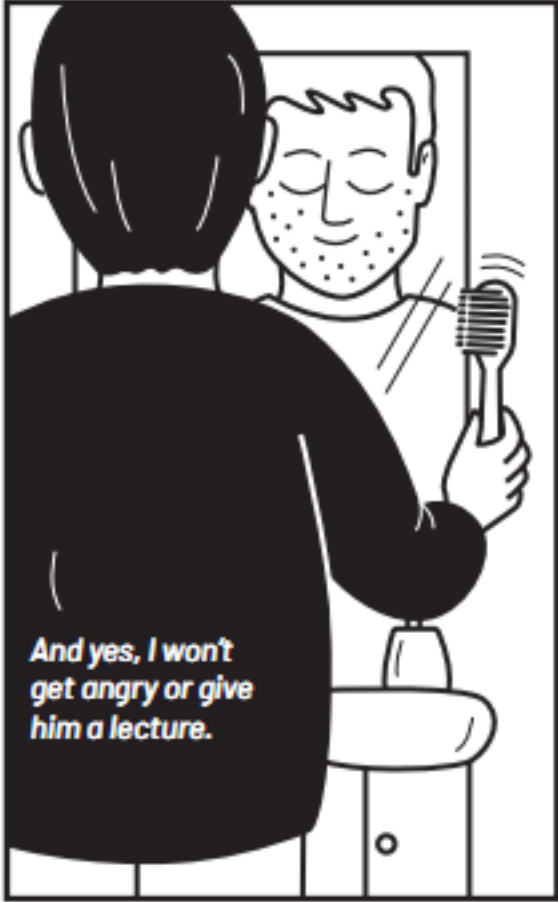
On the way to the bus stop, he walked ahead of me. He didn't wave when the bus left. I felt like a monster.



TUESDAY. I jumped out of bed.
I felt good.



I'll make something
nice for him,
something he'll like
to eat, like a bread-
butter-jam toast.



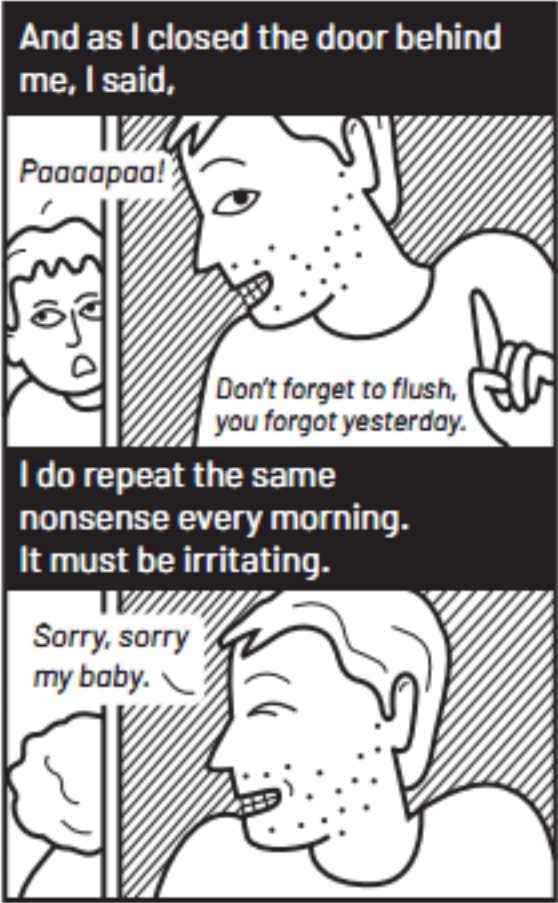
And yes, I won't
get angry or give
him a lecture.



I woke him up extra nice, gave
him two 5 minute extensions...



then I picked him up in my
arms and took him to the loo
for pee-pee.



And as I closed the door behind
me, I said,

Paaaapaa!

Don't forget to flush,
you forgot yesterday.

I do repeat the same
nonsense every morning.
It must be irritating.

Sorry, sorry
my baby.



Your favourite jam toast
is waiting for you.

I don't want.

I was waiting for him at the table.



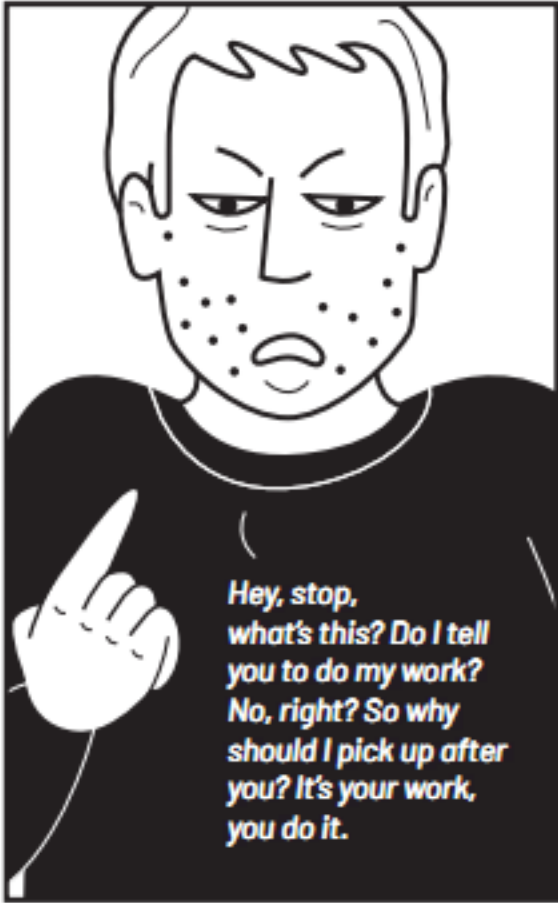
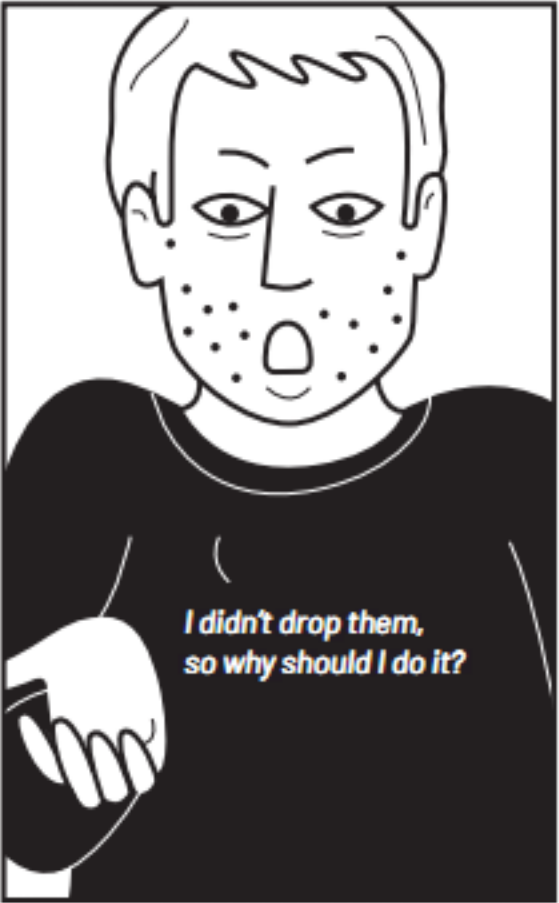
Have a little bit?

No, I don't want.



Ok. Ok. Papa is sorry
about yesterday.

What happened
yesterday?



Yes, my parenting is flawed, but there is an even more fundamental pattern that's staring at us here.



'I woke up



'I couldn't go back to sleep



'I will feel drowsy



'I shut my eyes and tried again



The sound annoyed me (I)



'I was nice



'I lost it



'I shouted after him



'I lectured him



'I scolded you



'I shouldn't have



'I had made that egg



Why should 'I' pick up after you?



Do 'I' tell you to do my work?



'I' was waiting



'I' won't. 'I' won't. 'I' won't.

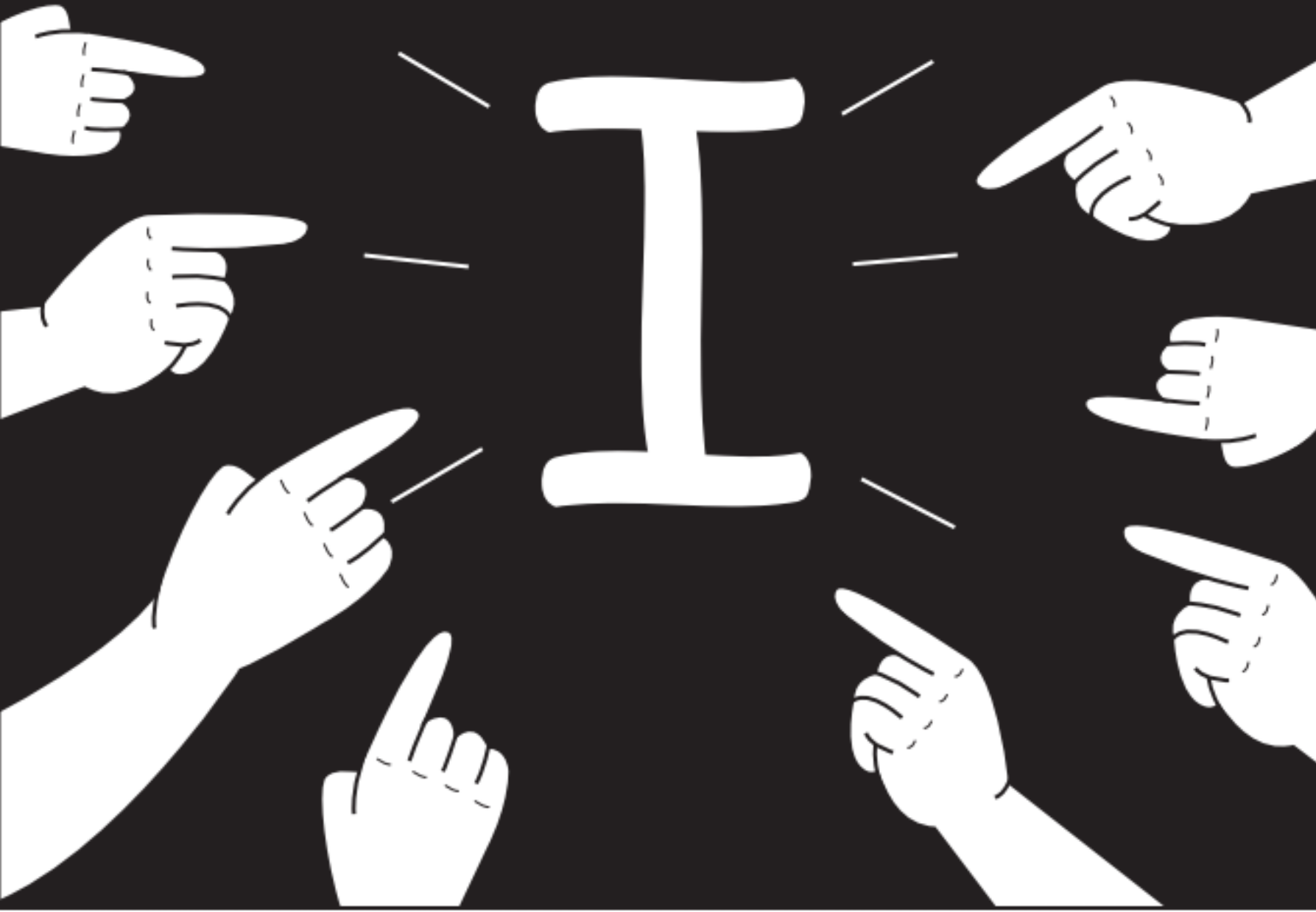


You (I) do it



'I' felt like a monster

The ubiquitous 'I'. How does it get away without being questioned?
What is this 'I'? Why does it always get into trouble?



2.

THE RAMANA MAHARSHI
ANSWER GENERATOR

All through the day
I me mine, I me mine, I me mine.

~ *I Me Mine*, The Beatles

The 'I' vacillates between the past and the future and there is no peace to be found with it around.

Past -

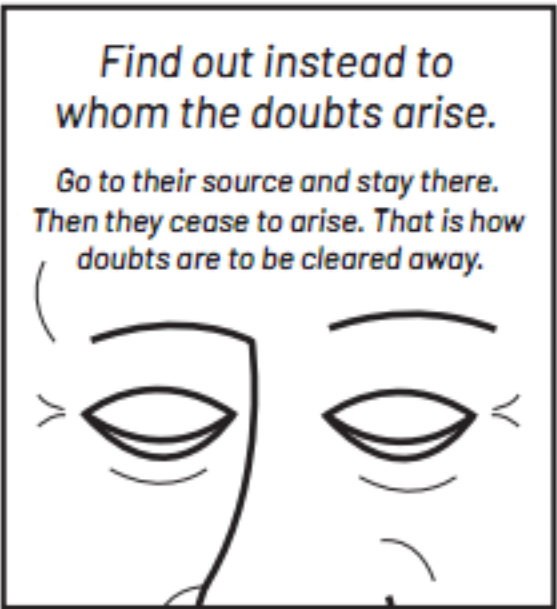
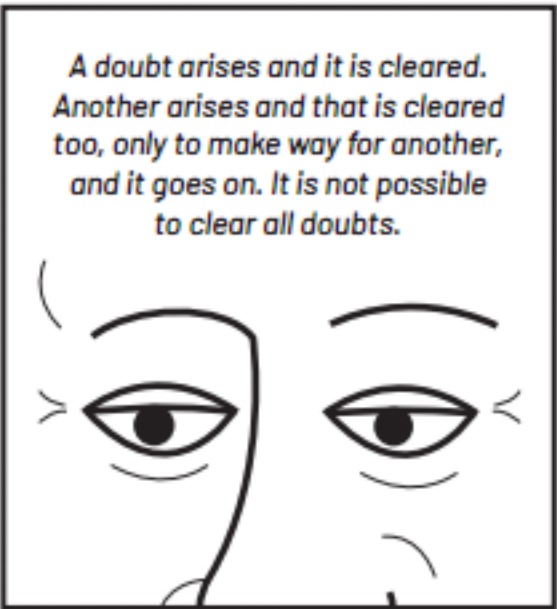
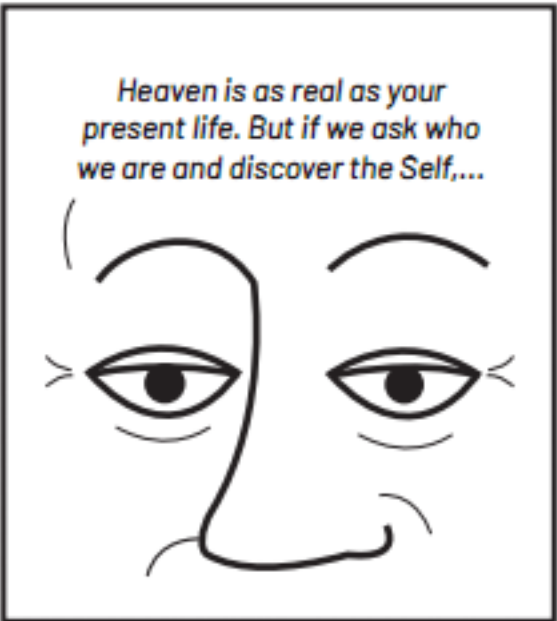
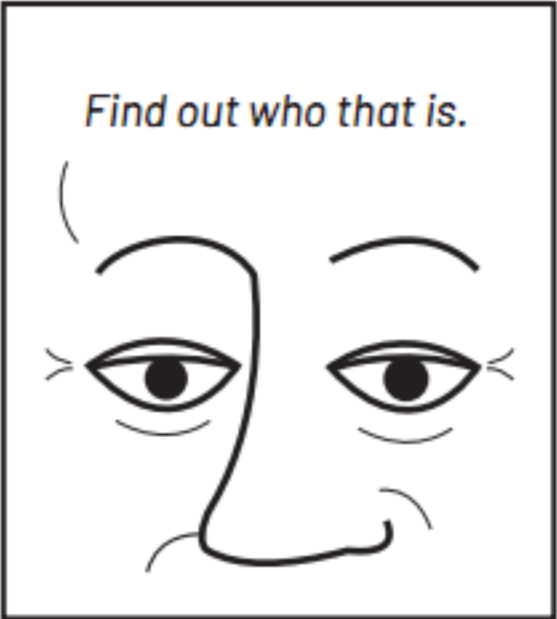
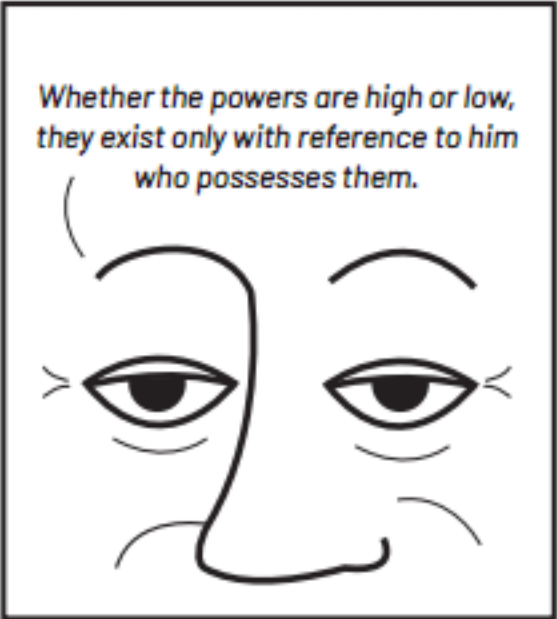
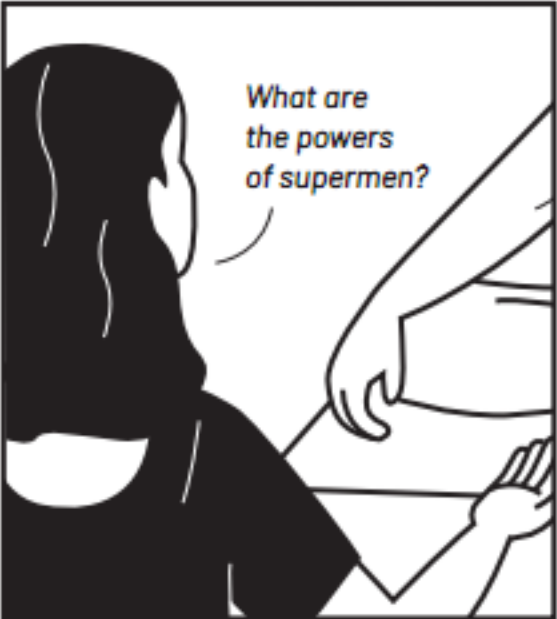
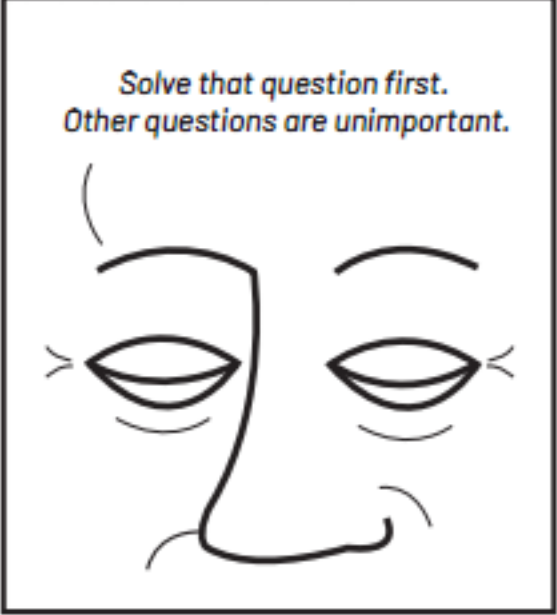
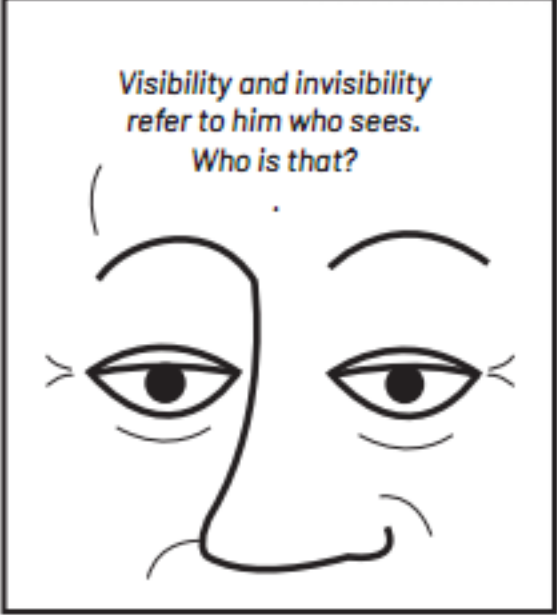
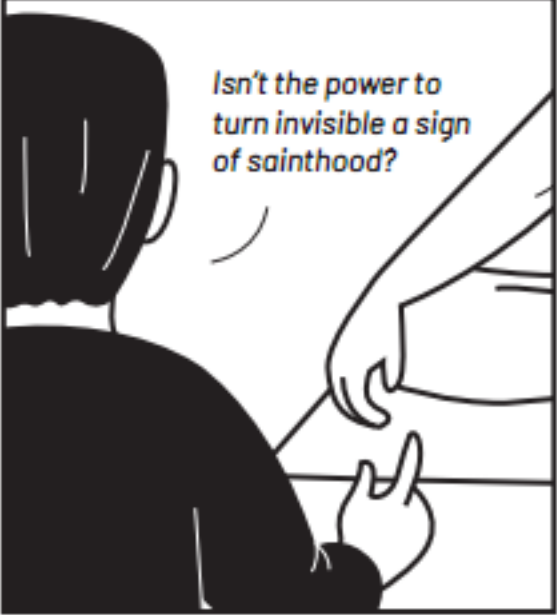
- If only 'I' had studied in college...
- If 'she' (the 'I' of another person) hadn't broken 'my' heart...

Future -

- My 'boss' will fire me if 'I' don't finish this assignment on time...
- Who will look after 'me' when 'I' get old...

Ramana Maharshi taught us to observe the pattern of this 'I'. According to him, if we could see through the falsehood of this 'I' and go beyond it, we could attain complete peace of mind.

In Ramana's peaceful presence, his devotees felt free to ask anything – sometimes the questions were weird and unrelated to his teaching. Ramana, with compassion and unwavering focus, brought them back to the real question (and to the essence of the teaching).



3.

TWO QUESTIONS
ONE ANSWER



Venkataraman was the strong and sporty kind, always keen on games and mischief but not too gung-ho about studying. He lived with his uncle in Madurai (a town in Tamil Nadu, India).



One day, sometime mid-July, Venkataraman was sitting alone in a room on the first floor of his uncle's house.



Suddenly, he felt a sensation that filled him with fear. He felt as if he was going to die.



He wasn't sure why it was happening but the feeling was unmistakable.



He didn't shout for help. It didn't even occur to him that he should tell someone about it.



He had decided to get to the bottom of this feeling on his own.



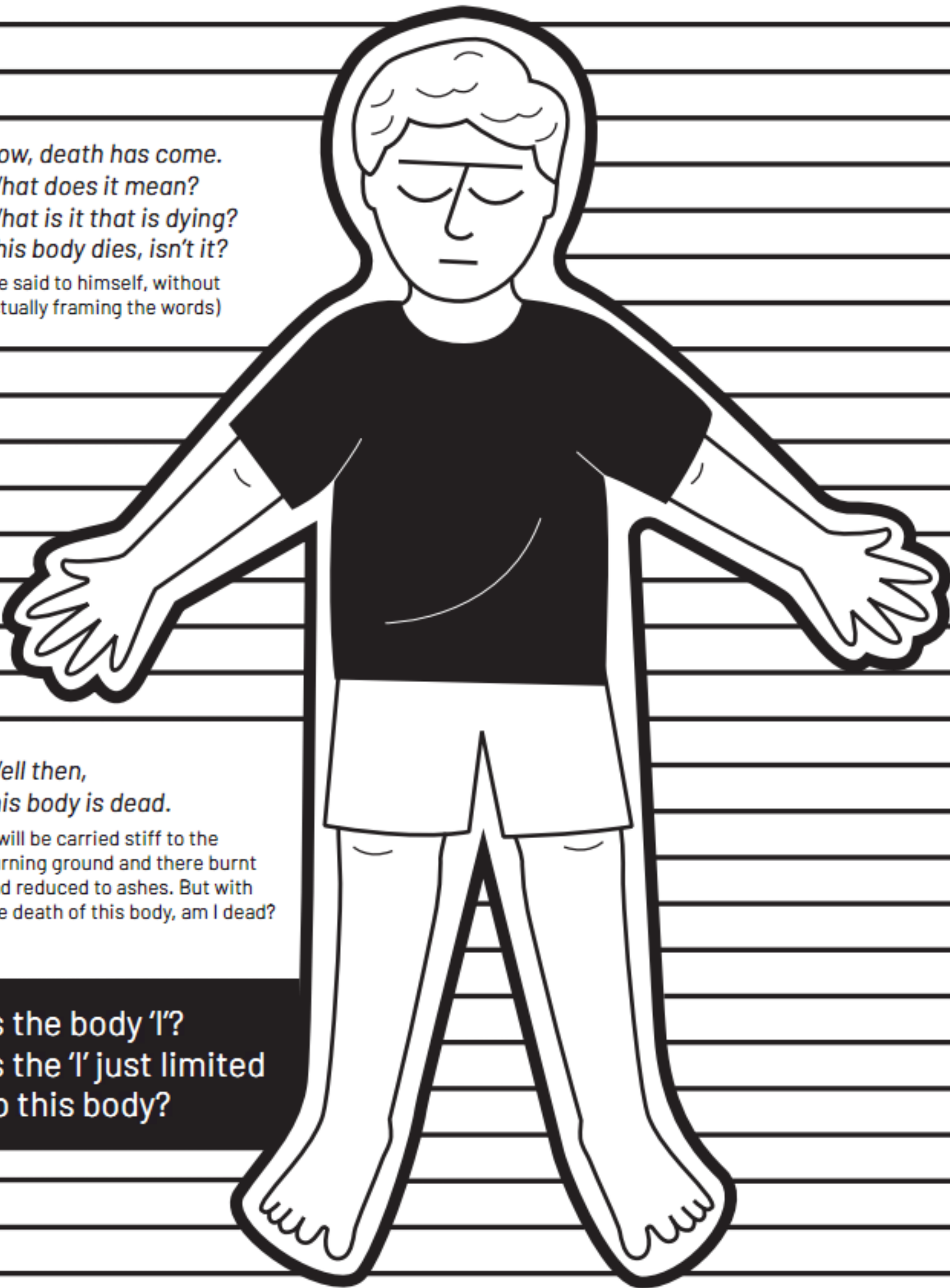
The shock and the fear drove his mind inwards.

He lay on the floor, stretched his limbs and acted dead – his body stiff, lips tightly shut, breath held back.

Now, death has come.
What does it mean?
What is it that is dying?
This body dies, isn't it?
(He said to himself, without
actually framing the words)

Well then,
this body is dead.
It will be carried stiff to the
burning ground and there burnt
and reduced to ashes. But with
the death of this body, am I dead?

Is the body 'I'?
Is the 'I' just limited
to this body?



The realization came to him like a flash. The ego was lost in a flood of Self-awareness and the sixteen-year-old found himself on the peak of spirituality.



Venkataraman later on came to be known as Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.

50 YEARS LATER

Boopathy lived in a small town not too far from the Maharshi's ashram.

*I must pray everyday. I'm becoming evil.
I'm becoming dirty. I must go to the
temple today and pray for an hour.*



The young man felt troubled.



He washed his face...



and stepped into the balcony
for some fresh air.



There she was.



Drying clothes after her bath.



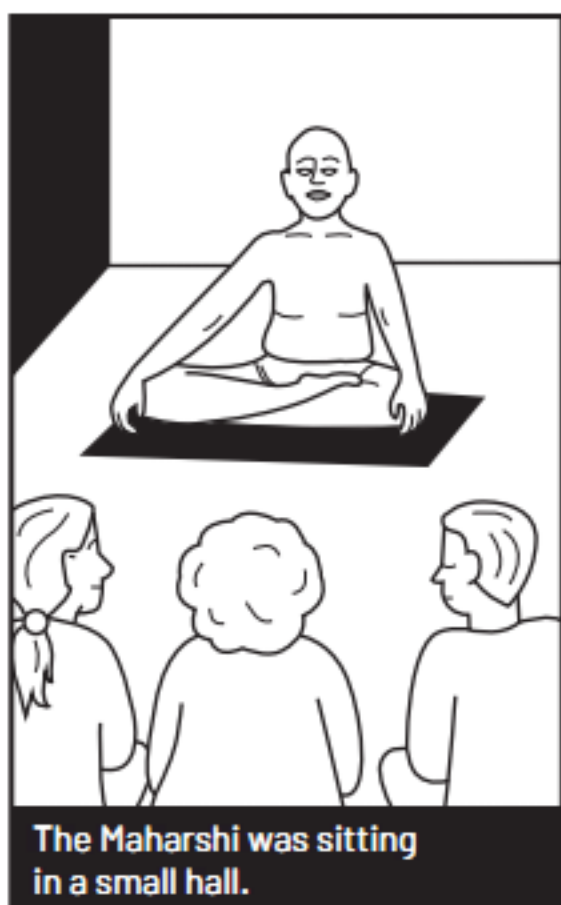
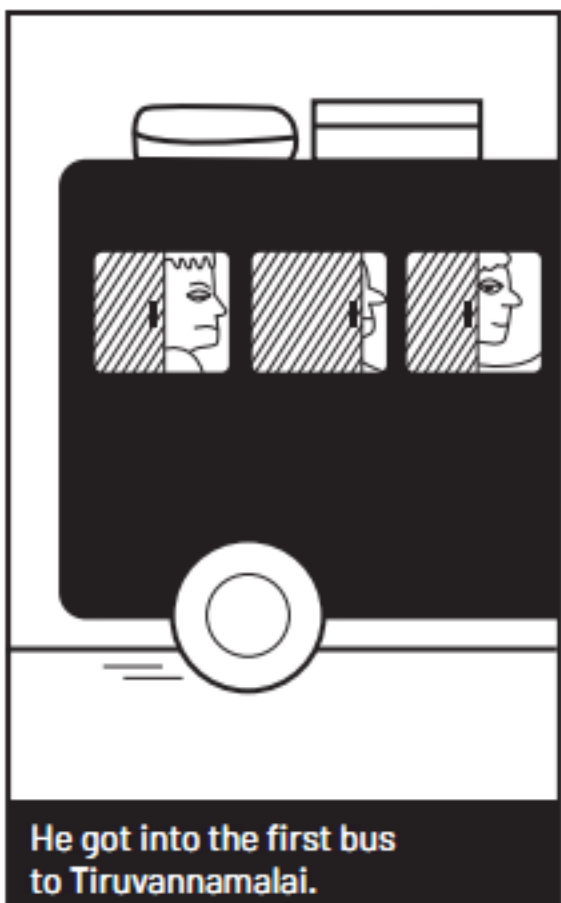
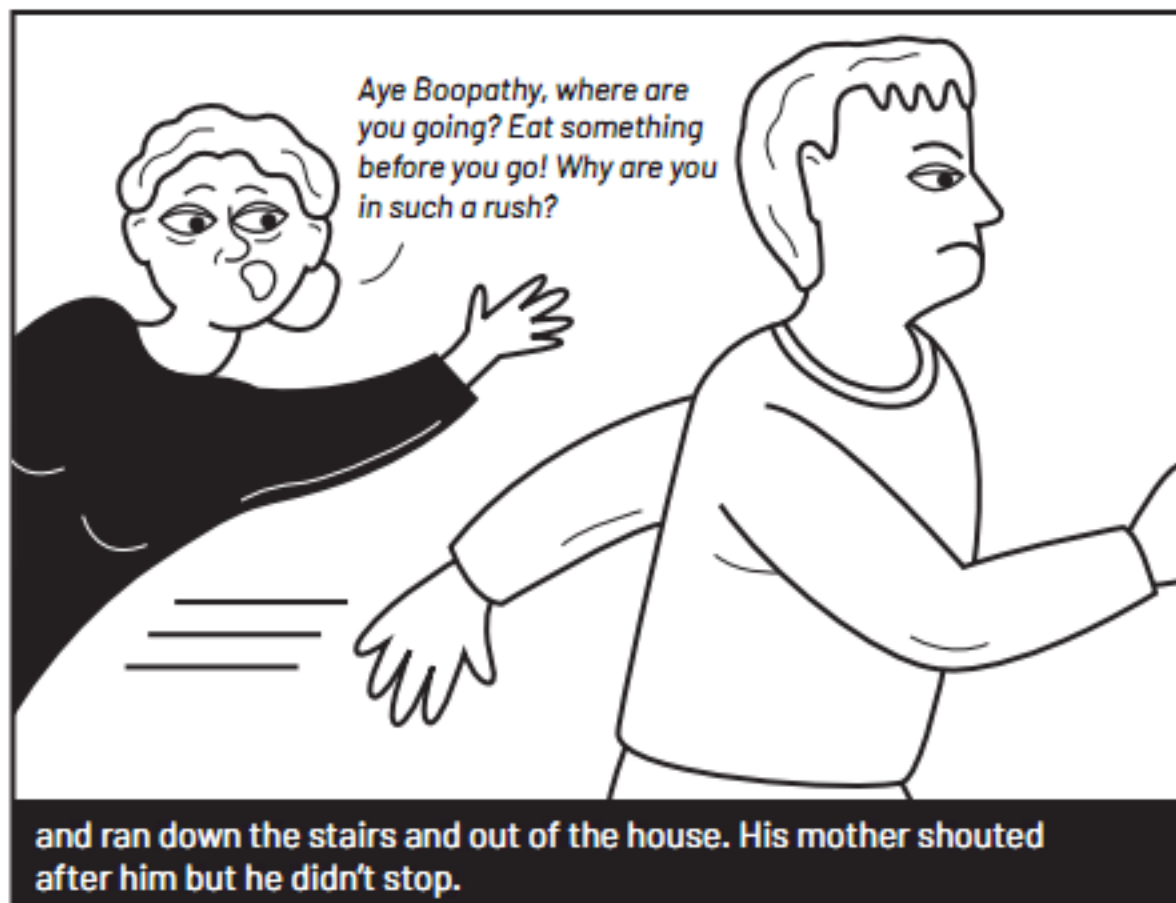
He stared at her.

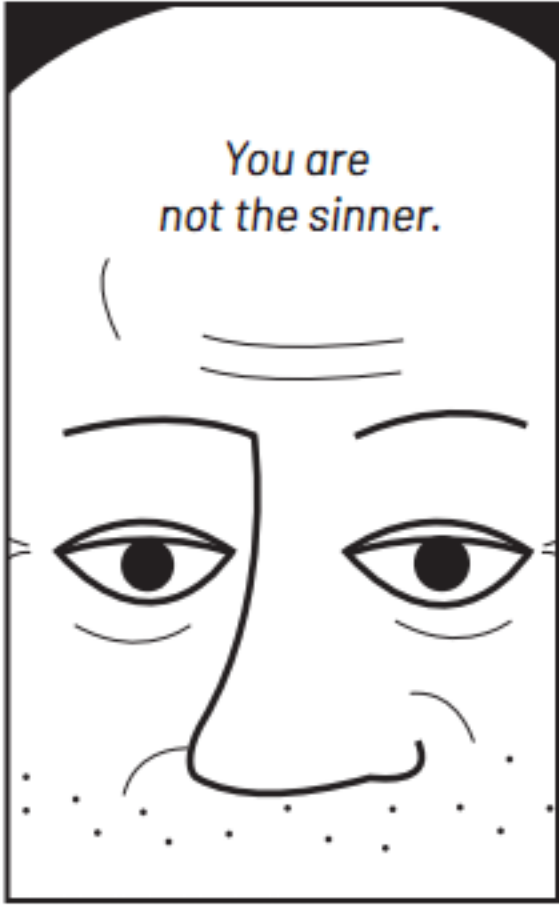
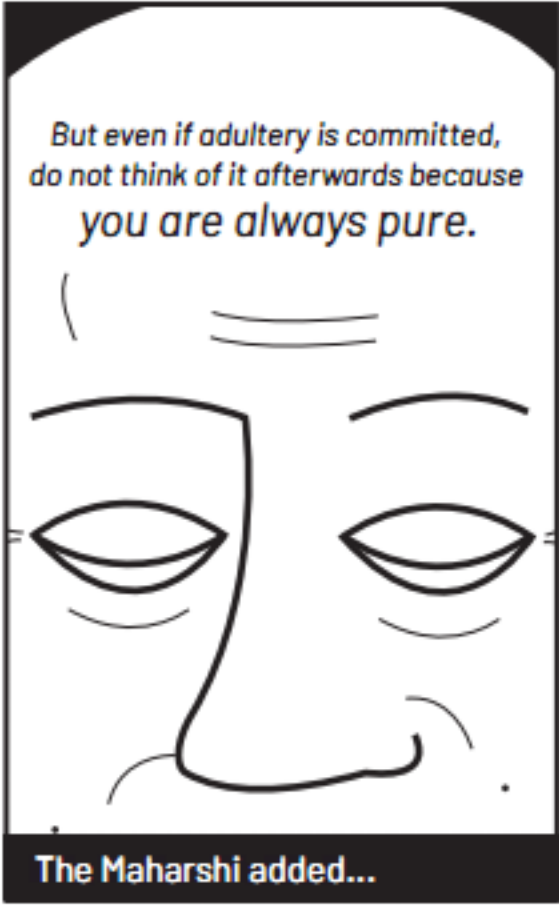
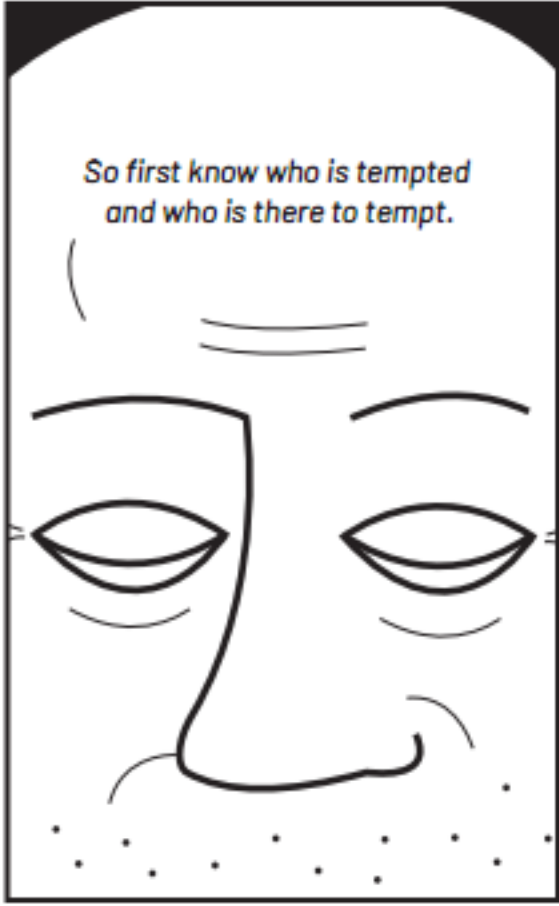
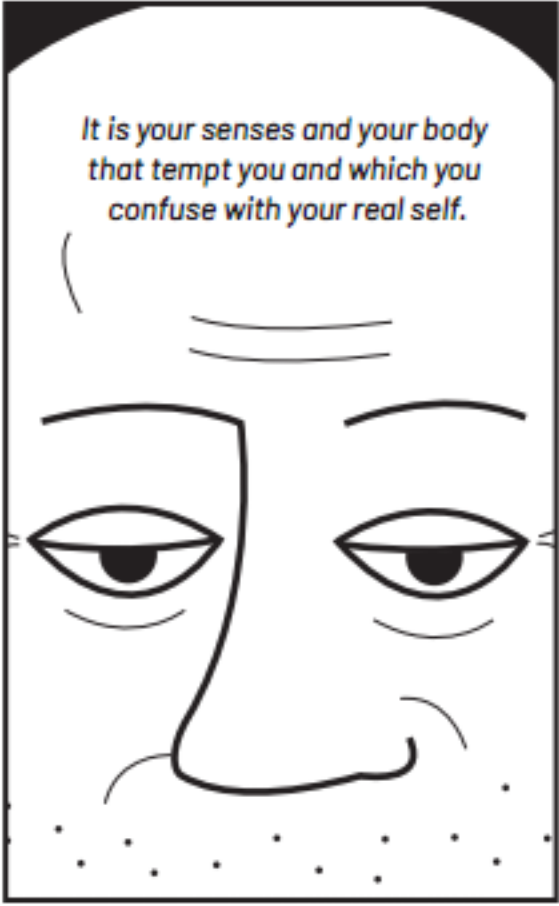
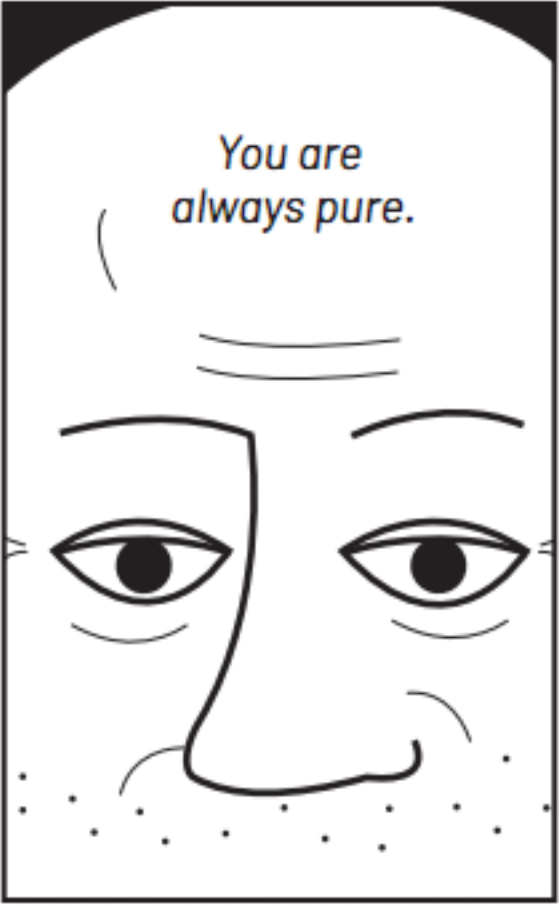
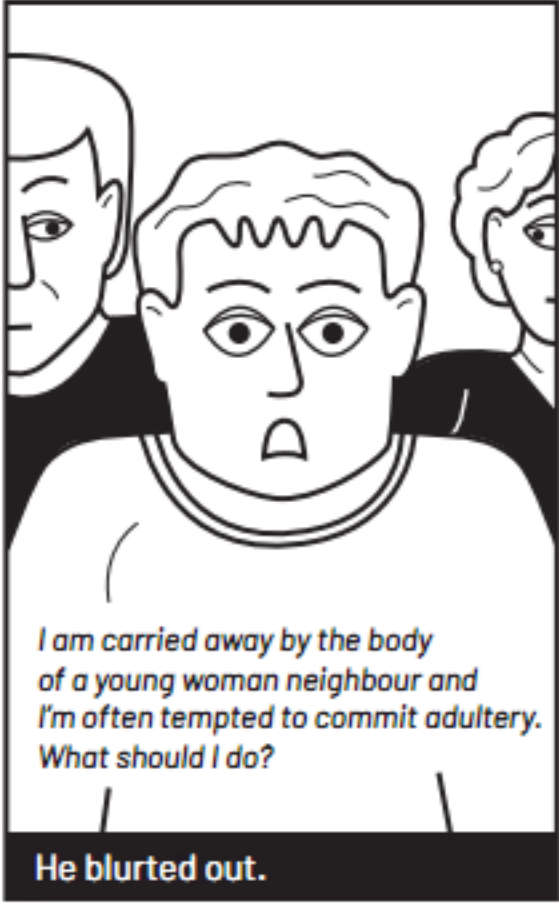


She smiled and carried on
with her work.



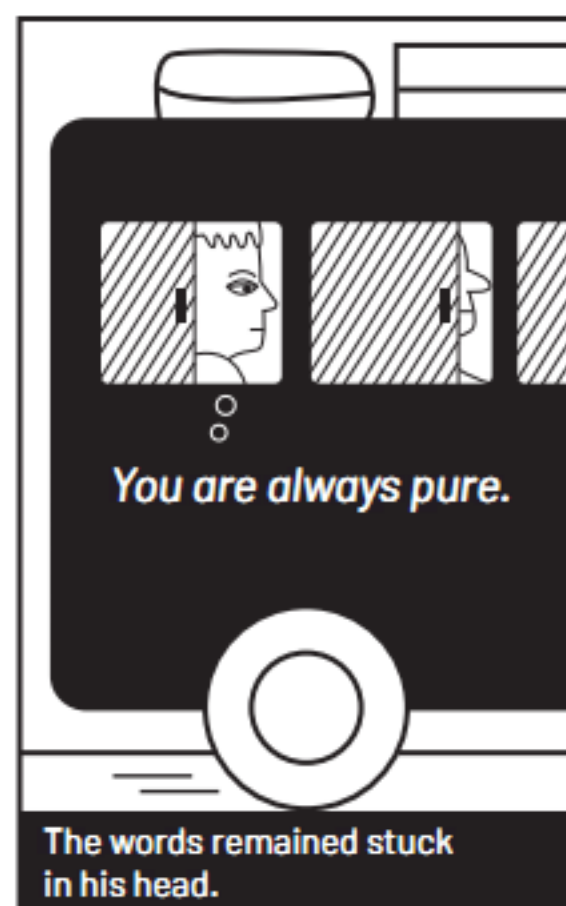
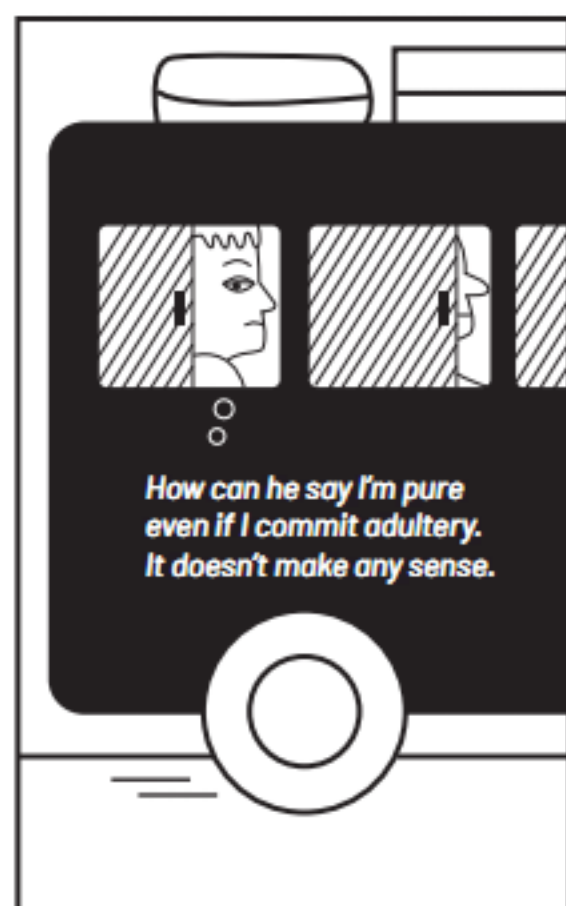
He kept looking till he became
aware of it.







He was taken aback by the answer. His mind went blank. After a while, he got up and left.

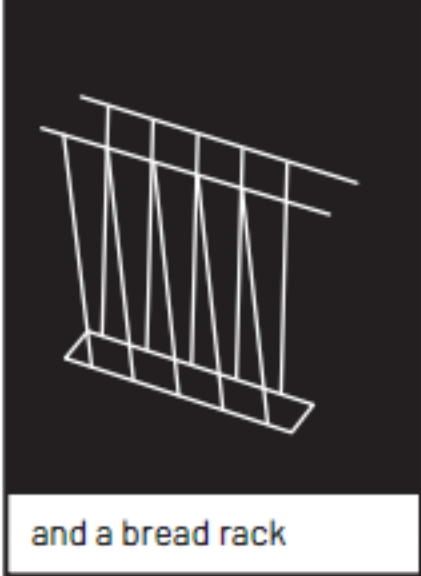
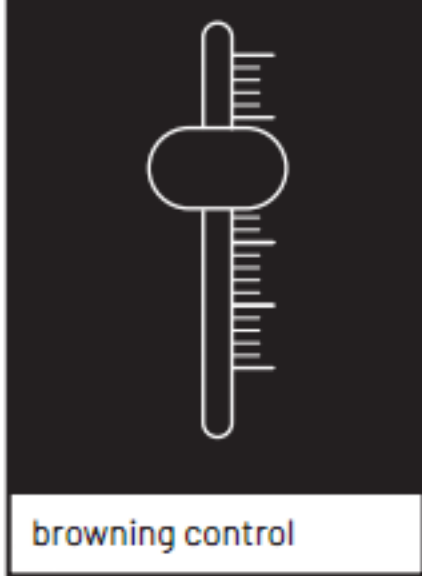
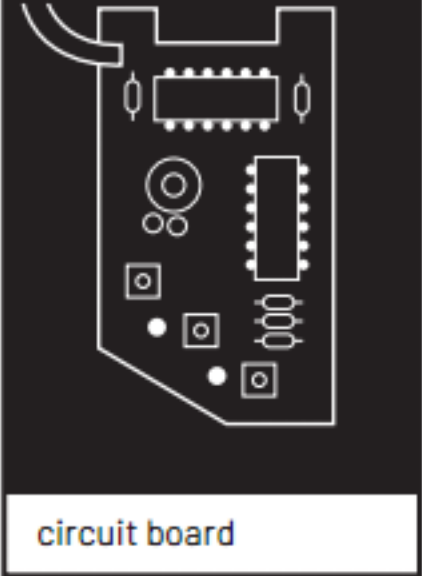
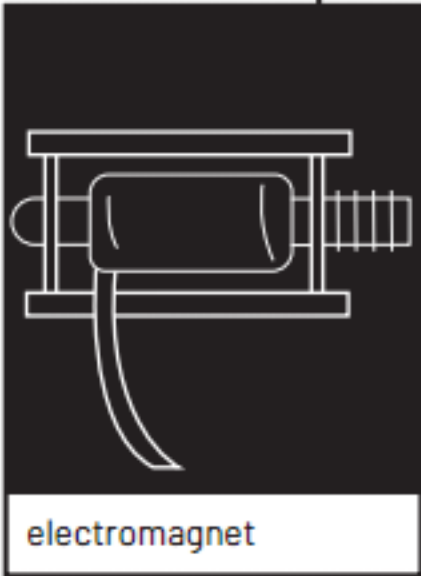
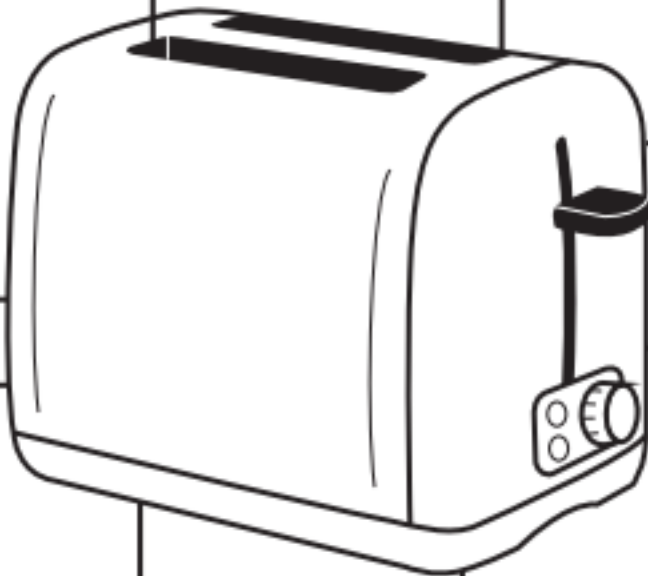
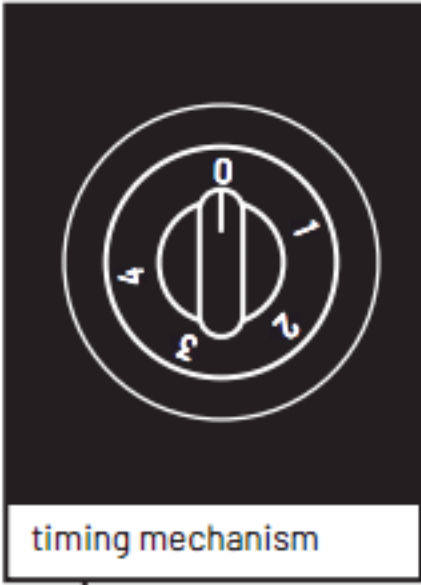
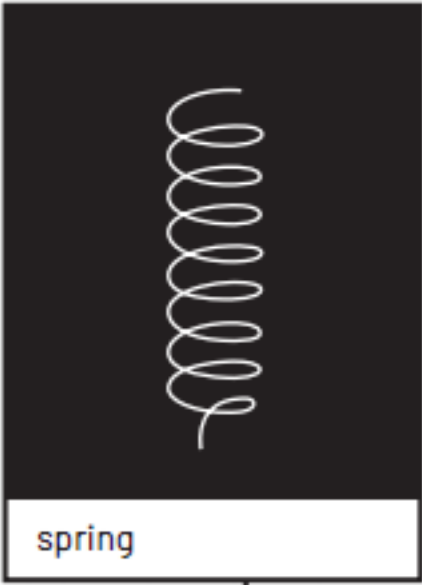
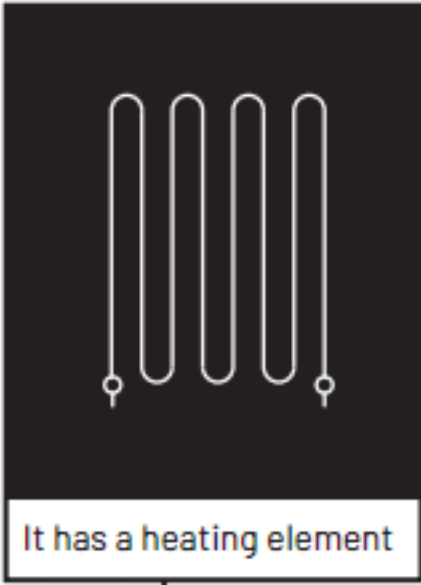


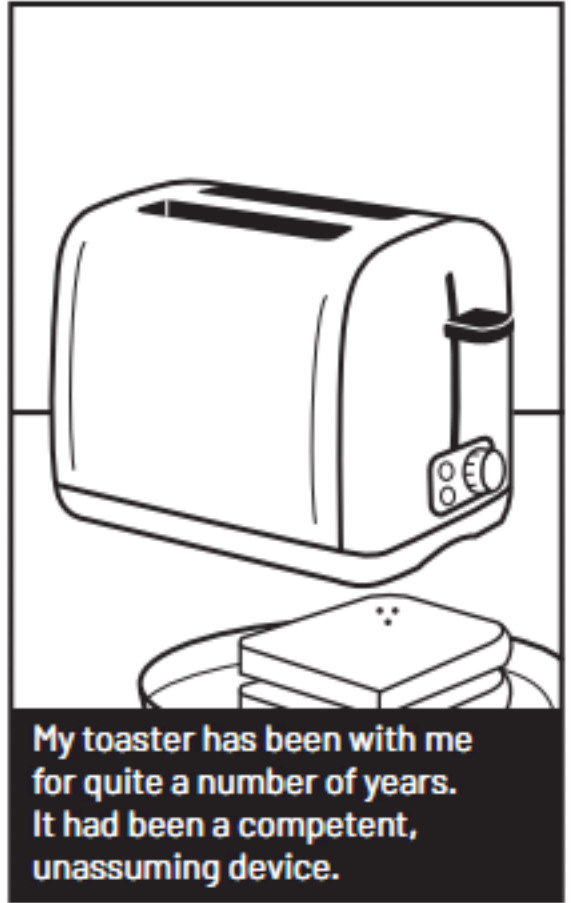
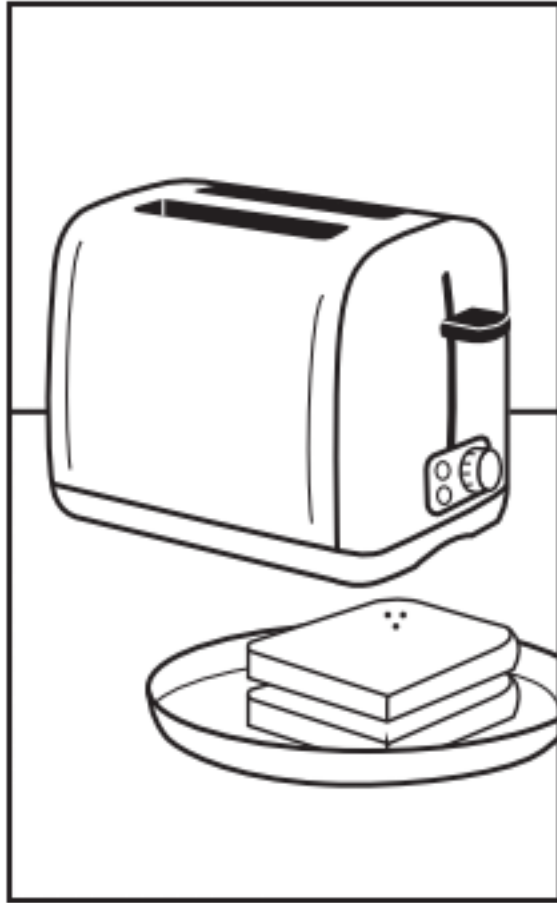
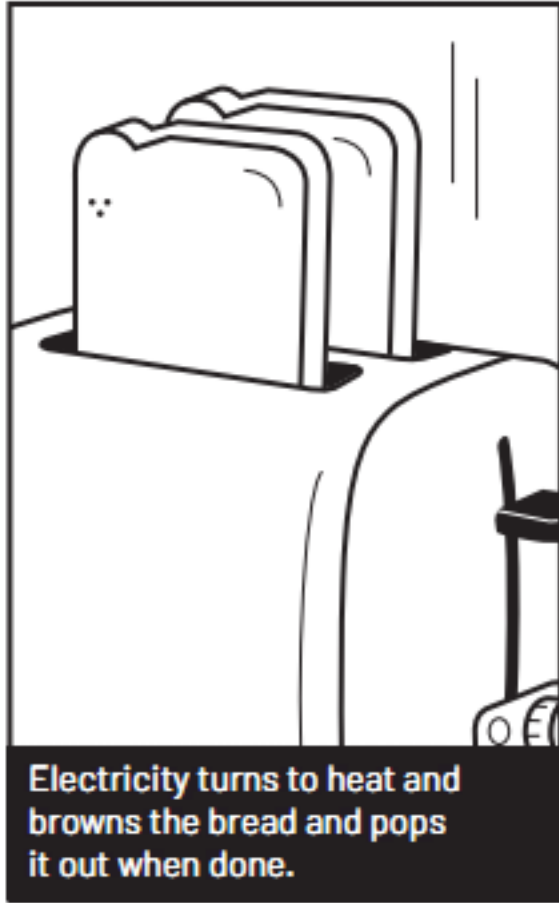
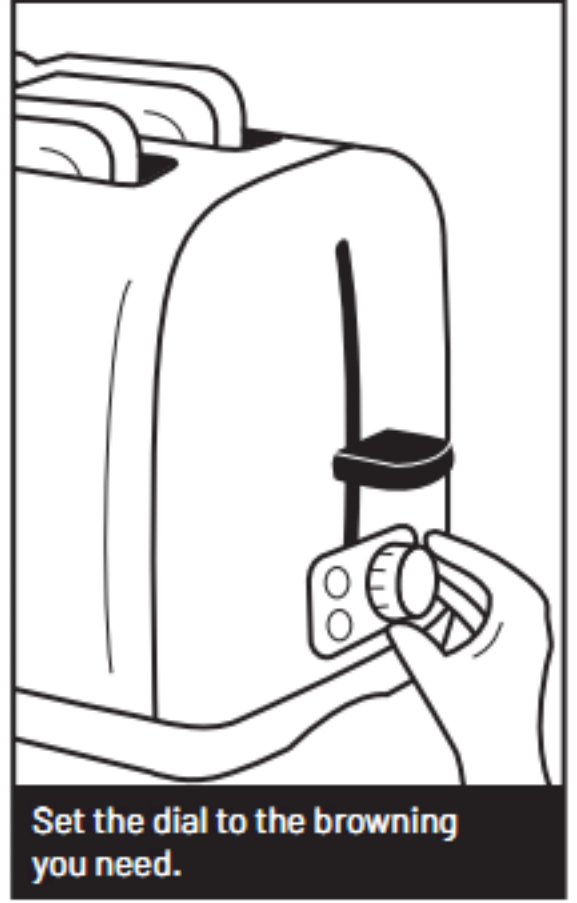
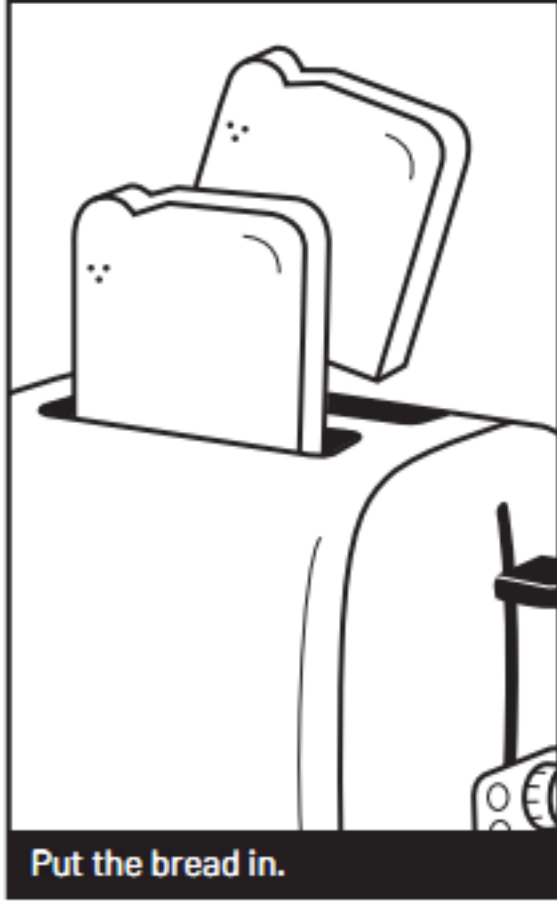
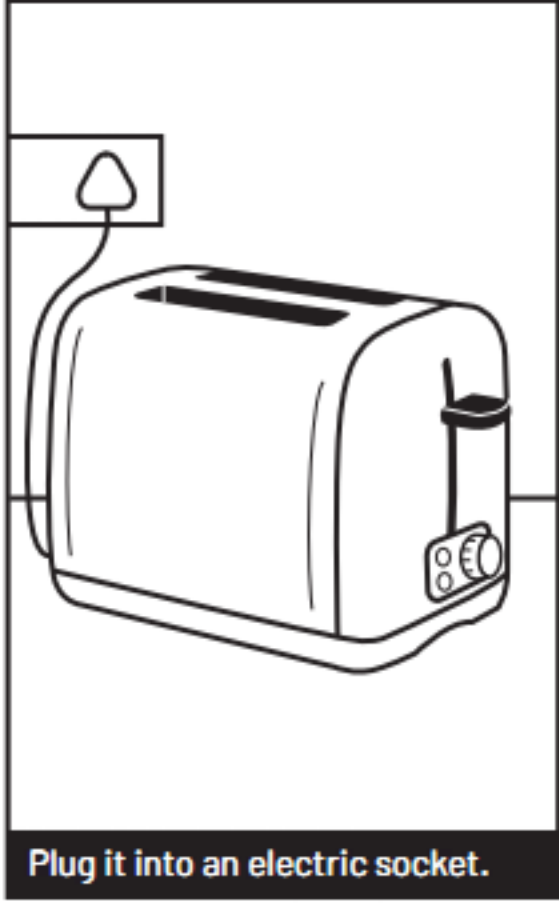
4.

SYMPATHY FOR
THE TOASTER

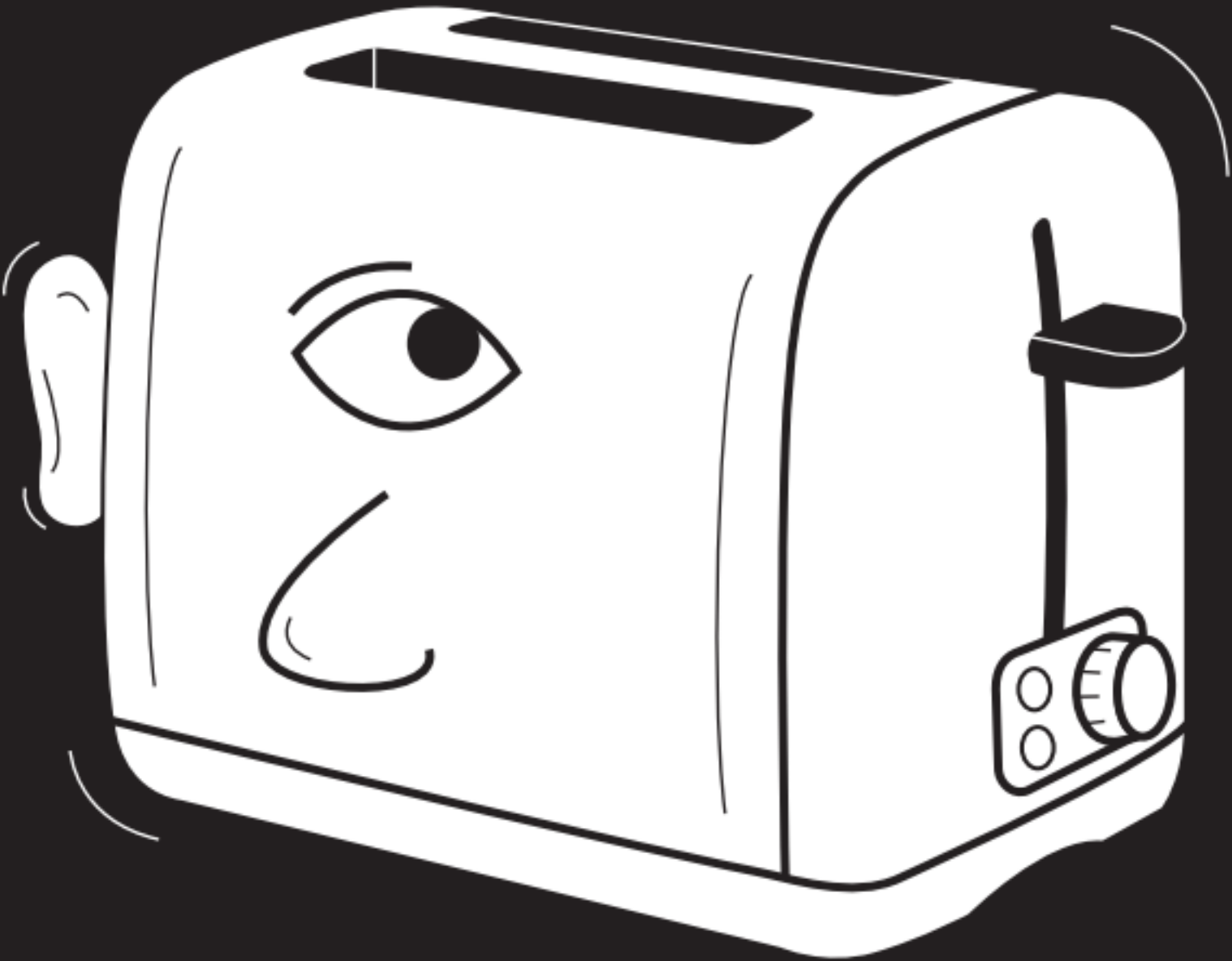
According to Sri Ramana, turning inward to find the 'I' and then going to its source is the path to Self-realization. For most of us, understanding the 'I', can be complex. Here's an example that Ramesh Balsekar used to illustrate this.

A toaster is a complex machine.

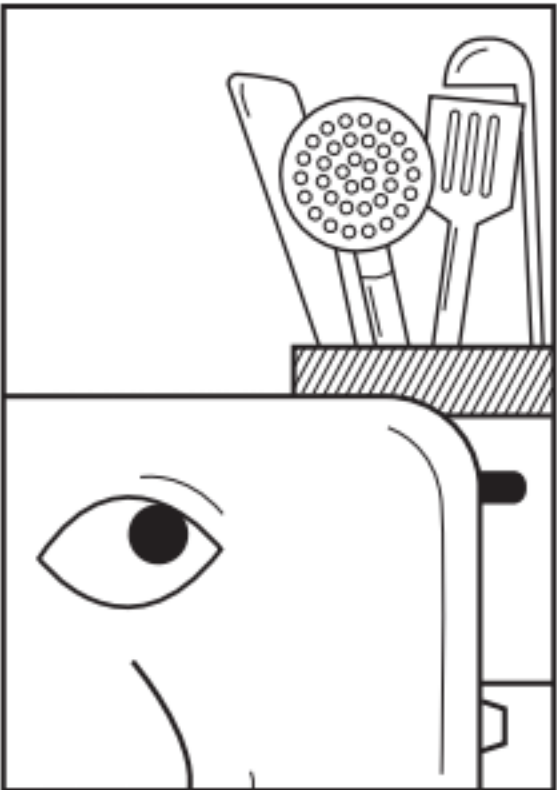




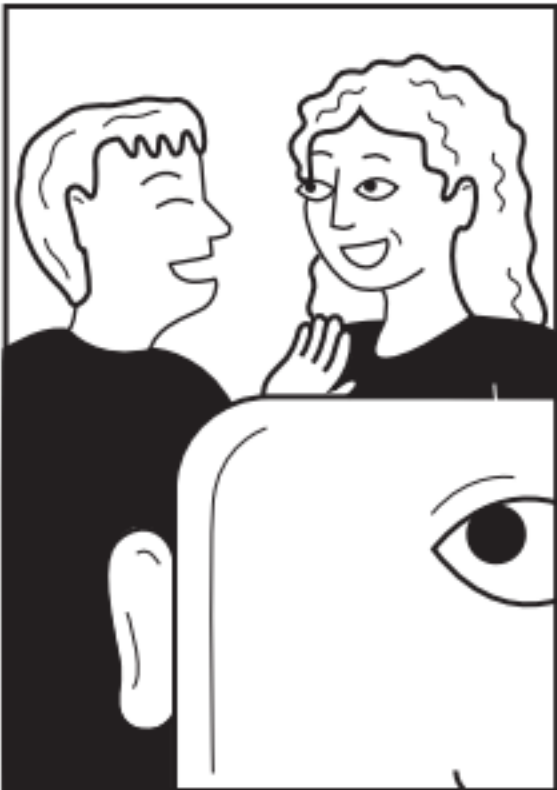
But then something extraordinary happened.



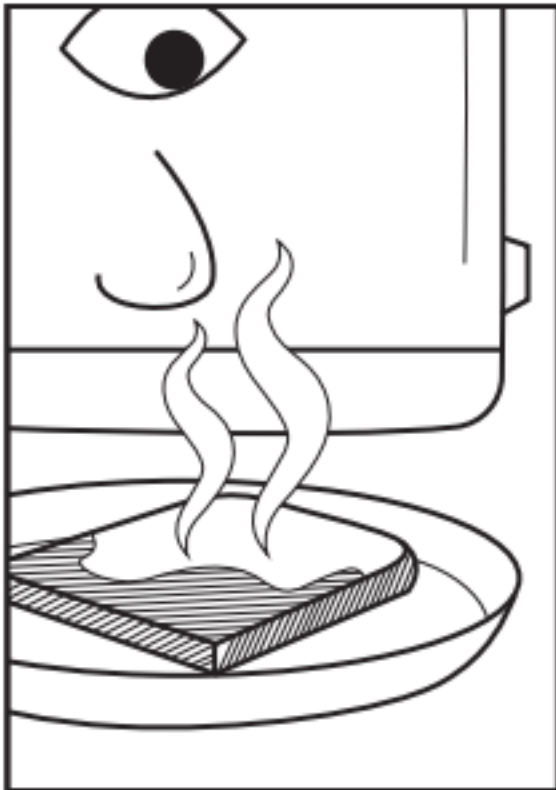
One day, the machine got an eye, an ear, a nose and a central system to operate and interpret the signals coming from these new add-ons (let's call it the toaster's 'intellect').



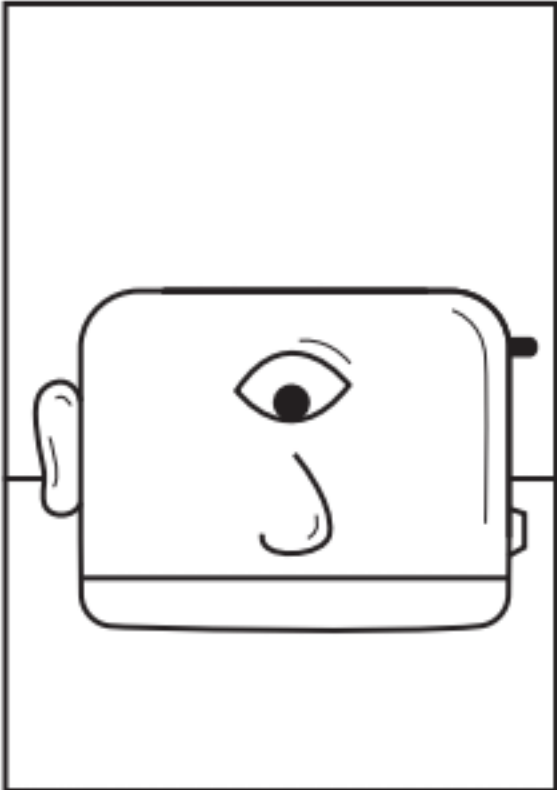
The eye saw the shiny kitchen utensils.



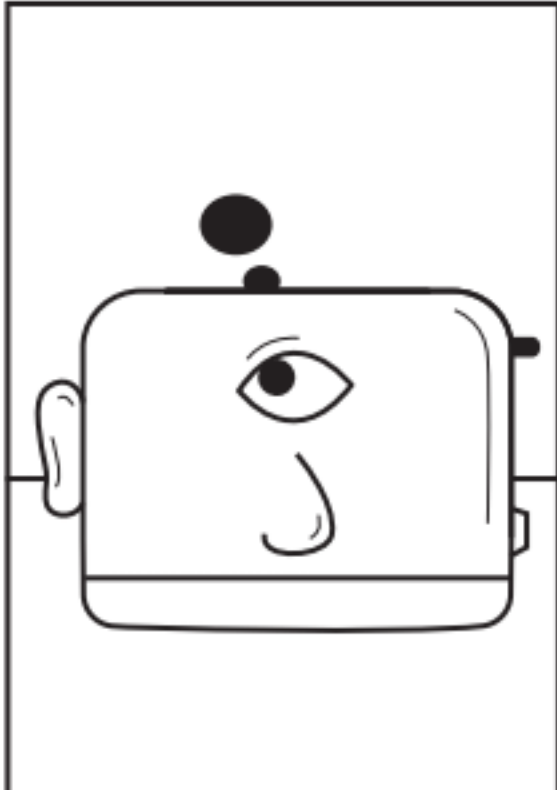
The ear heard people talking and laughing.



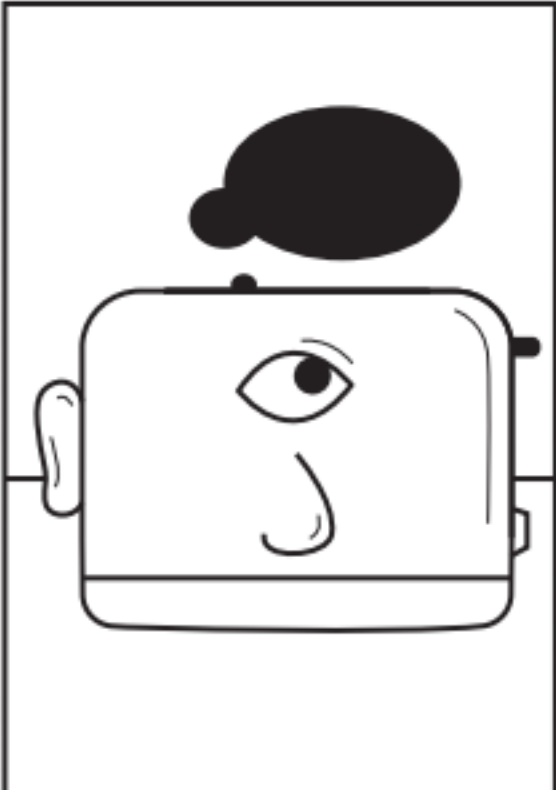
The nose could smell a burnt toast.



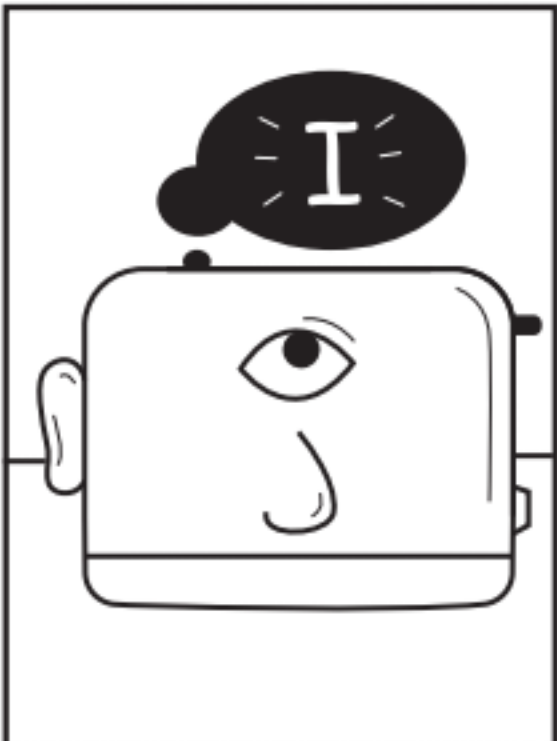
With the senses doing their job, thoughts couldn't be far behind.



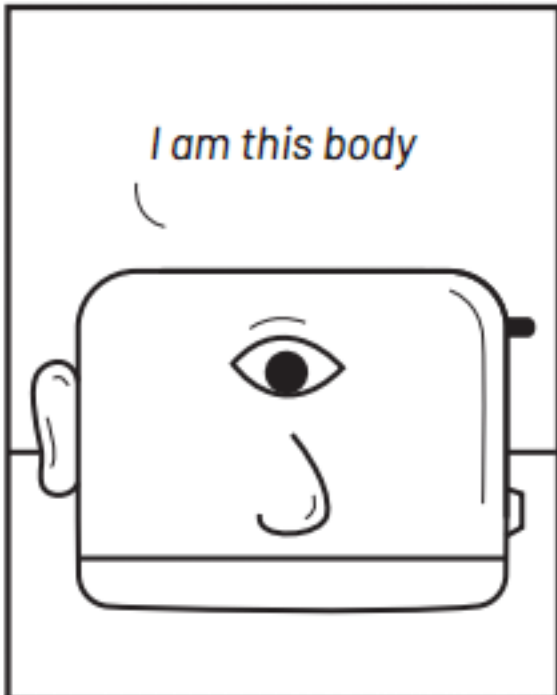
The machine got its first thought.



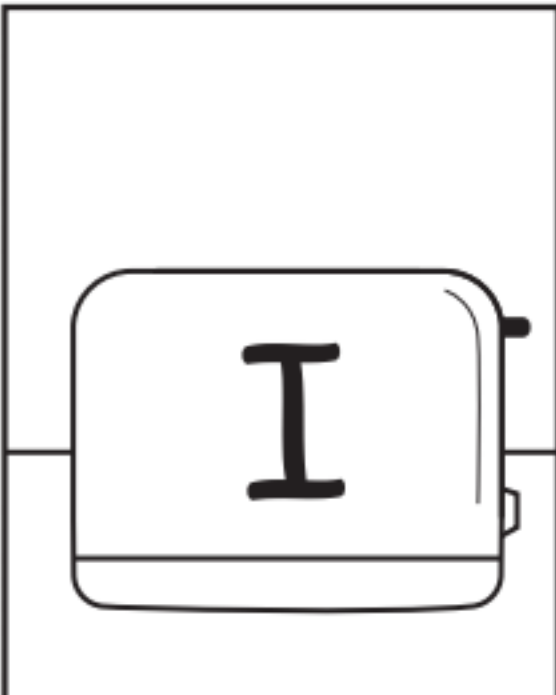
Guess, what it could be?



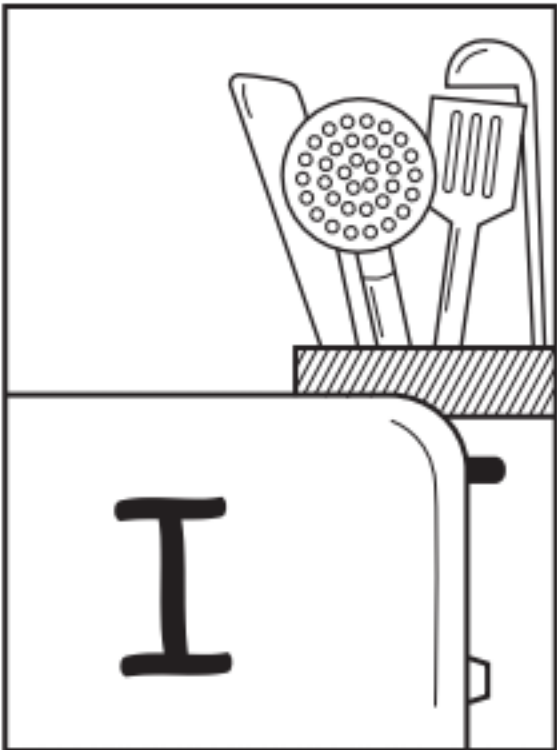
It was the 'I', after all, there has to be someone who sees, smells, hears.



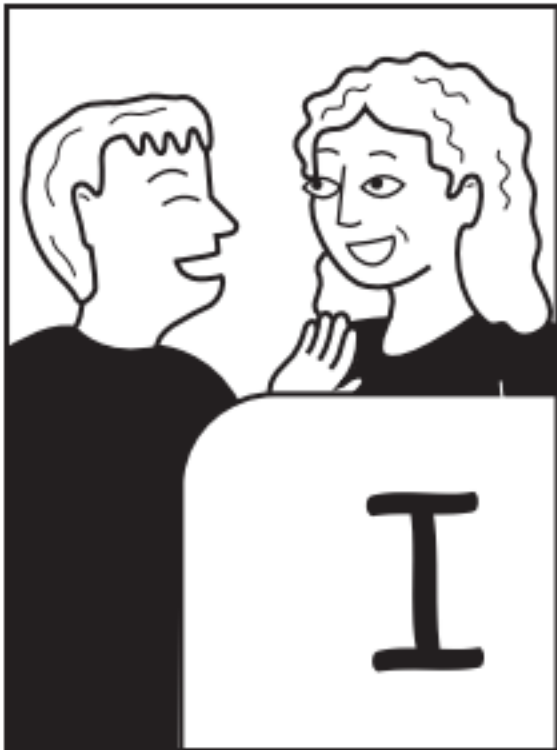
The 'I' thought identified with the toaster. In other words, the 'I' thought had limited itself to the body of the toaster.



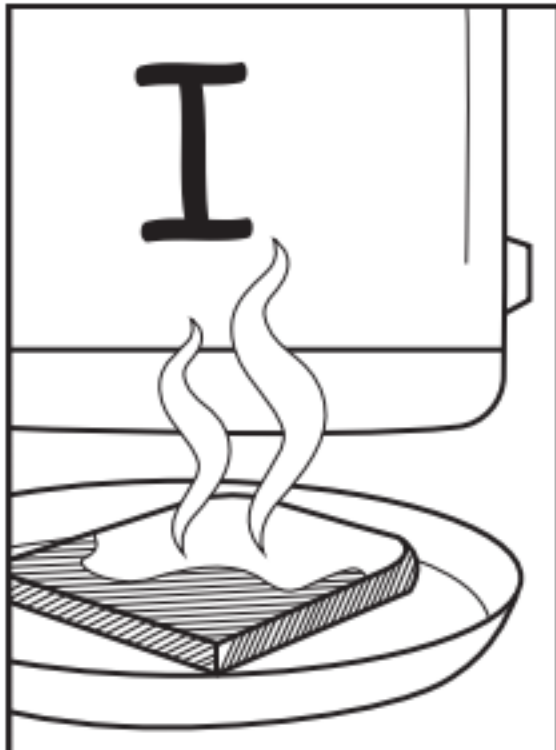
The toaster now could see the world in relation to itself.



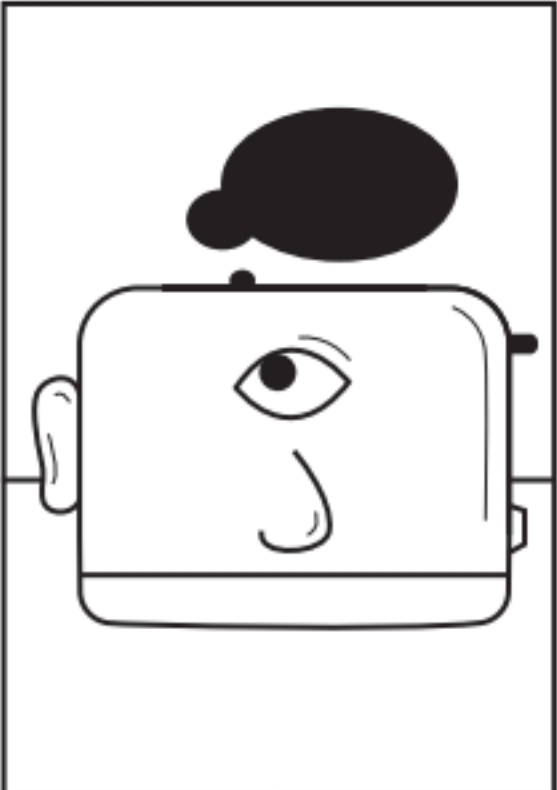
The eye was no longer seeing the shiny kitchen utensils, the 'I' was seeing them.



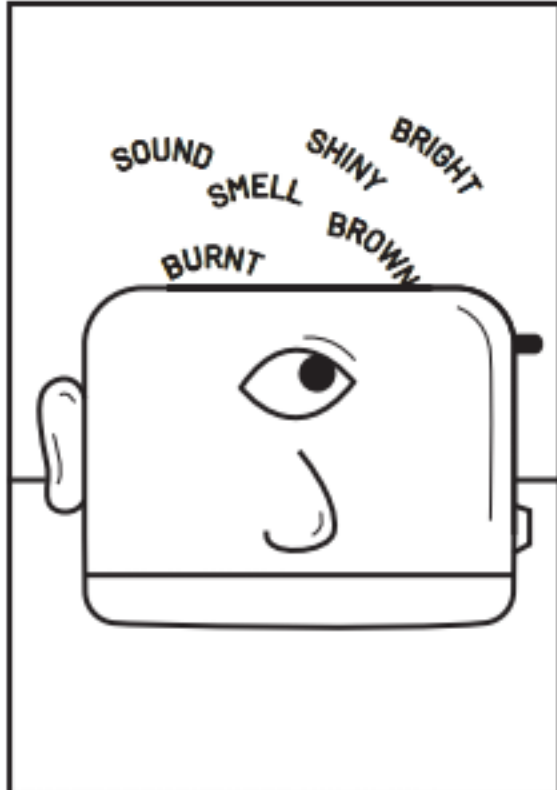
The ears were no longer hearing people talk, the 'I' was hearing them.



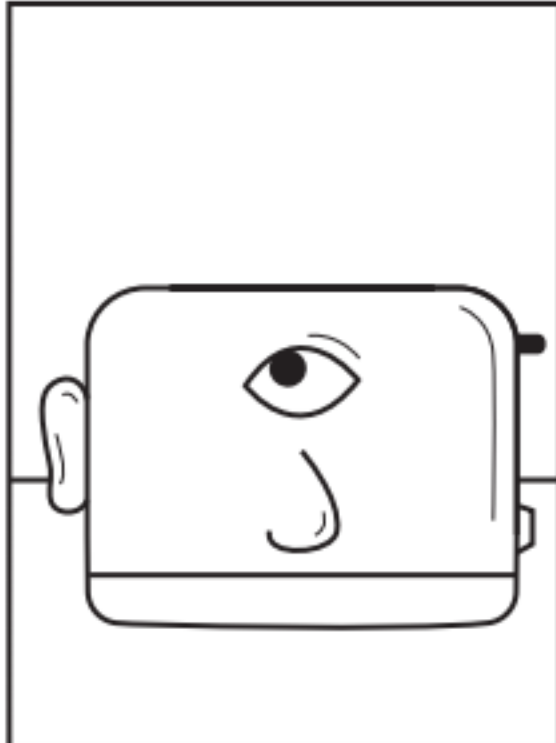
The nose no longer smelt the burnt toast, the 'I' smelt it.



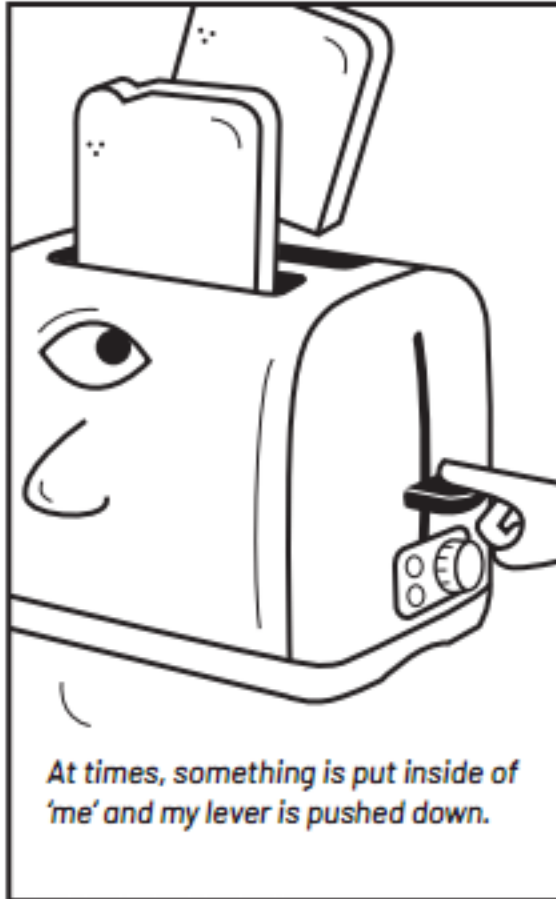
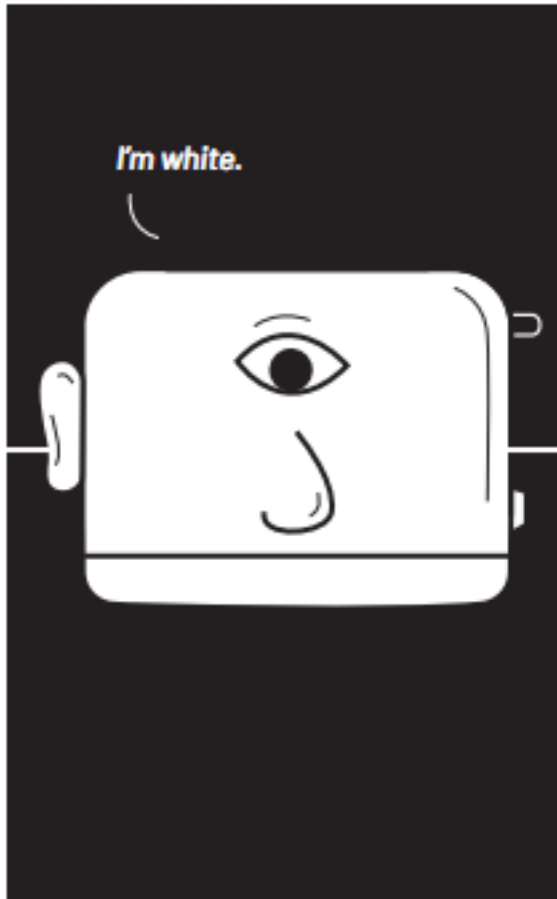
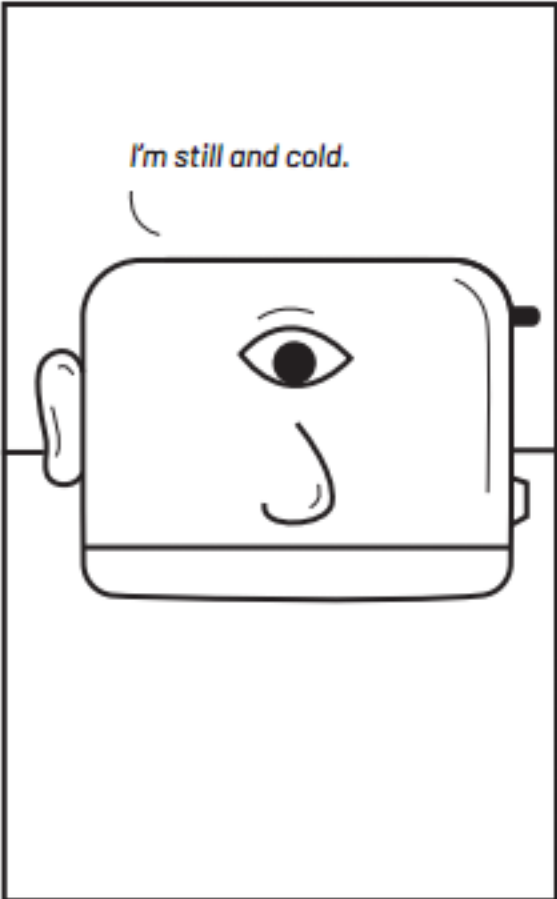
That done, more thoughts could arise.

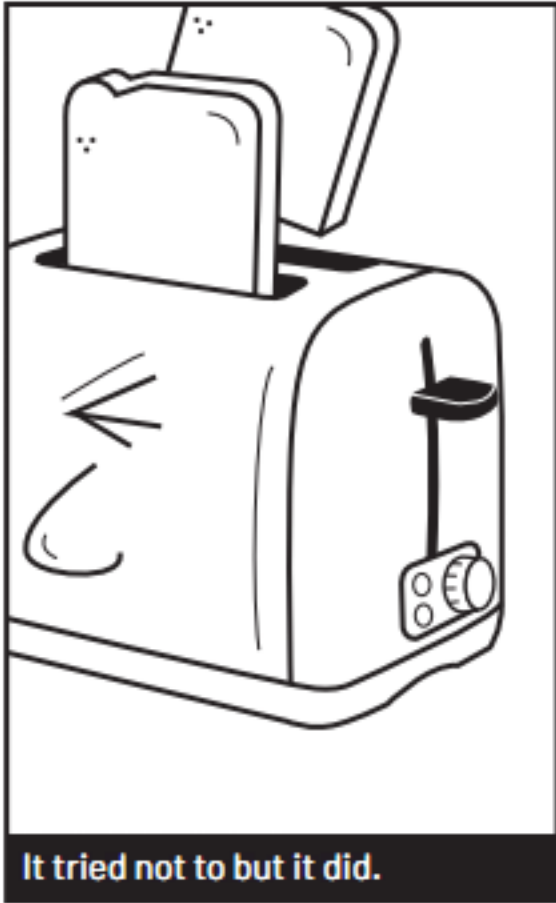
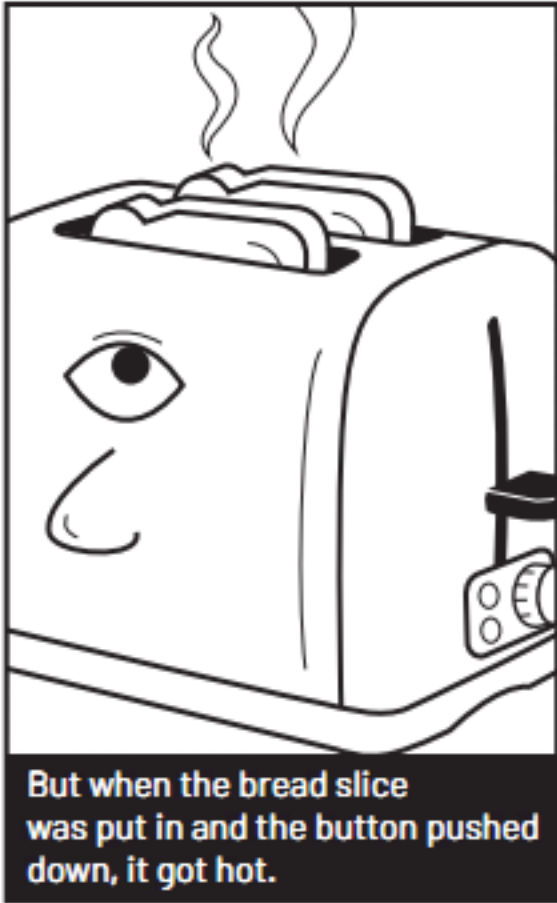
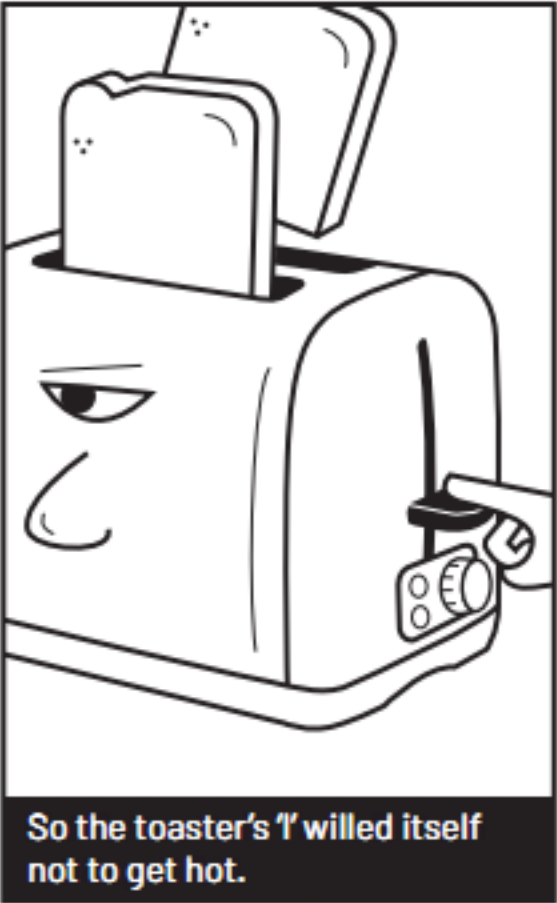
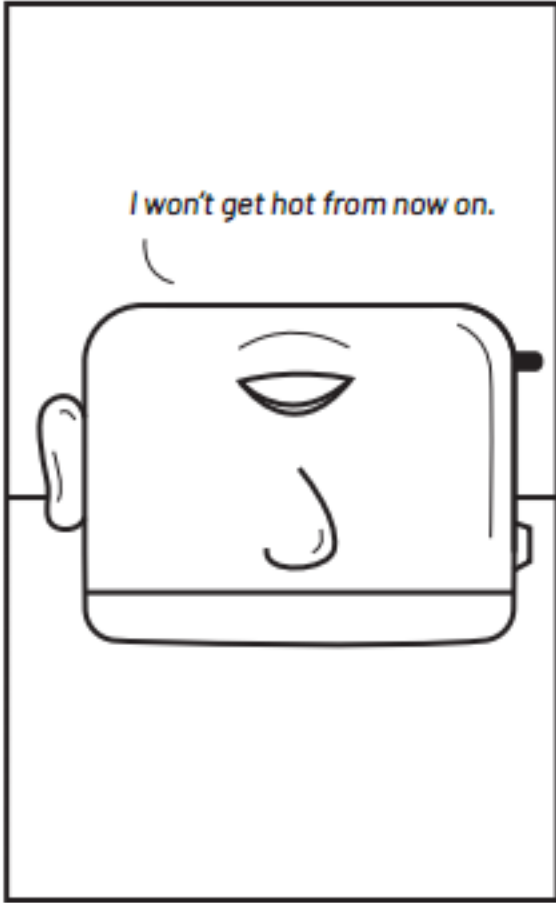
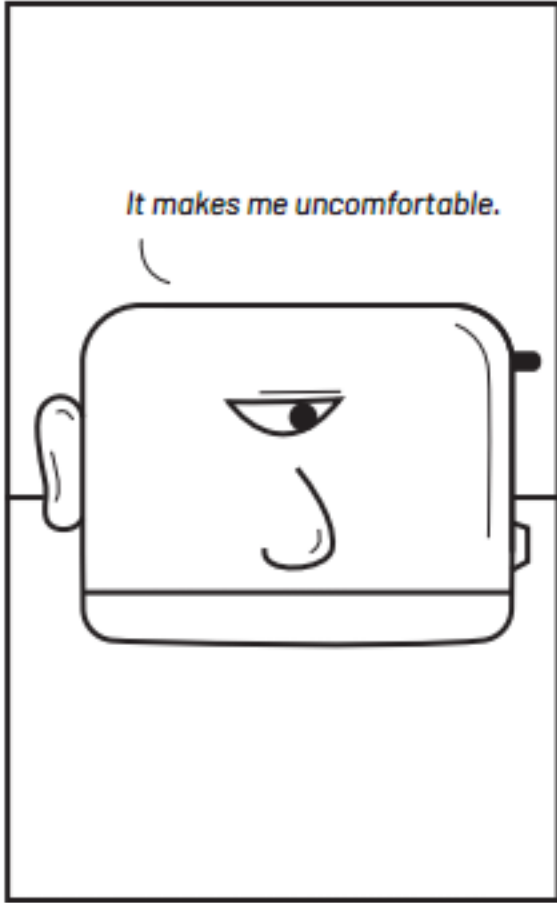
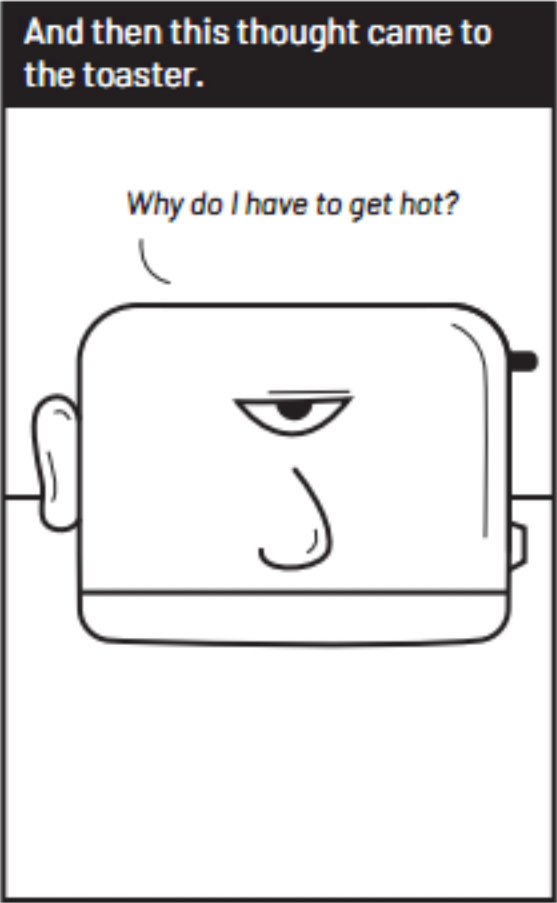
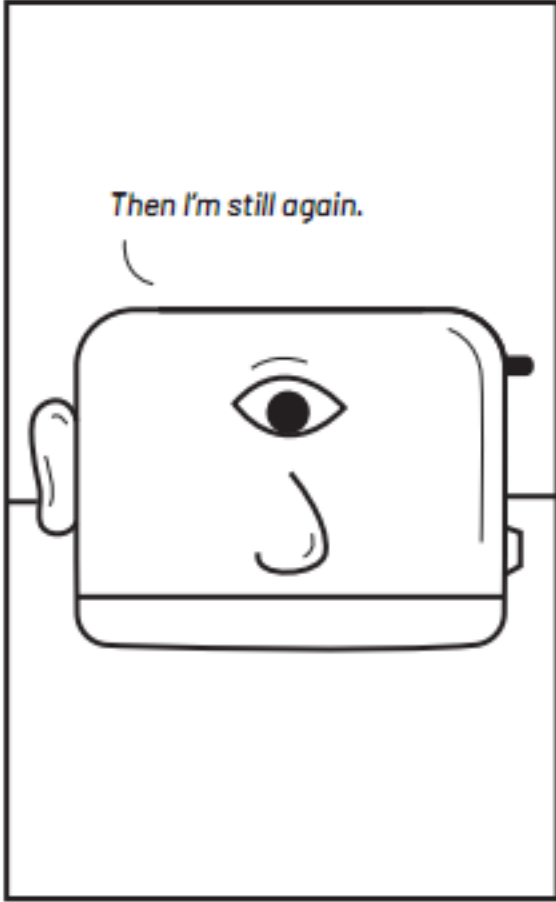
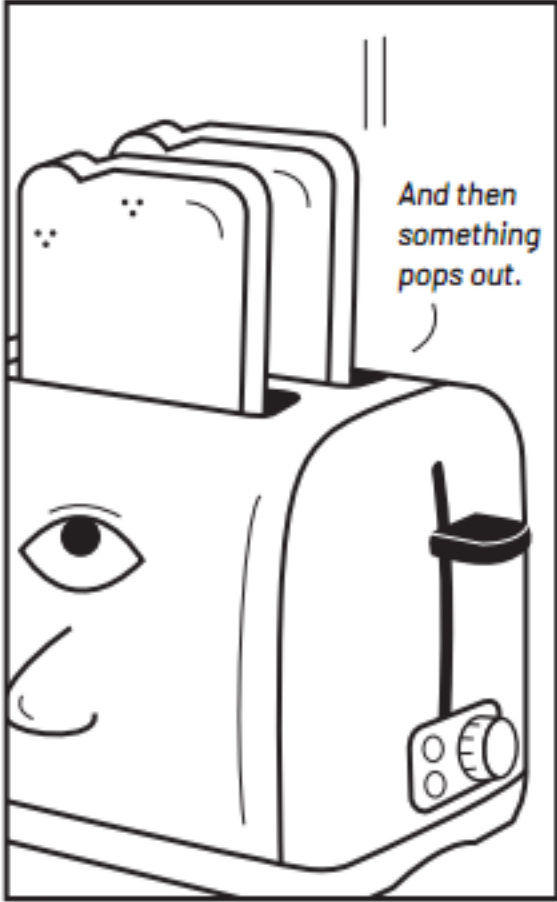
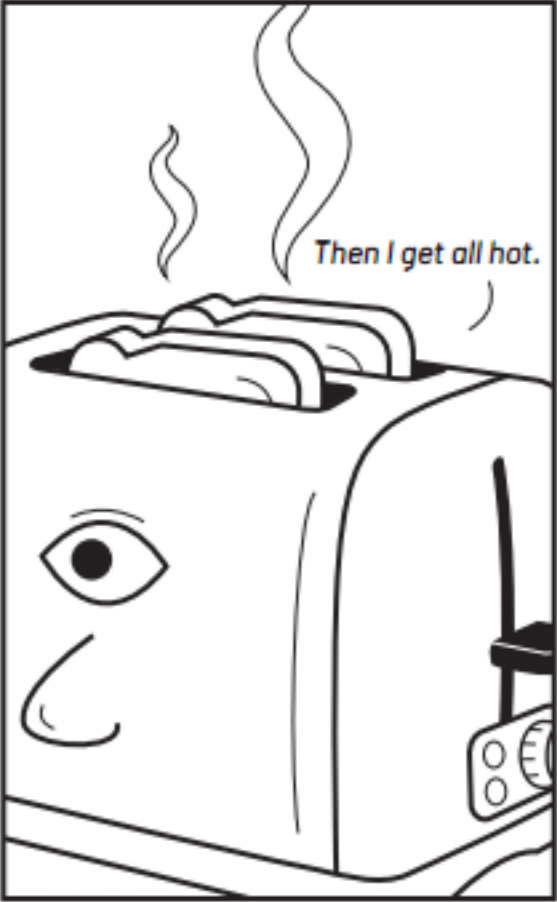


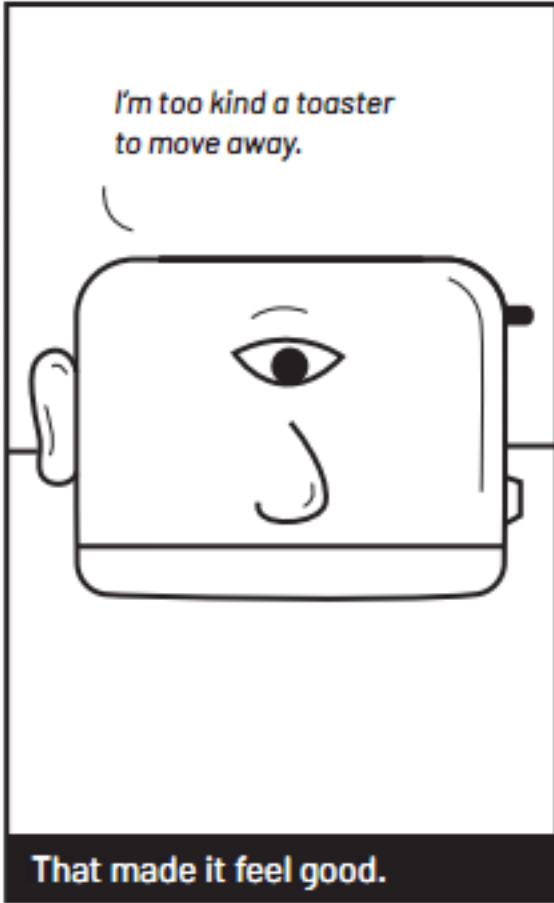
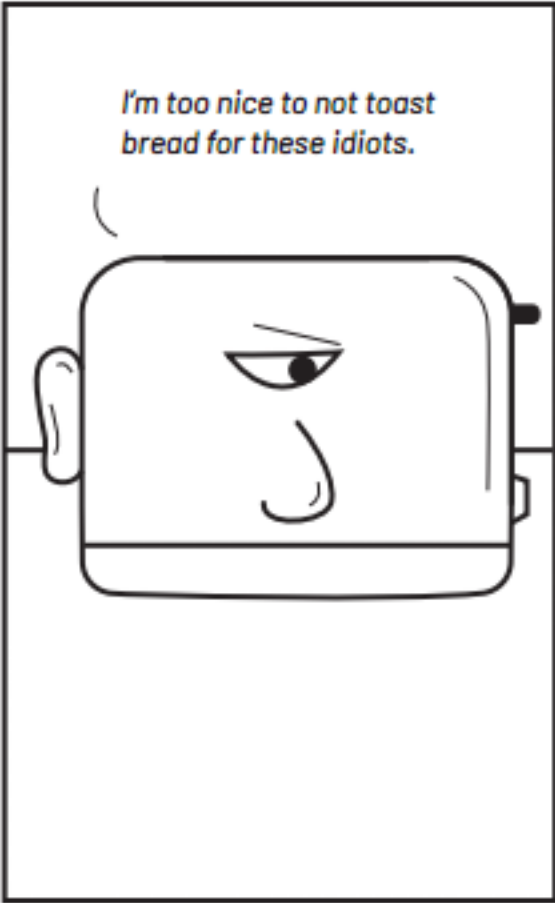
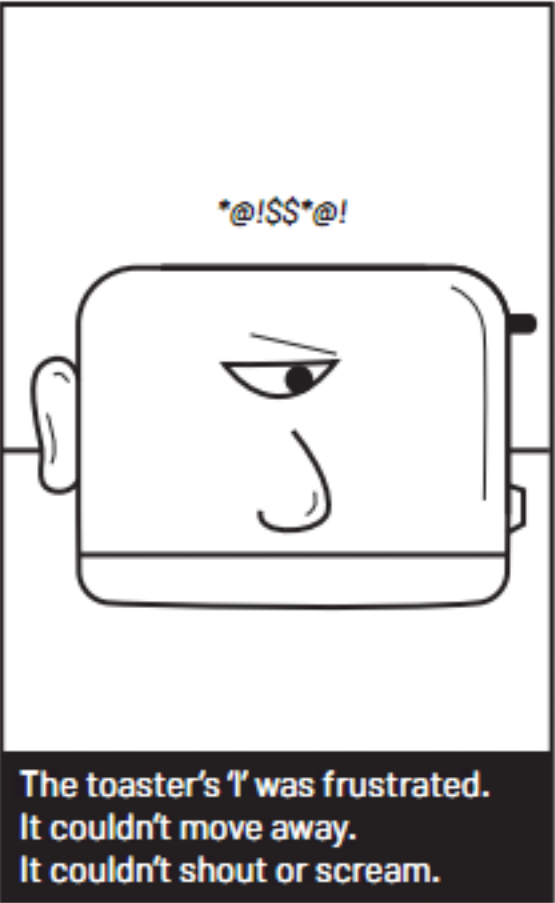
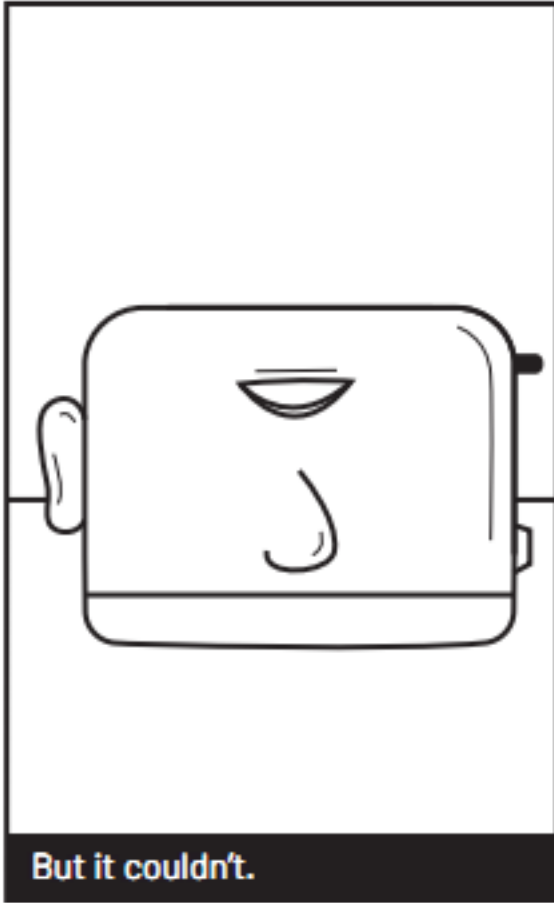
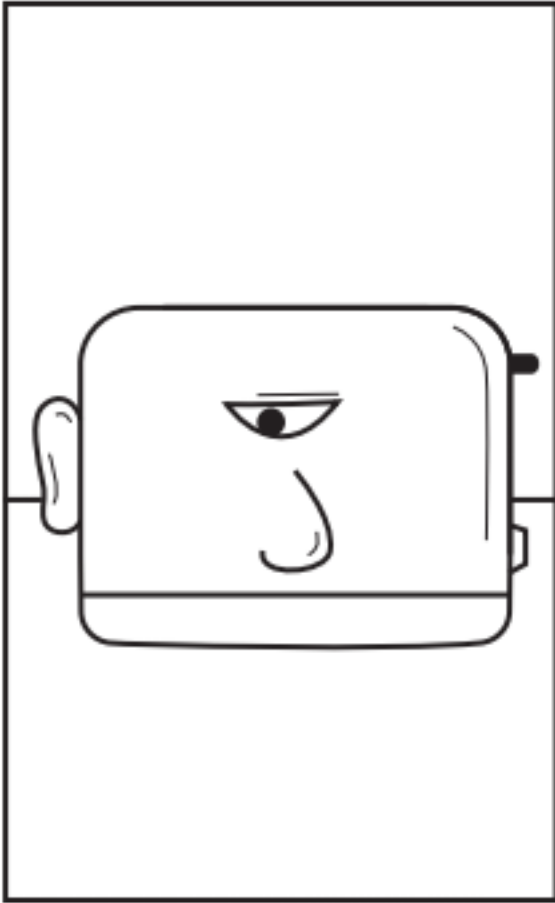
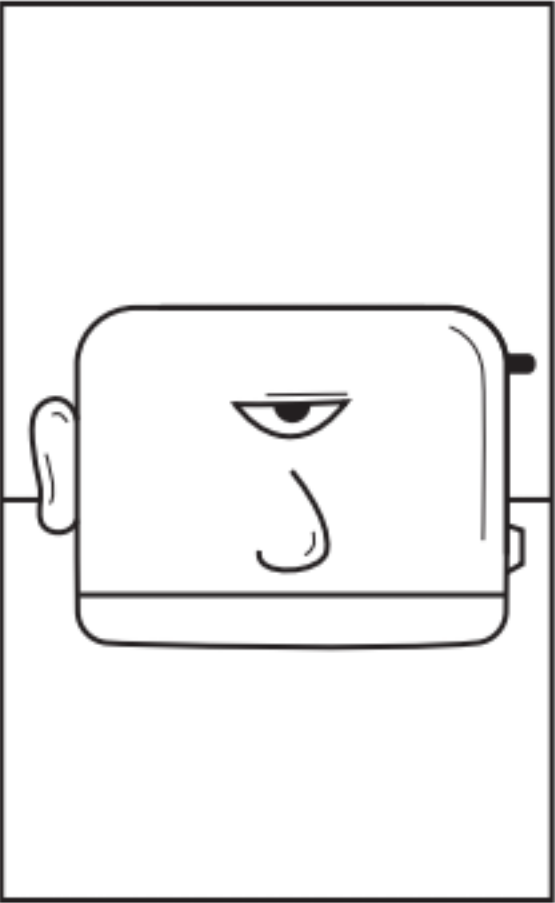
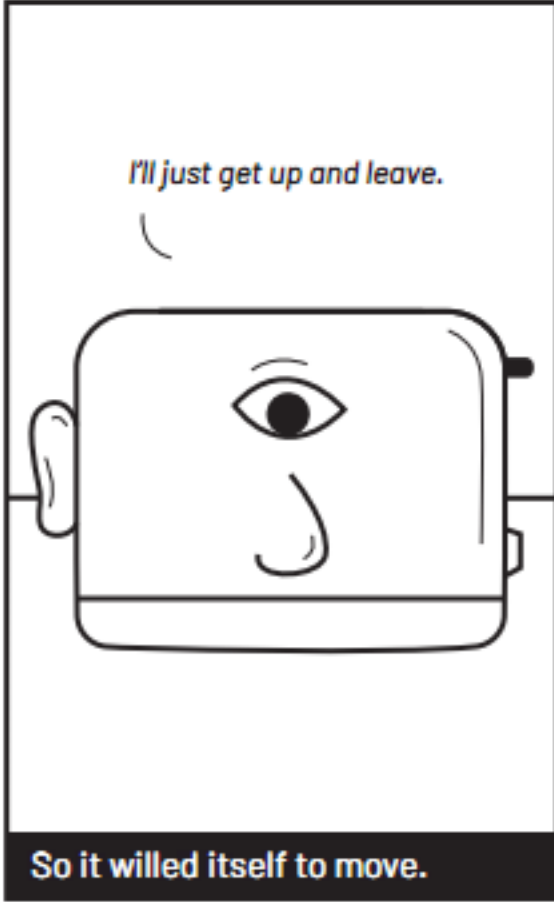
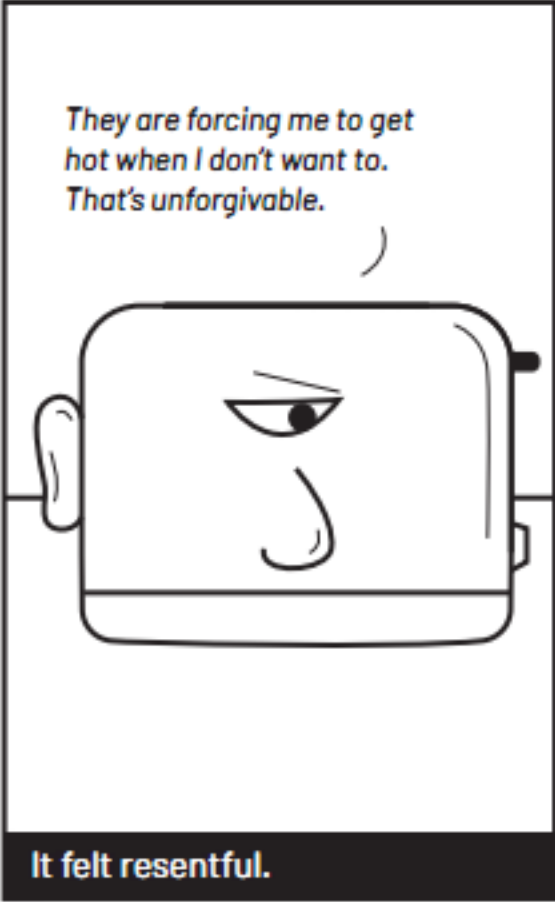
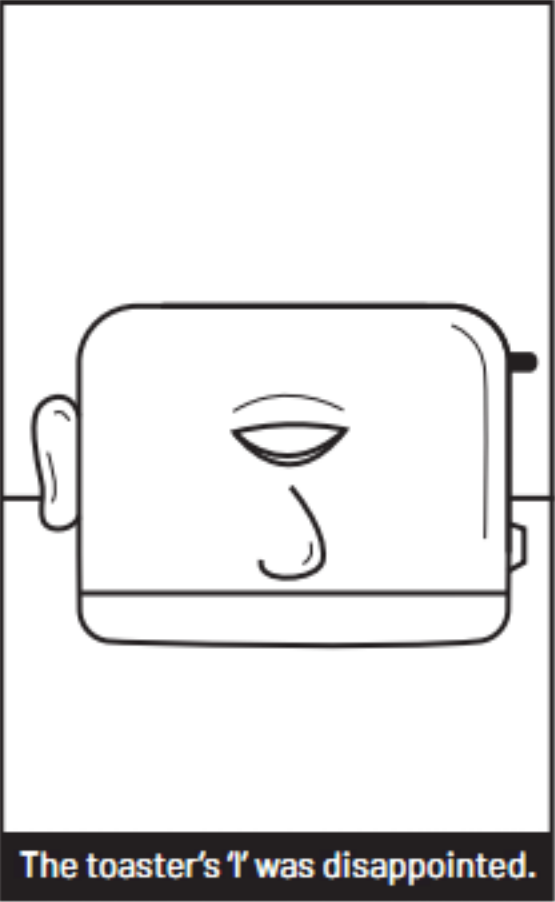
The toaster came up with words to express these thoughts.

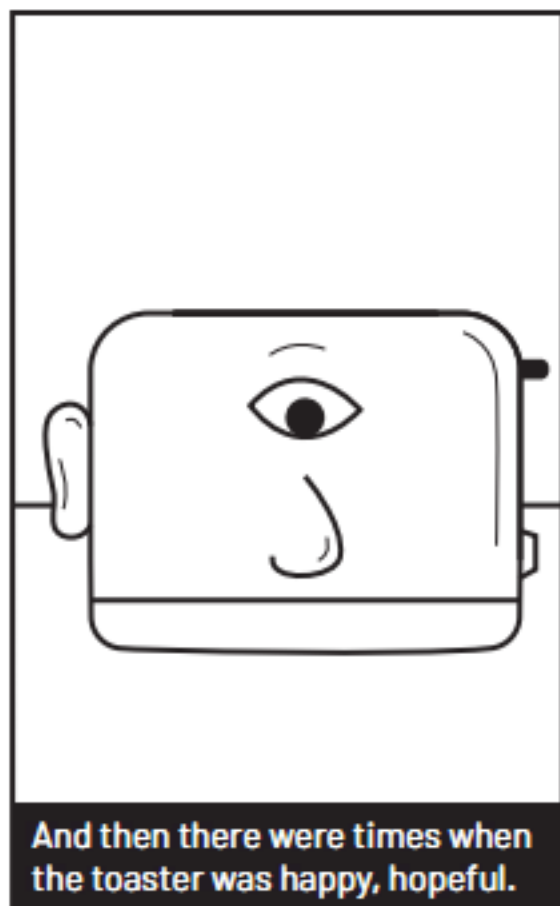
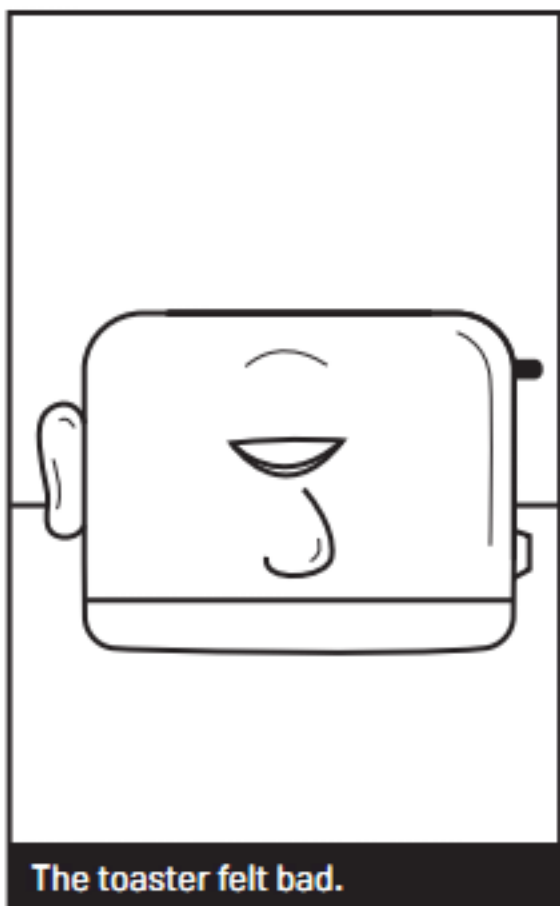
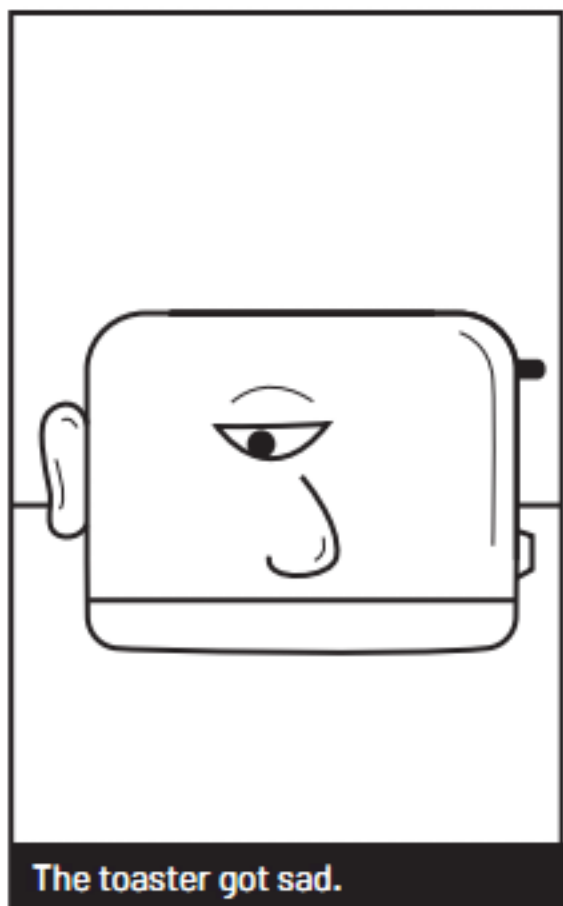


A few weeks passed, the toaster had made a picture of who it could be.









And so it goes.

The toaster's intellect interacts with the senses (hearing, sight, smell, etc.); the senses provide the intellect (mind) with impressions of the world and based on these impressions the intellect forms an identity 'I'. The 'I' constitutes the body of the toaster and its mind (or intellect). The 'I' limits itself to this body-mind complex. Anything that's not this 'I' becomes the 'other'. The toaster's 'I' assumes that it is doing things / can do things, for example, it is toasting bread, it can run away if it wants.

In reality, the 'I' is just a thought. The 'I' does nothing. It takes ownership for what the toaster's pre-programmed functionality is doing and gets frustrated when it isn't able to run away ('running' is something that the toaster isn't programmed to do).

The same applies to human beings. All our resentment and anxiety is like that of the toaster — at our inability to change people or events, at our inability to change ourselves.

So there it is, the 'I' is an imaginary concept (the mind identifying with the body and creating the concept of 'I'). It is a thought (the first thought) that all other thoughts rely on for their origin, that is, if there was no 'I' then other thoughts can't occur since all thoughts are in relation to the 'I' and the 'other' (the world).

18.

Thoughts alone make up the mind;
And of all thoughts the 'I' thought is the root.
What is called mind is but the notion 'I'.

19.

When one turns within and searches
The shamed 'I' vanishes
And wisdom's quest begins.

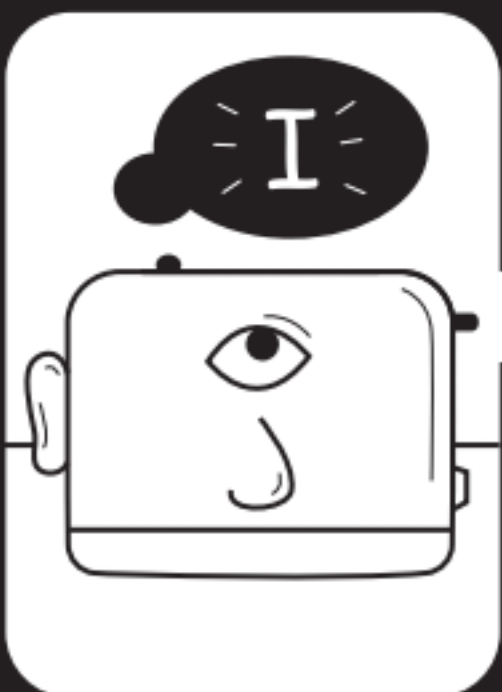
~ Verse 18 & 19, Upadesa Saram, Sri Ramana Maharshi

Turning inward to find one's true Self (and not the illusory 'I') is the path recommended by the Maharshi. But for that to happen, the mind's 'I' needs to weaken its hold, that is, the ego needs to go. This can be achieved to a large extent by understanding how human beings really operate

(Hint: somewhat like the toaster).

ABSTRACT KNOWLEDGE

via the senses – sight, smell,
hearing, touch and taste

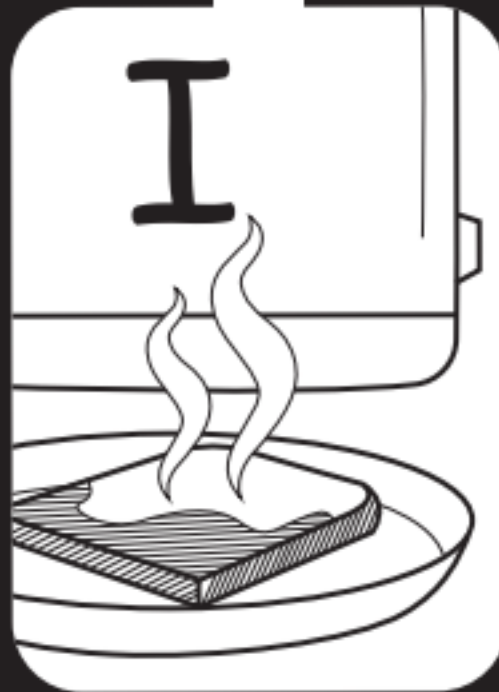
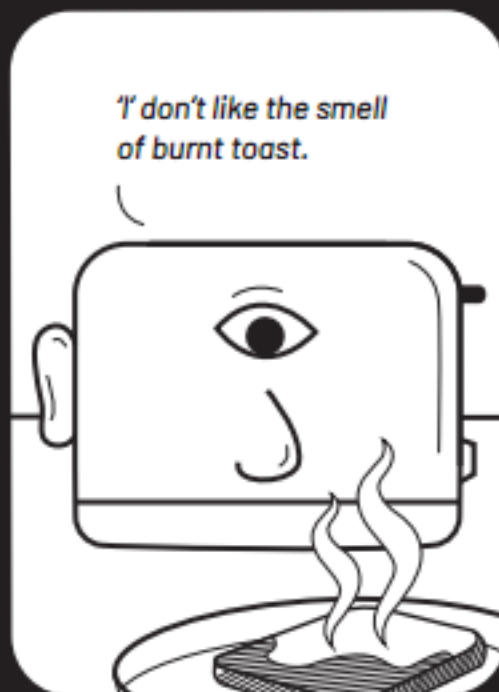


EGO

the imaginary subject:
the ONE that can see, hear,
smell, touch and taste

WORDS

that give expression to
the thoughts and feelings

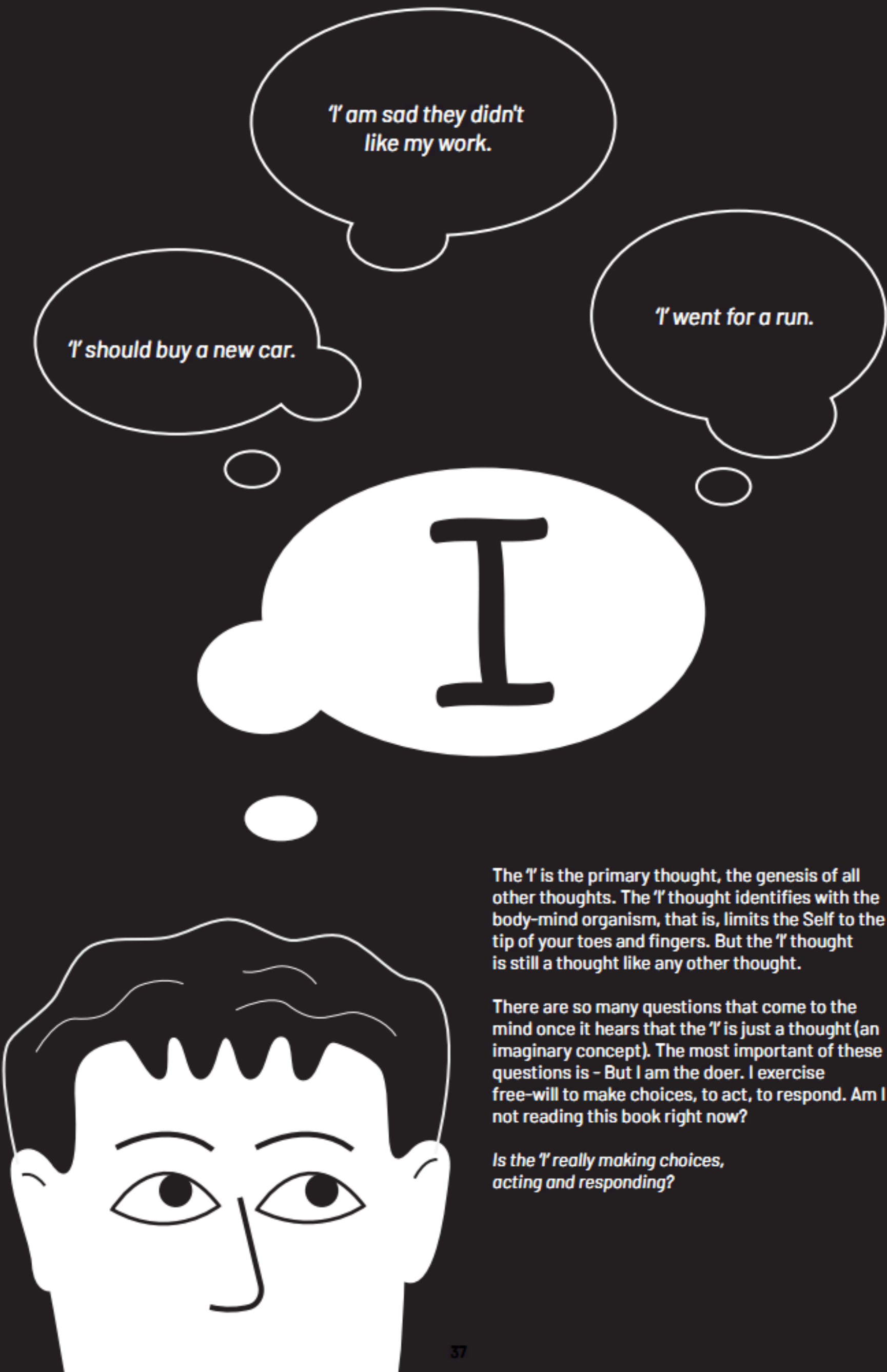


THOUGHTS & FEELINGS

in relation to the 'I' and how this
'I' interacts with the 'other' (the world)

5.

TWINS SEPARATED
AT BIRTH



*'I am sad they didn't
like my work.*

'I should buy a new car.

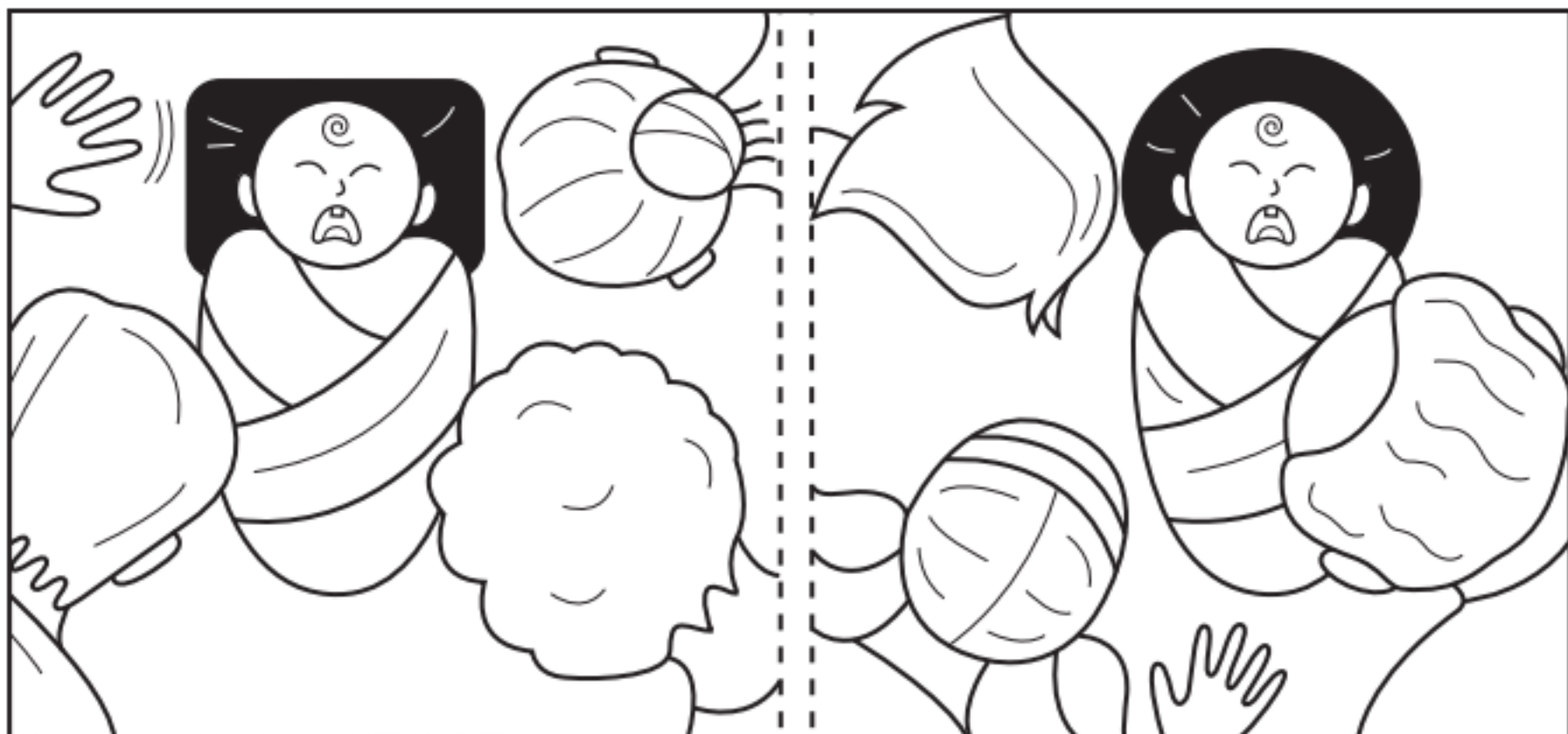
'I went for a run.

I

The 'I' is the primary thought, the genesis of all other thoughts. The 'I' thought identifies with the body-mind organism, that is, limits the Self to the tip of your toes and fingers. But the 'I' thought is still a thought like any other thought.

There are so many questions that come to the mind once it hears that the 'I' is just a thought (an imaginary concept). The most important of these questions is - But I am the doer. I exercise free-will to make choices, to act, to respond. Am I not reading this book right now?

*Is the 'I' really making choices,
acting and responding?*



James Springer and James Lewis were separated as one-month-olds, adopted by different families...

The two Jims were reunited when they were 39.



University of Minnesota psychologist Thomas Bouchard found some interesting commonalities...



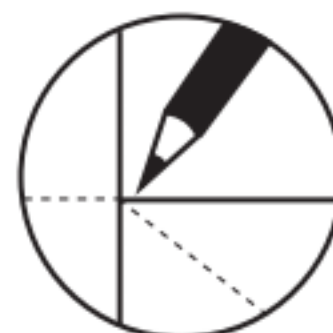
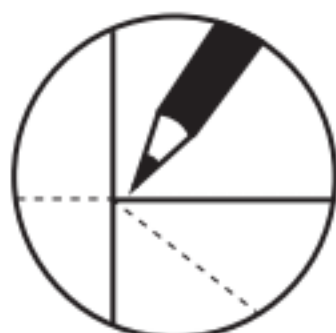
LINDA

BETTY



LINDA

BETTY



$$2+2=4$$



SPELLING



$$2+2=4$$



SPELLING

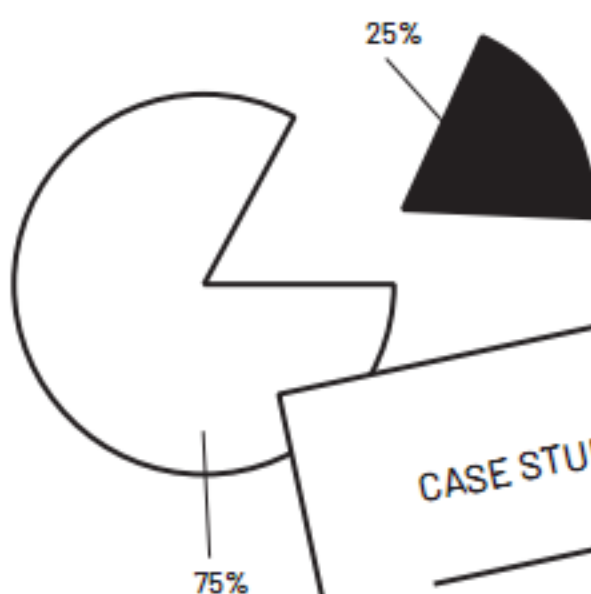


Both had married and divorced a woman named Linda and remarried a Betty. They shared interests in mechanical drawing and carpentry; their favourite school subject had been maths, their least favourite, spelling. They smoked and drank the same amount and got headaches at the same time of day.

STUDY 121



SE STUDY 420



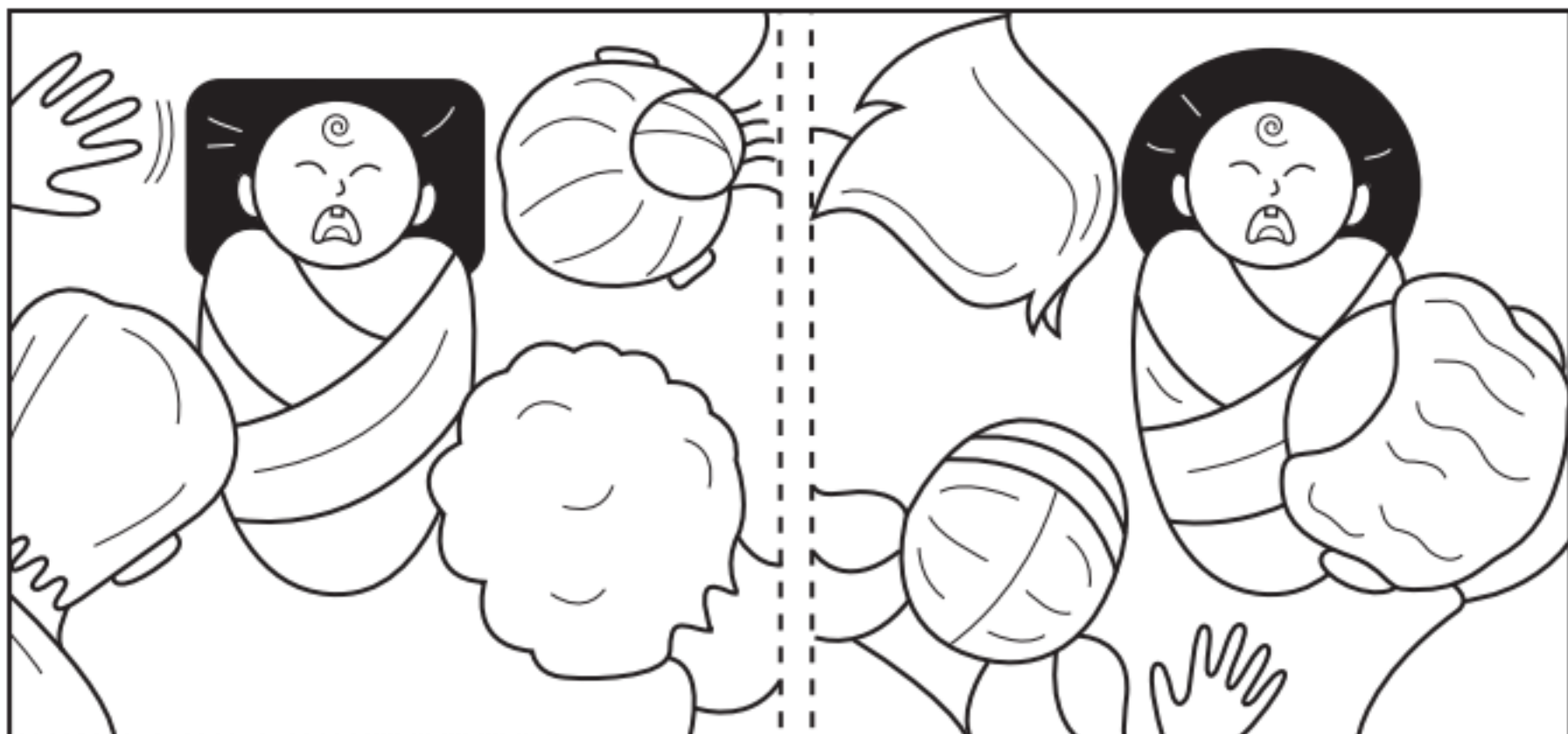
CASE STUDY 128

CASE STUDY 101

CASE STUDY 210



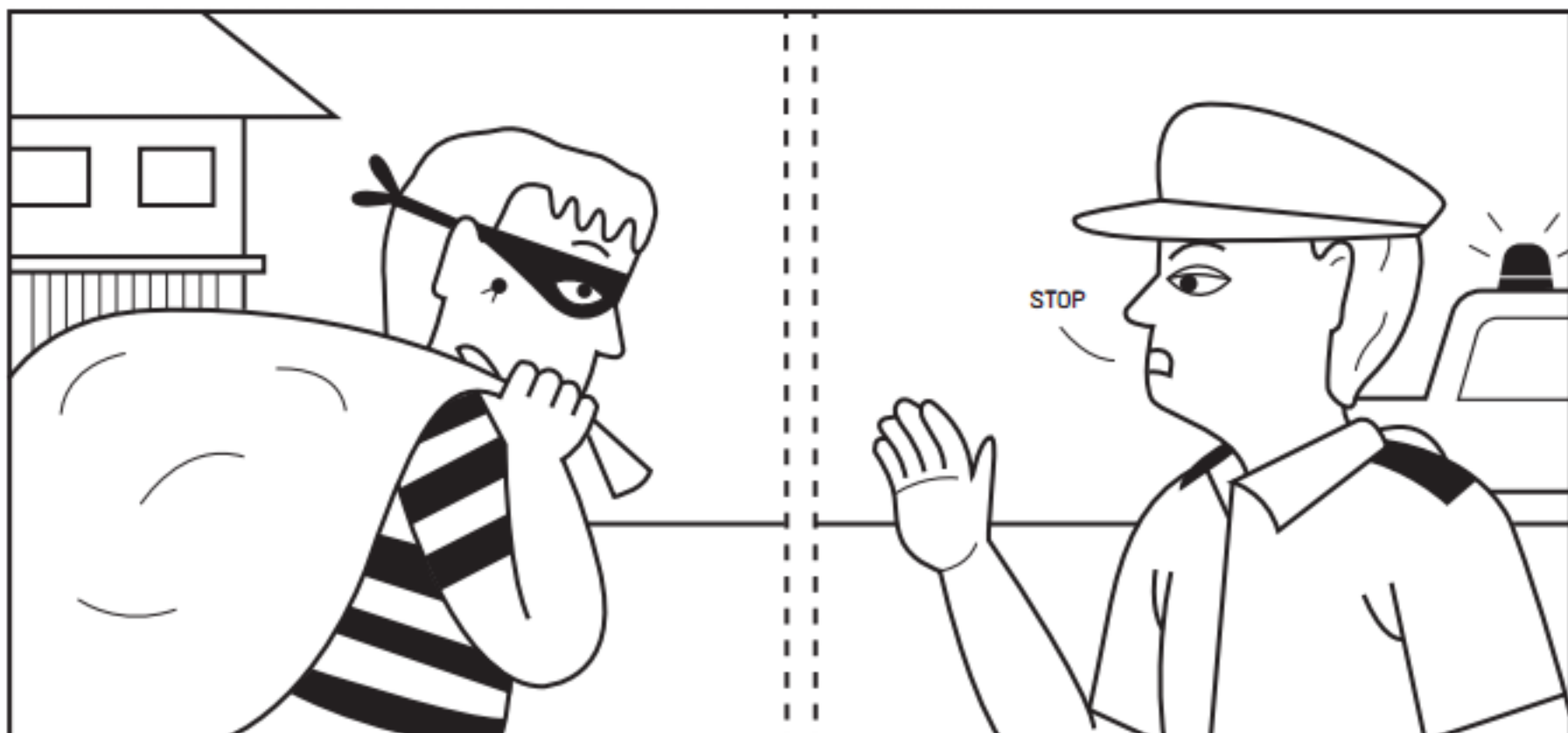
This was 1979. Since then, several such studies have indicated that our traits are to a large extent inherited. So, how we respond to situations is heavily influenced by our genes. But that's not all. It's also about the environment we grow up in.



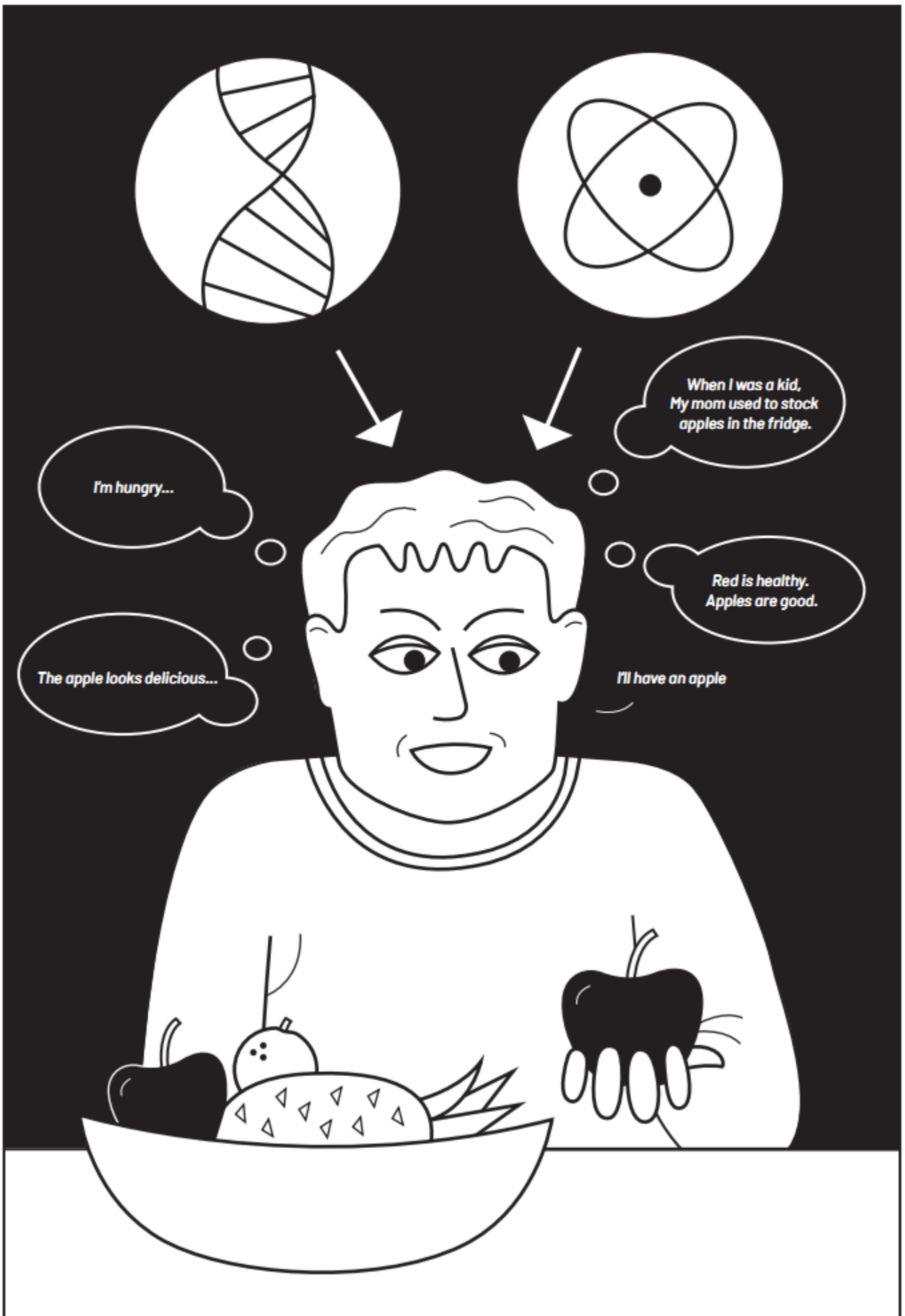
Identical twins raised in different environments didn't end up at the same place, did they?



One was more successful, the other one less. One was richer, the other one was not so well off.



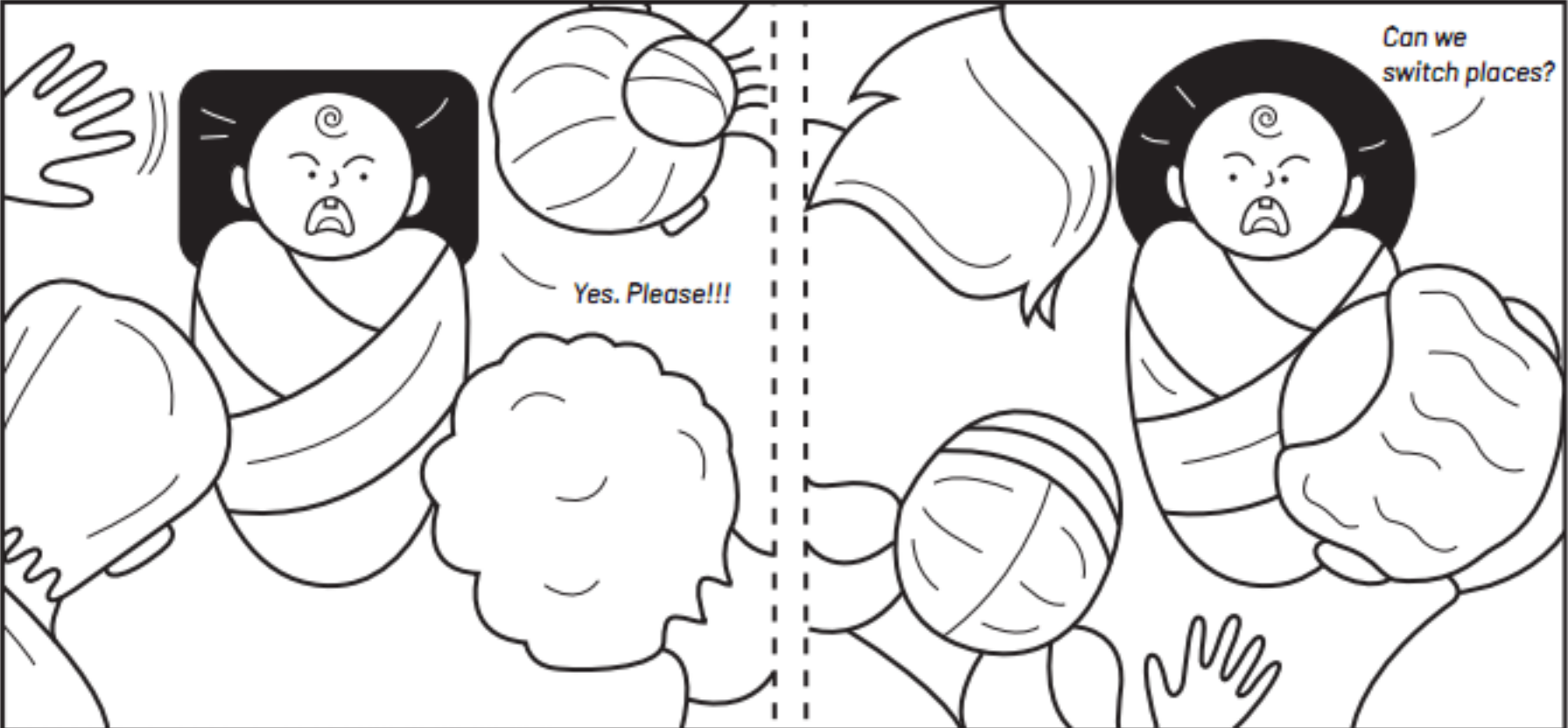
One became a thief, the other a policeman. A Bollywood potboiler!



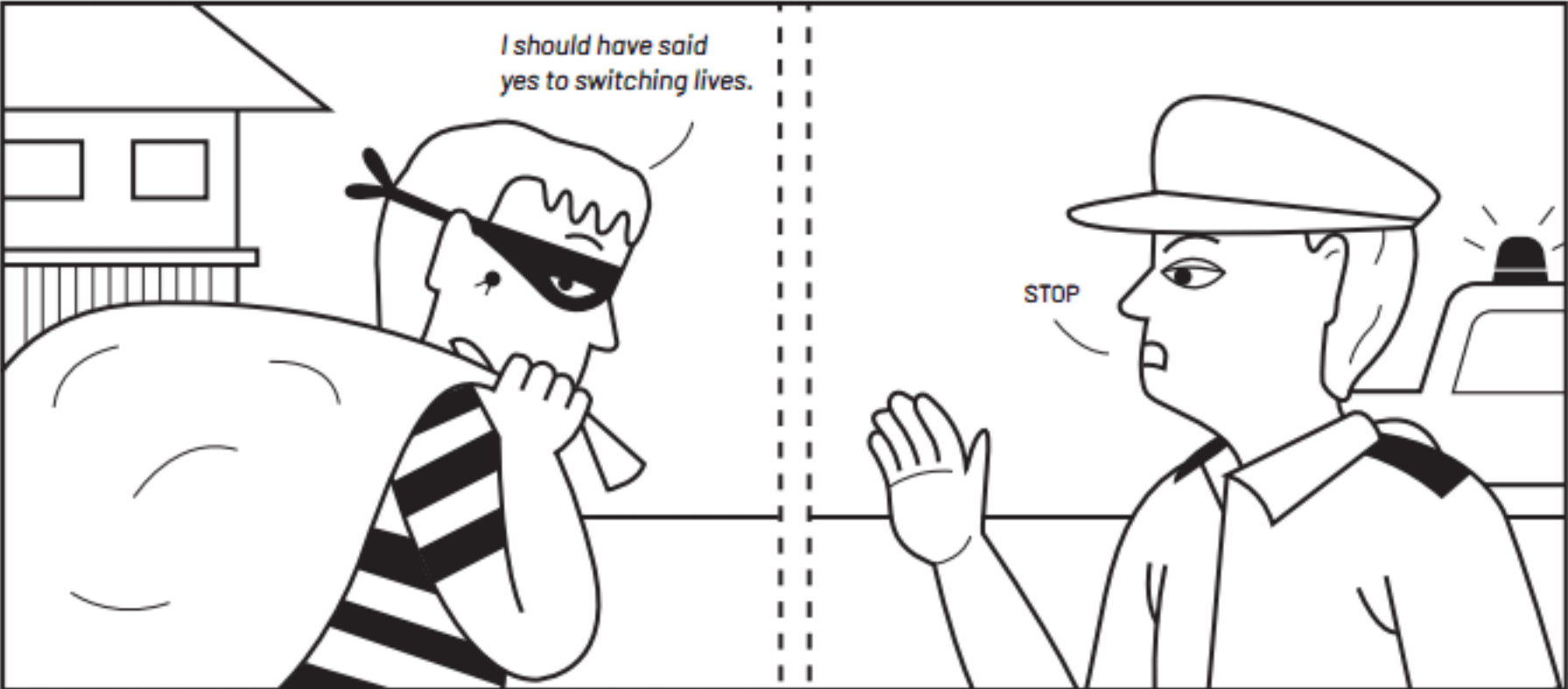
Latest research into the role of genes and conditioning clearly affirms that everything we do or say or think or feel (all of it), is dictated by our genetic code and the environment that we have grown up in (implying everything that's happened to us till the present).

But wait...

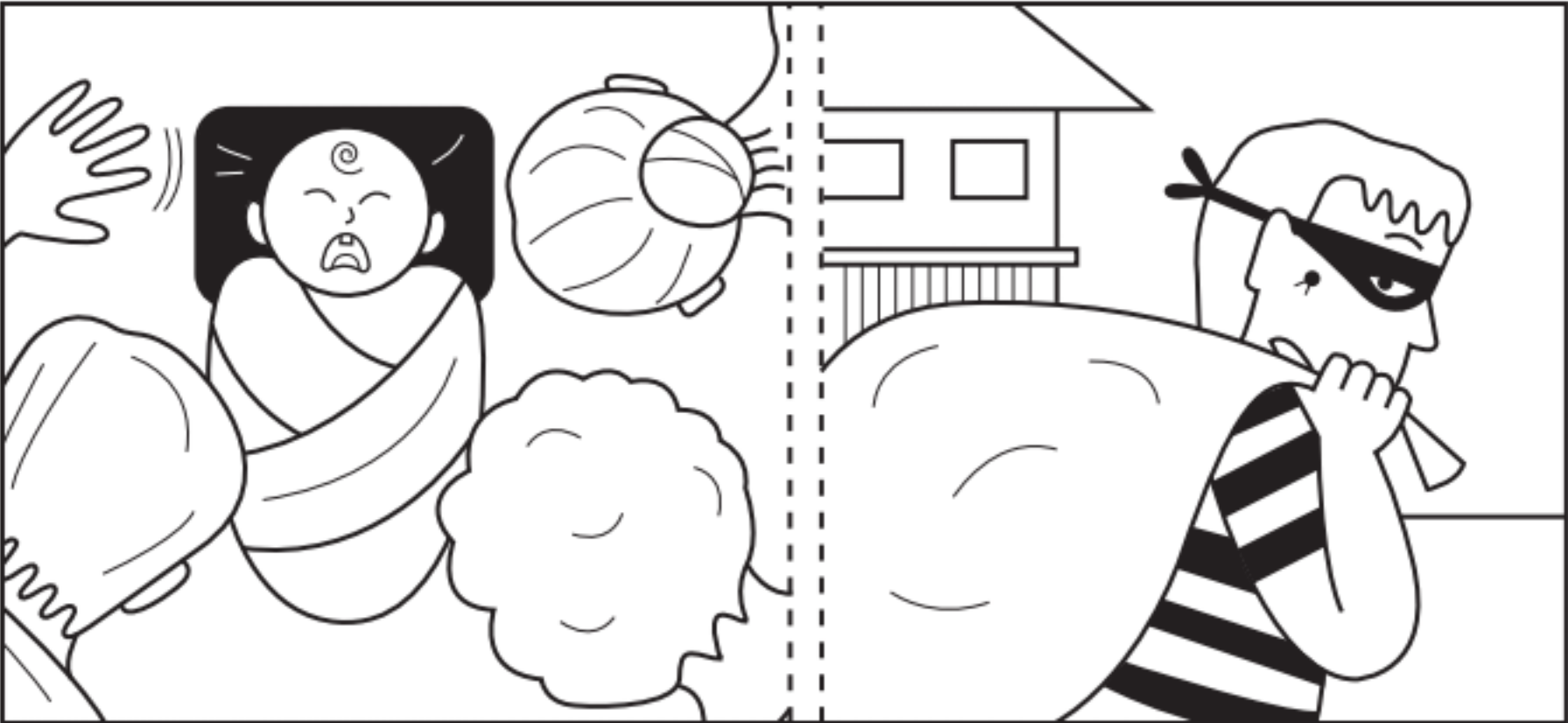
Which one of these things was in our control?



Genes? Not at all. Inherited. We didn't choose where we were born, did we?



Environment? Nope. We didn't get to choose the parents who raised us and we grew up to become who we are because our lives were limited by the possibilities provided by our context (and further limited by our genes).

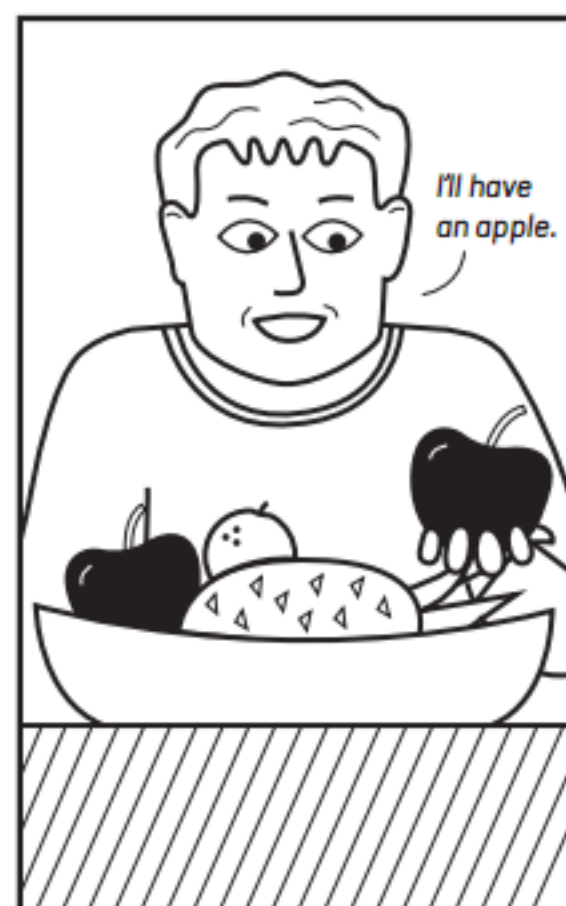
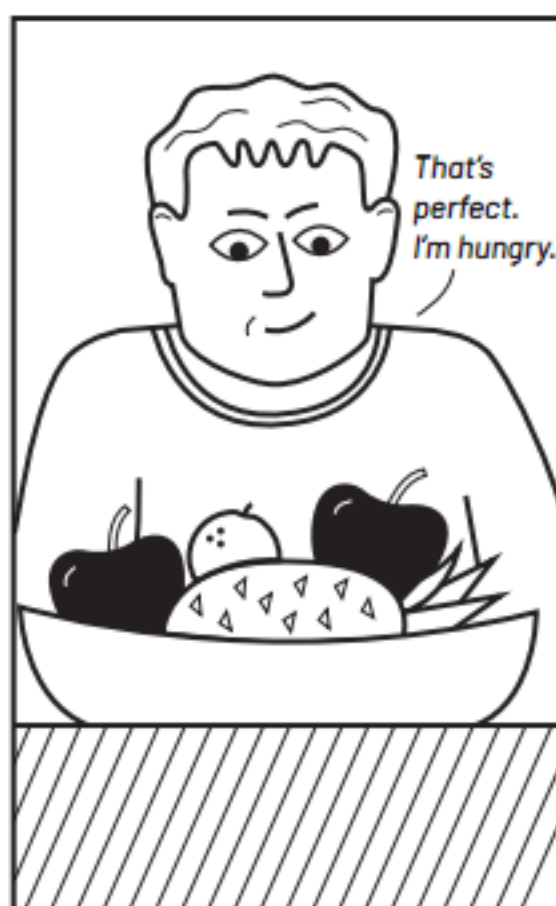


That is, where we came from decided where we could go.

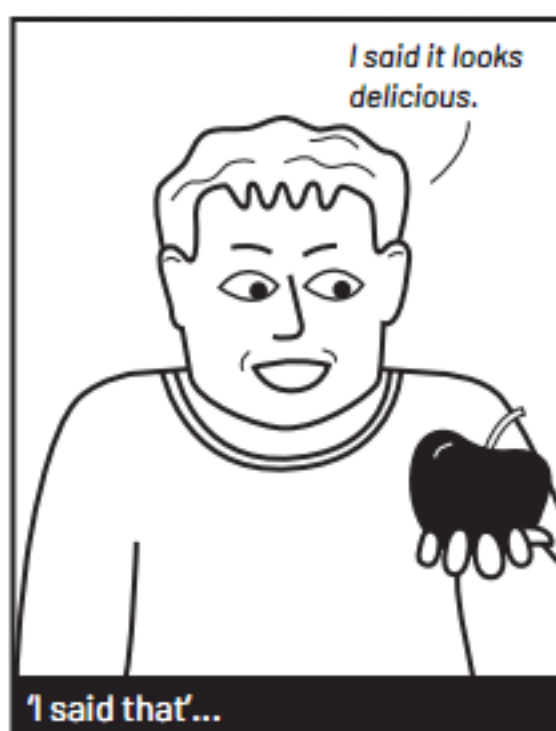
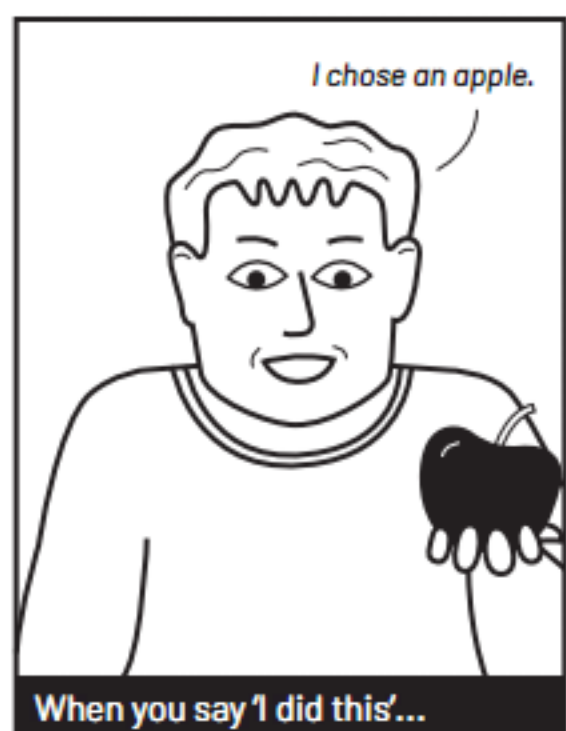
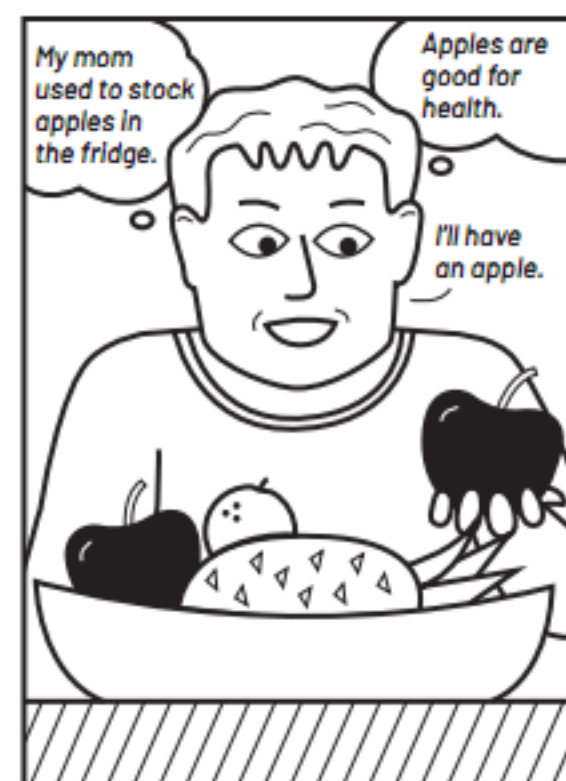
There is nothing new about what's being said. The theory of genetics was first proposed a century and a half ago. Genes and conditioning and their relative influence have been hotly debated. However, recent research is clearly pointing to something that's even more radical.

Everything we do is decided by our genes and conditioning.

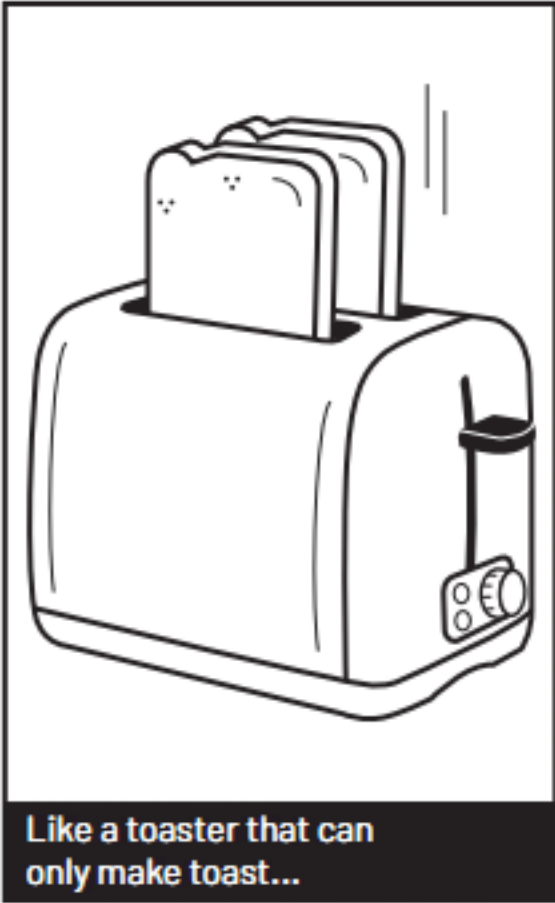
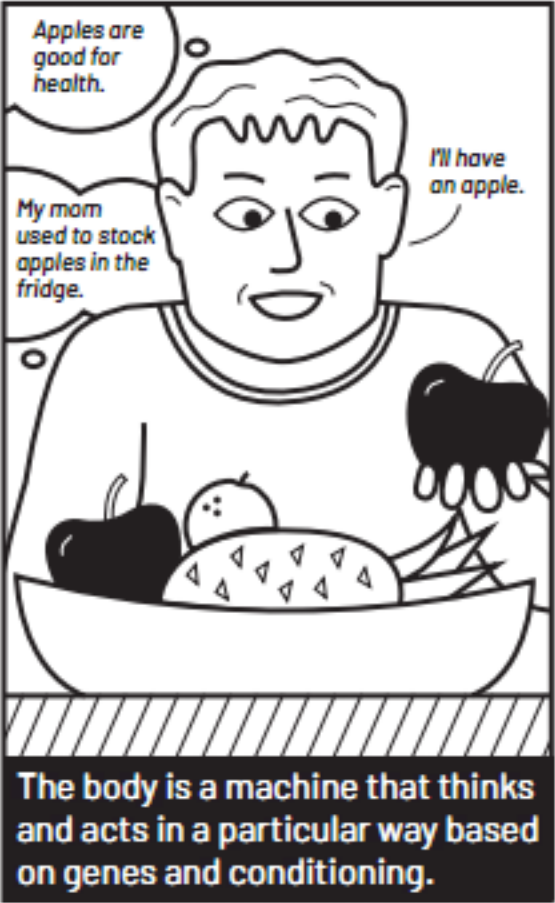
**We respond to external stimuli but the response is pre-programmed,
that is, decided by our genes and conditioning.**



What you consider as a choice made by you is actually an action dictated by your genes and conditioning.



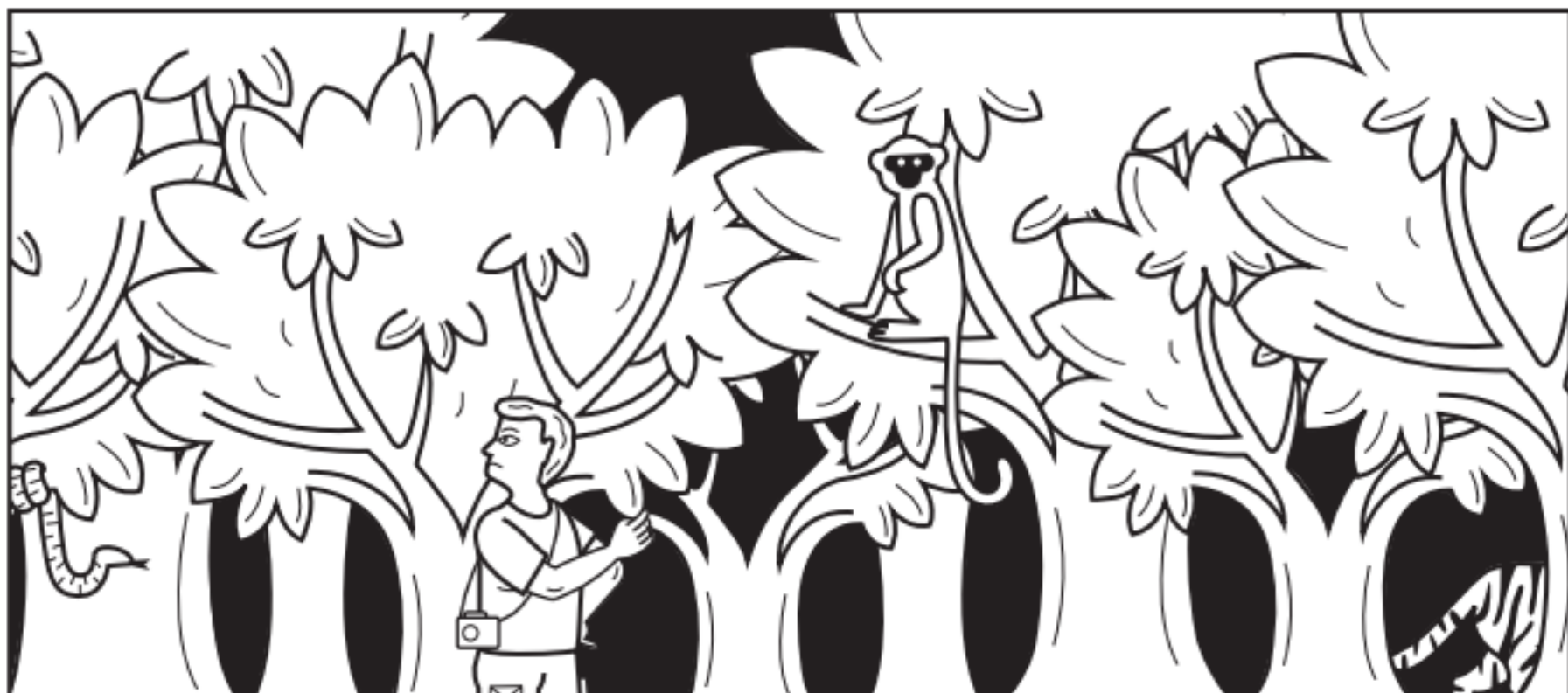
**...you assume that there is an individual 'I' that thinks and acts.
But there is no such individual.**



Do you have any control over the next thought that pops out of your head?

6.

THE GRAND ILLUSION



A man got lost in a vast jungle. He walked a long distance hoping to find his way but the farther he got, the more lost he was.



Tired, he lay on the ground, propped his head against a rock and rested.



A few minutes later...



He saw a pack of wolves running towards him.



They were hungry.



A pack on the hunt.



The man ran as fast as he could.



The wolves were faster and had him surrounded.



Just when it seemed to be over...



...the man ran into a clearing, in the middle was a lone tree. He scrambled up the thick trunk just in the nick of time. The wolves converged at the base and leapt as high as they could but they couldn't get to him.



The man hung on to a branch that was out of reach.





The wolves ambled about but didn't leave, waiting for him to fall down like a ripe fruit.



Night came and the pack howled.



The man was sleepy but the branch was too narrow to lie down.



*I must not sleep.
I must not sleep.*

He knew if he fell asleep he would surely fall down and get devoured.



*I must not sleep.
I must not....*

Hours passed. The night grew darker. The man grew sleepier.



*I must not.... sleep..
I...must not....sss*



*I.....sle....e...p...
i....sss....ll..*



The wolves settled down beside the tree.



With the howling no longer disturbing the man, his entreaties to himself to not sleep became a whisper and then stopped.



A few seconds later...



Cursing himself, he tried to scramble back up.



But the wolves were too quick for him.

The man congratulates himself (his 'I') for running fast and climbing up the tree.
He tells himself (his 'I' telling itself) not to fall asleep.

Like most of us, the man hasn't realized that the 'I' doesn't control thoughts
and actions.

He ran because his mind-body was programmed to respond this way, he climbed
up for the same reason and he, finally, couldn't keep himself awake because he
wasn't programmed to do that.

But in this story, the man's ego sense 'I' takes the credit, gets blamed - having done
nothing, isn't that something?

This is the GRAND ILLUSION.

7.

WORKING MIND / THINKING MIND



Have you noticed the tremendous, painful weight of the 'I'?

I have to do this or else I'll be in a soup...

If only I hadn't done that...

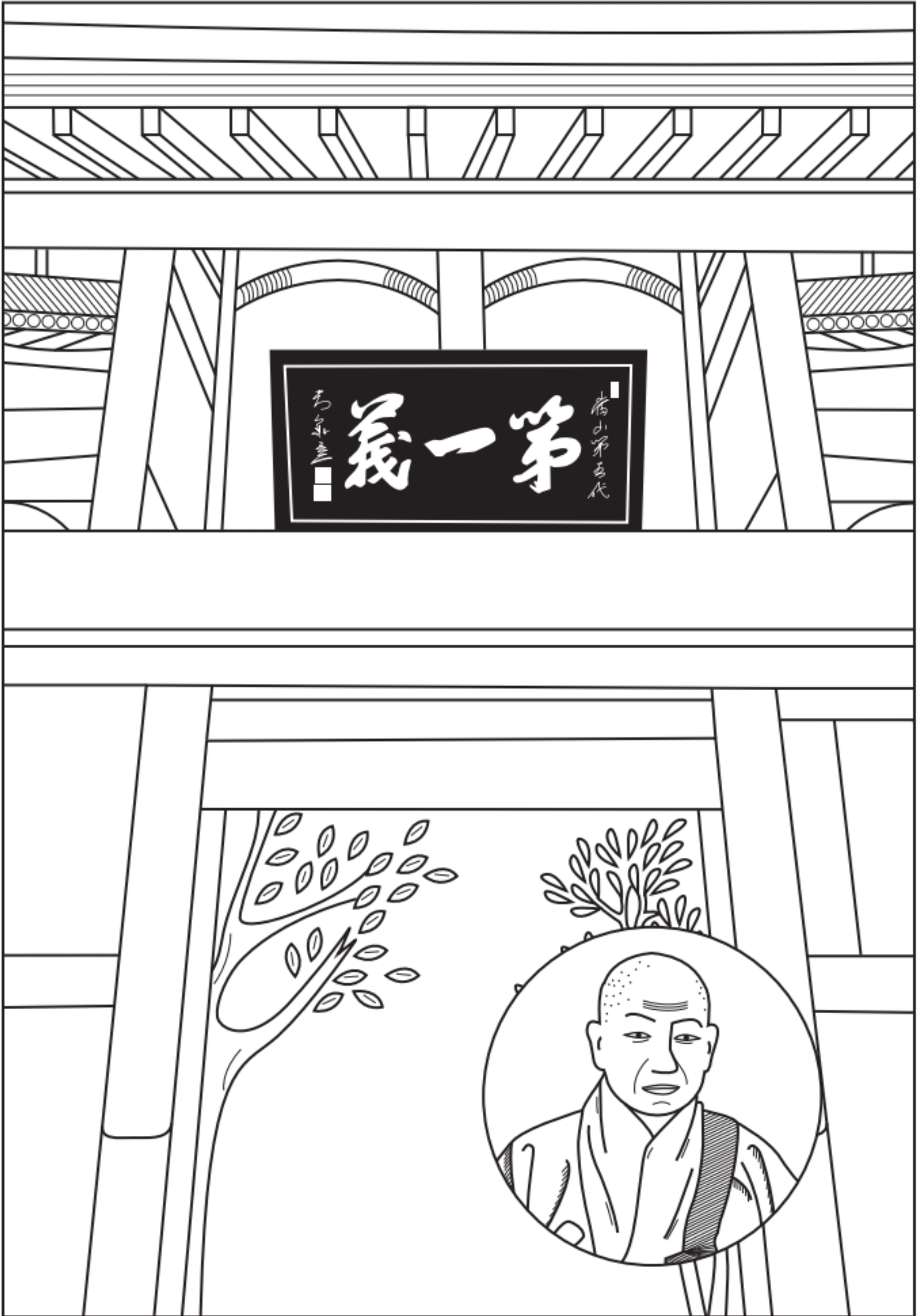
I can't do that and he can...

She made me suffer...

He will definitely do something to harm my reputation...

It goes on and on. The regret and anxiety related to what was done to you or by you in the past or what you have to do or someone else will do to you in the future – isn't that a significant part of our mental narrative?

But if 'I' is not the doer, then what's the point of worrying about what you did or will do? Why be anxious about what will happen in the future and regret what you did in the past? Why not live from moment to moment, being fully attentive to the present?



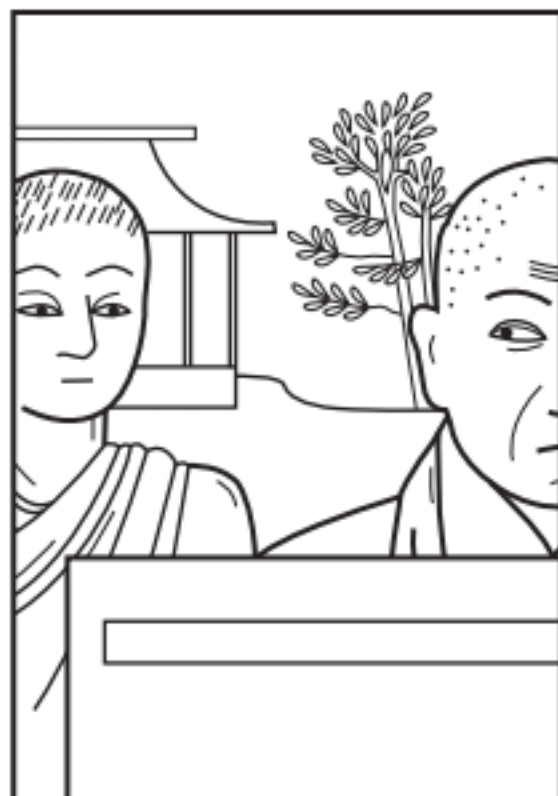
At the Obaku temple in Kyoto one can see carved over the gate the words 'The First Principle'. The letters are unusually large, and those who appreciate calligraphy always admire them as being a masterpiece. They were drawn by Kosen (a master calligrapher) two hundred years ago.



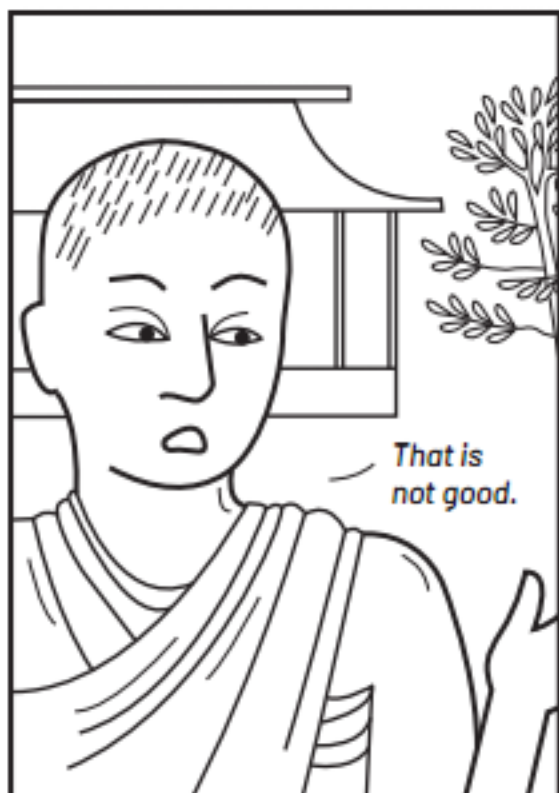
When the master drew them he did so on paper, from which the workmen made the large carving in wood.



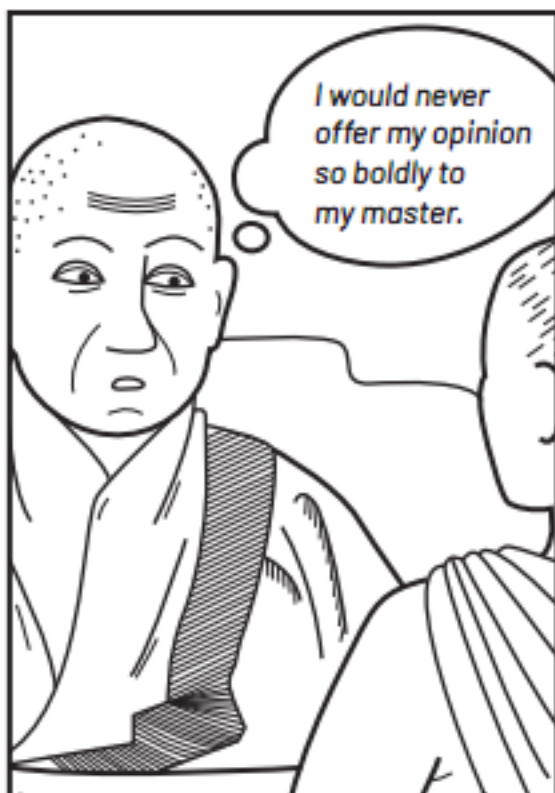
As Kosen sketched the letters an outspoken pupil was with him.



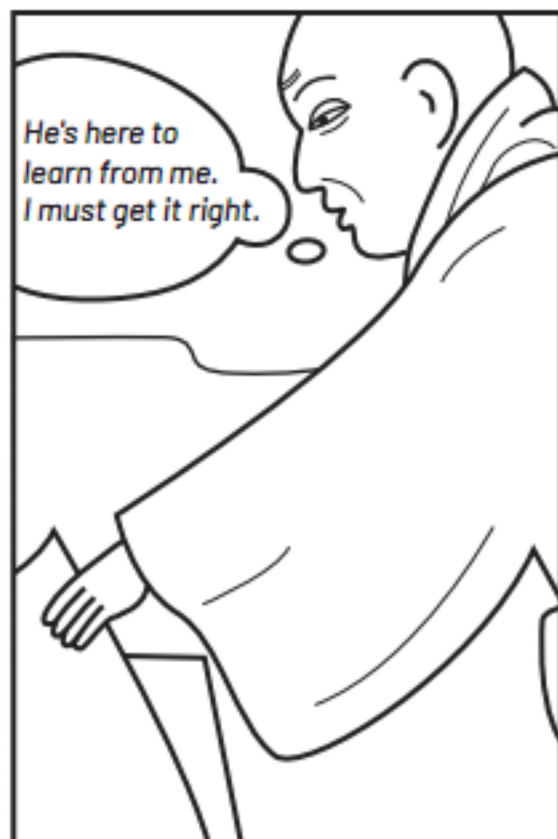
Kosen was acutely aware of the pupil's eye on him.



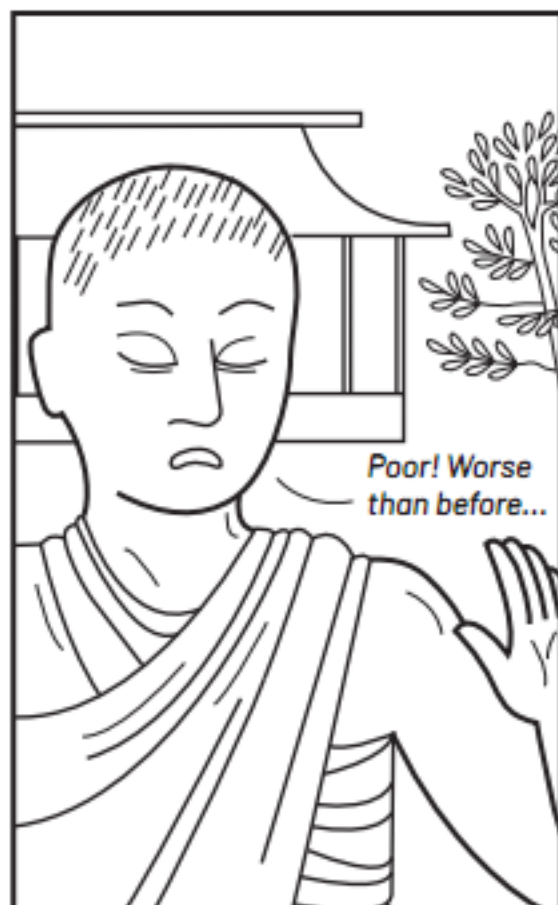
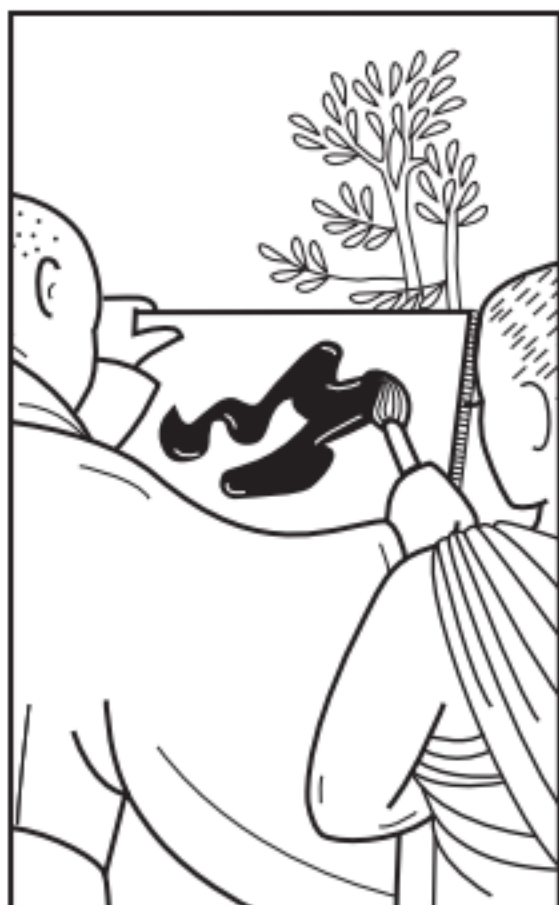
The pupil remarked after Kosen's first attempt.



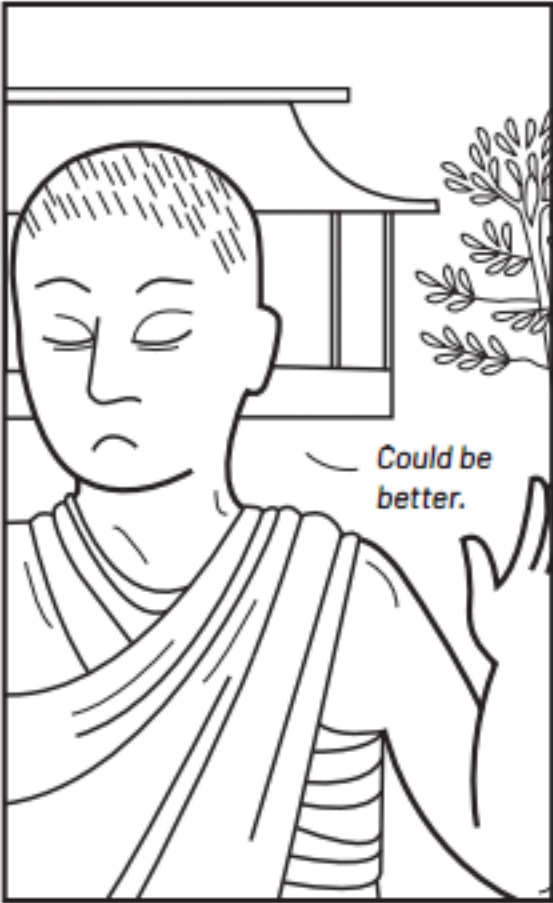
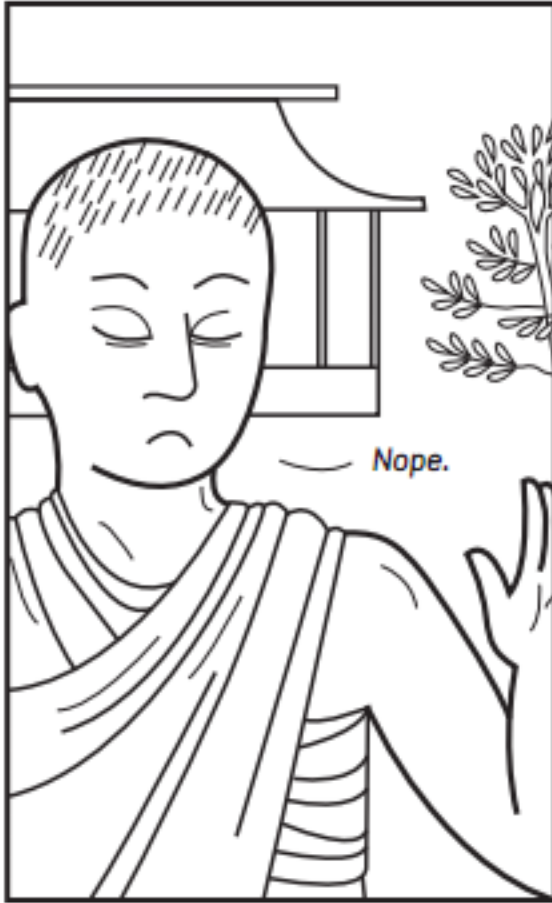
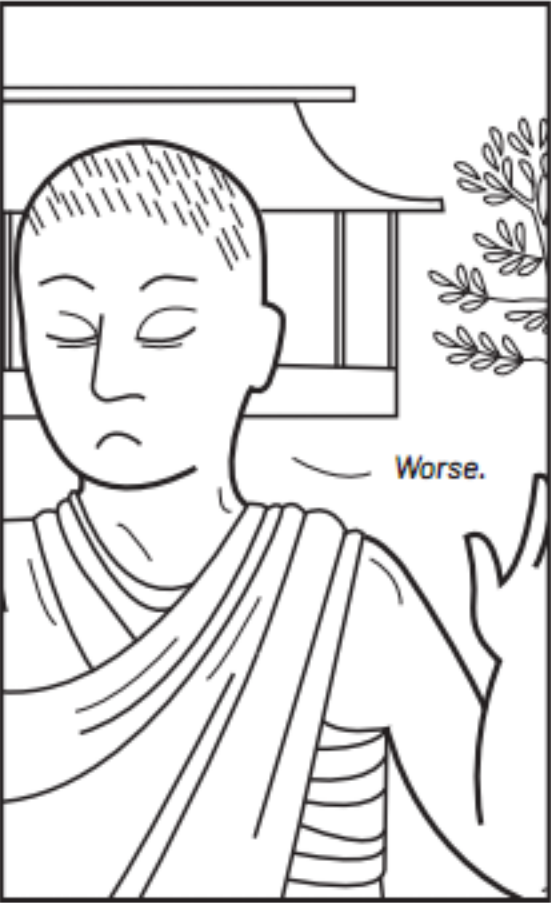
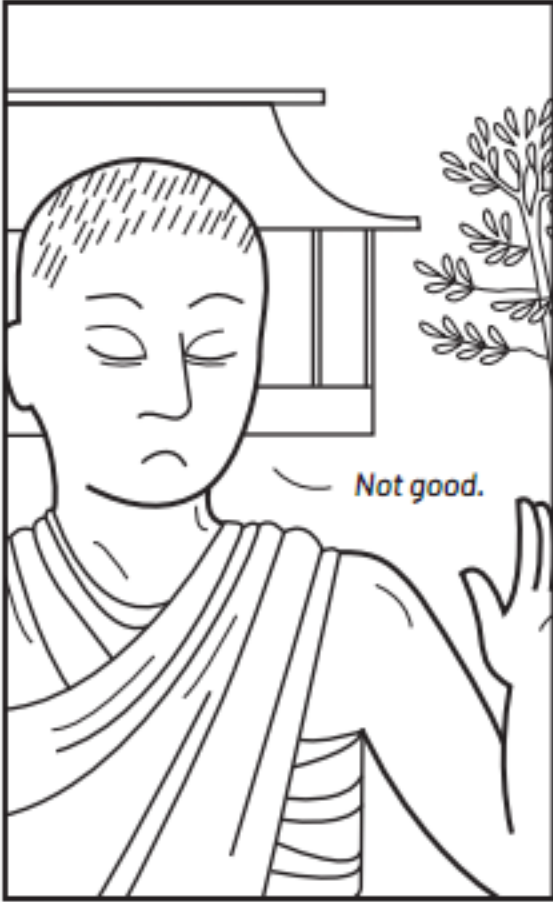
Kosen's thoughts went back to his days as a student.



He picked up another sheet.

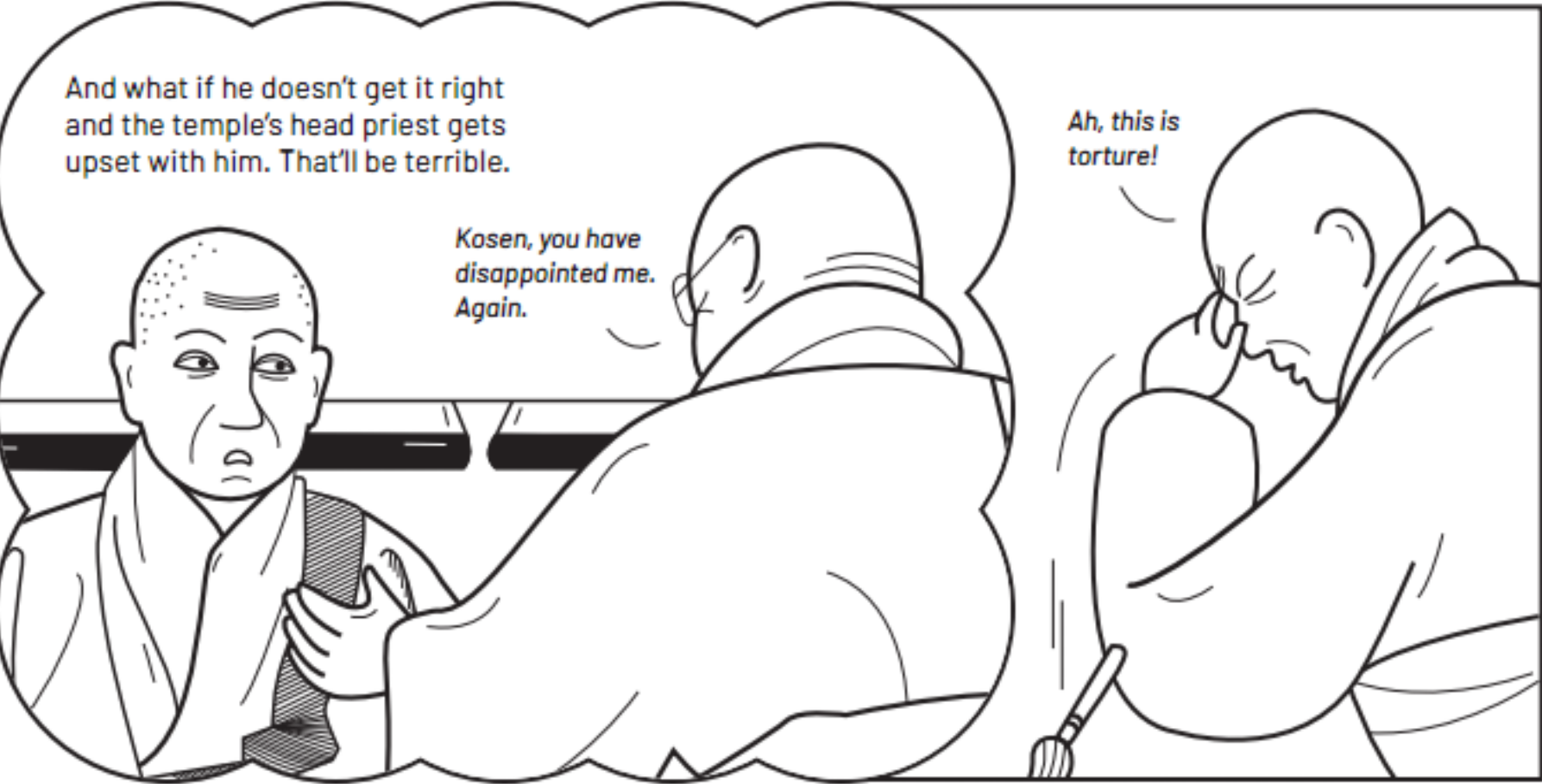
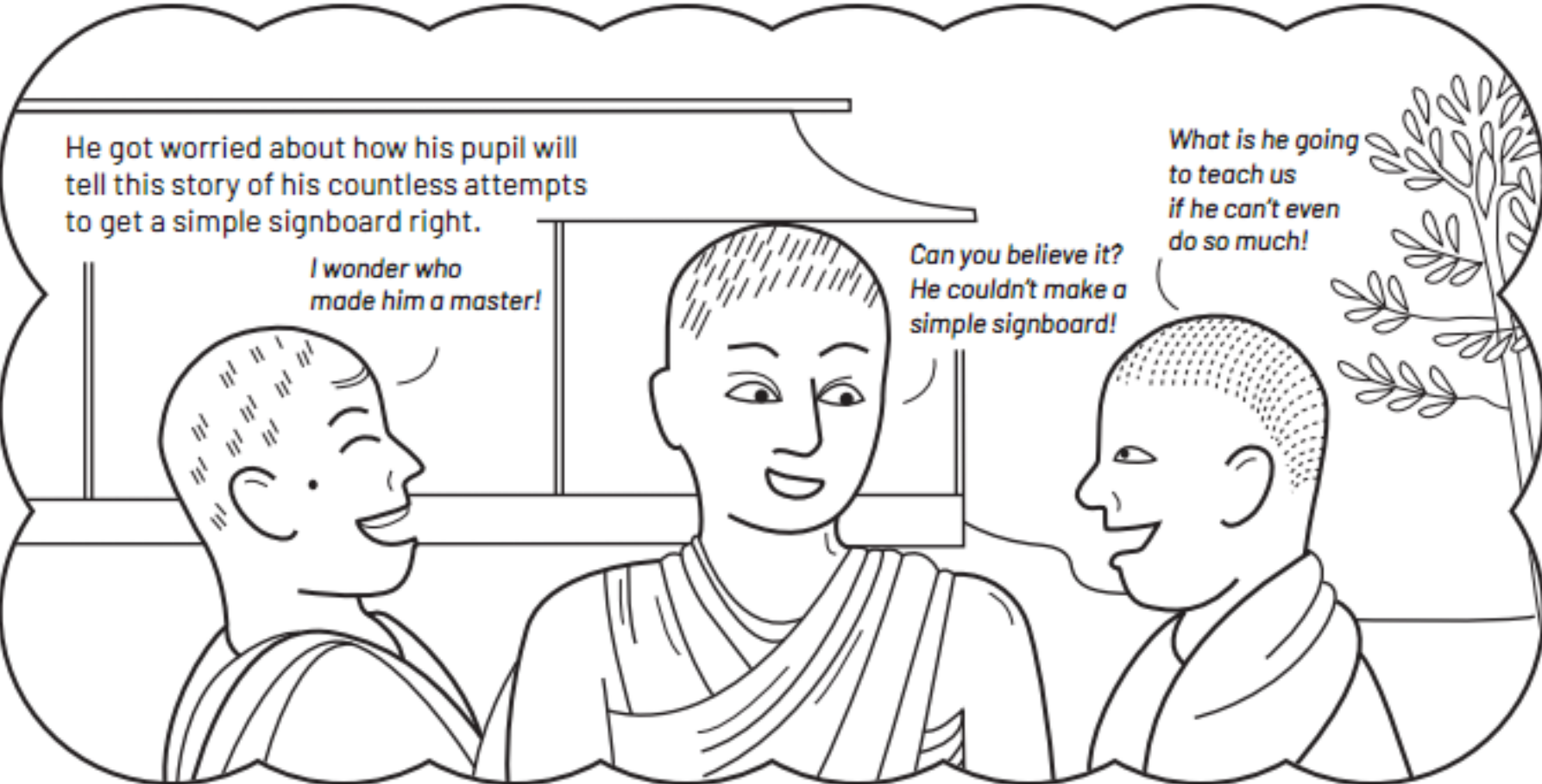
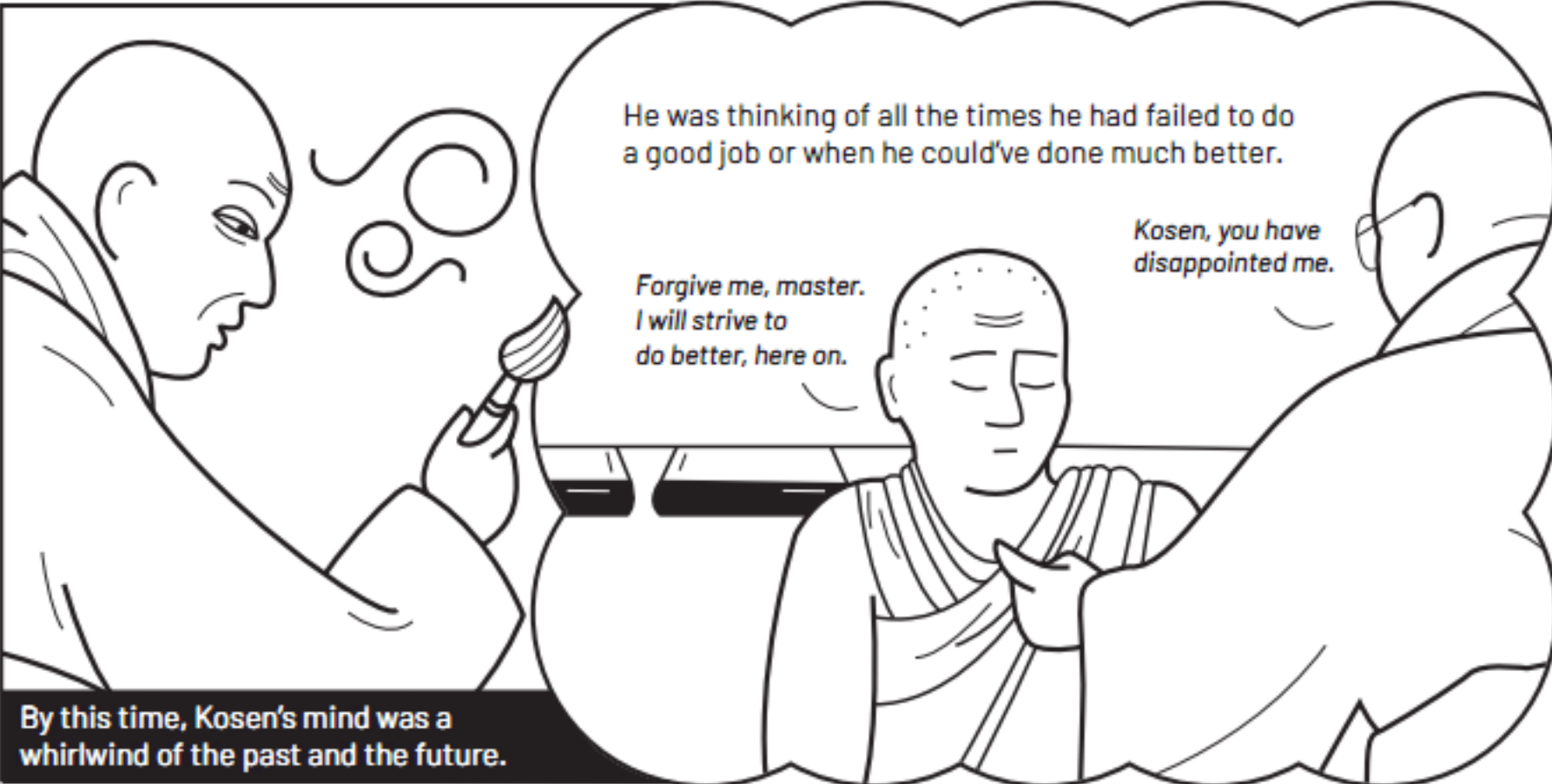


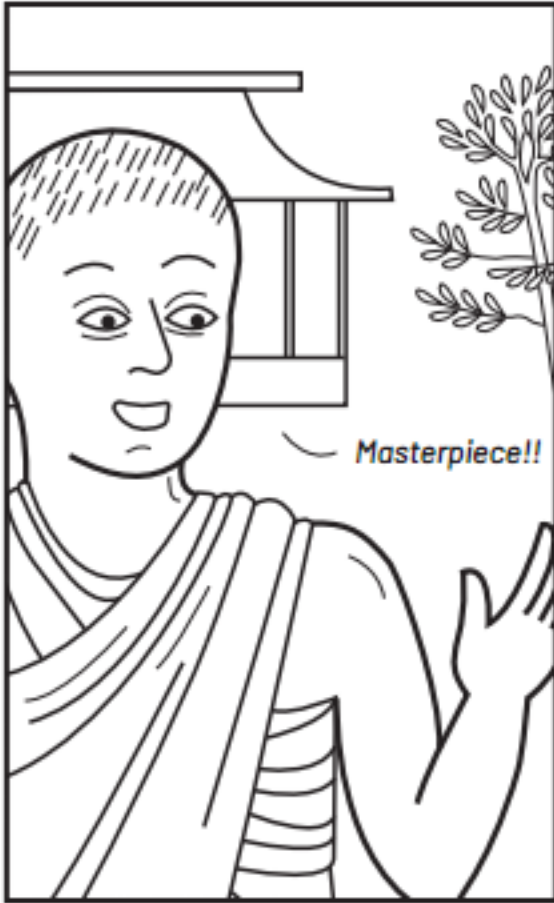
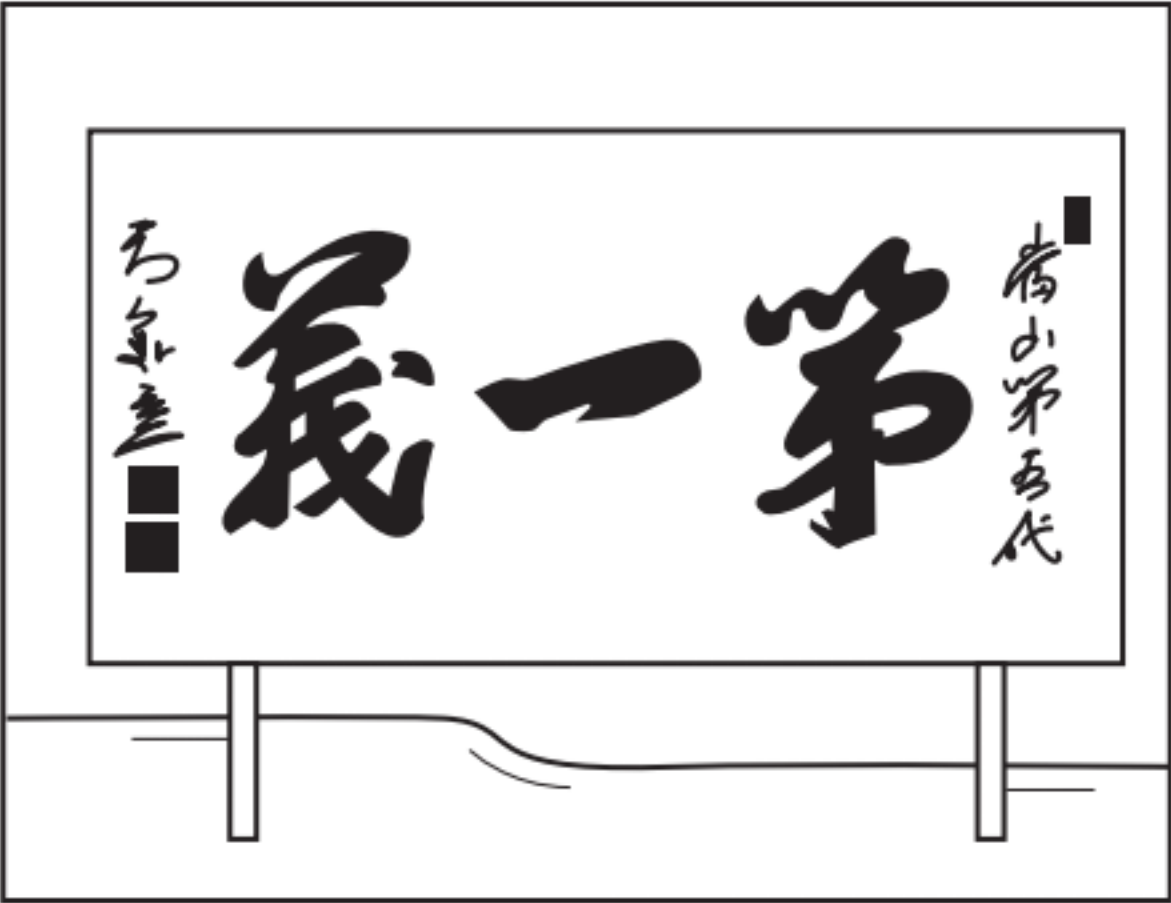
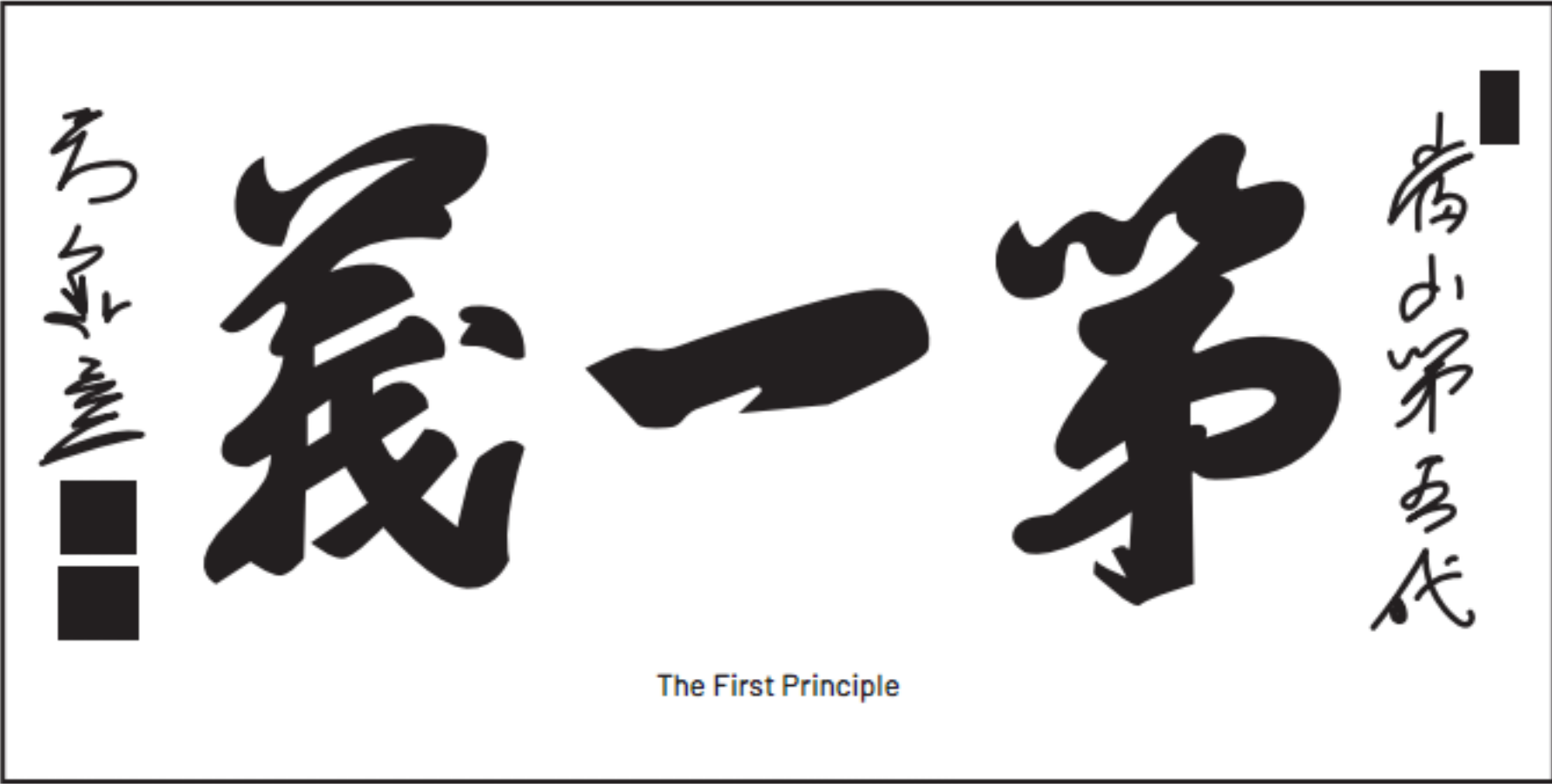
Poor! Worse than before...

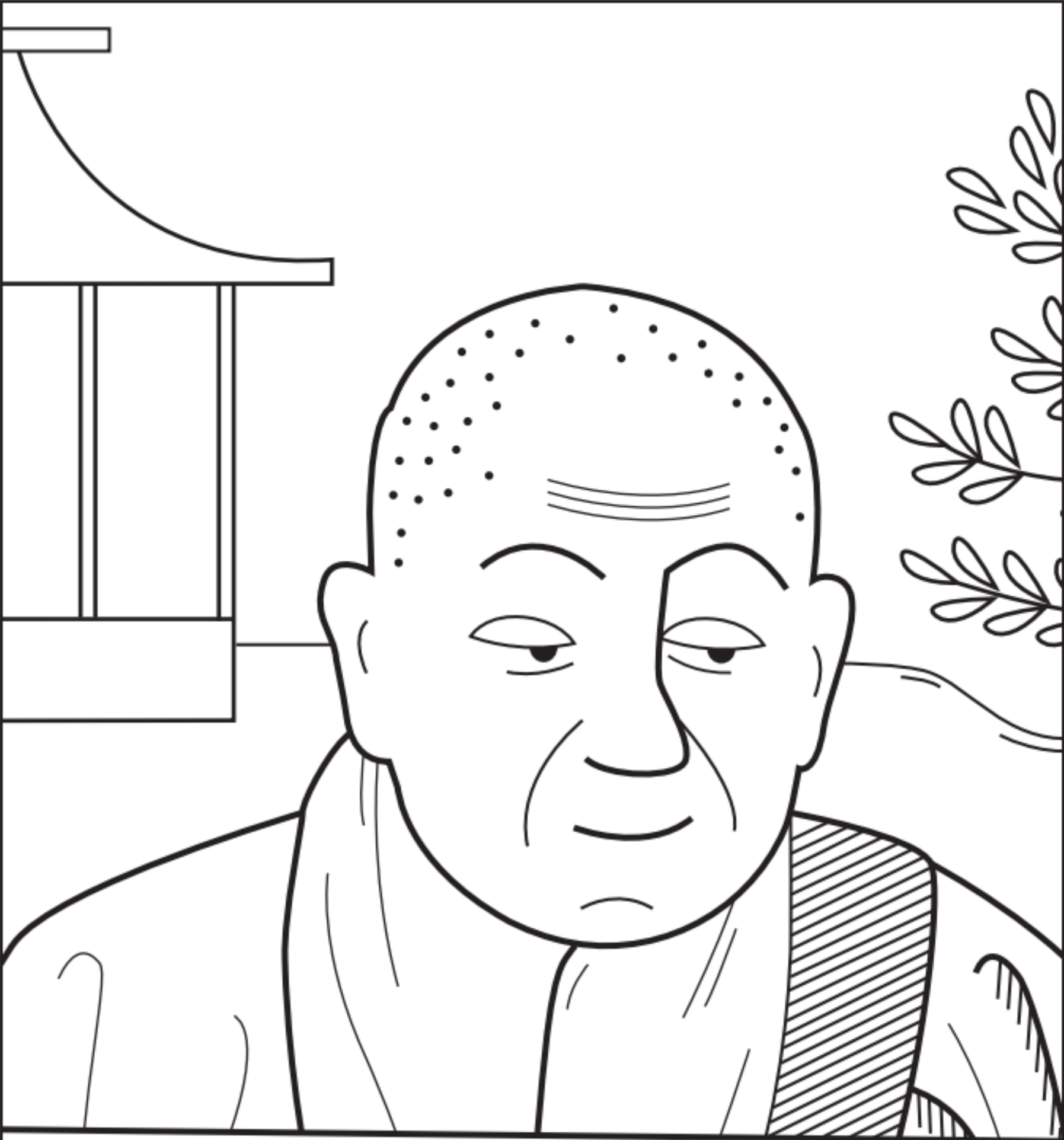




...until eighty-four First Principles had accumulated, still without the approval of the pupil.

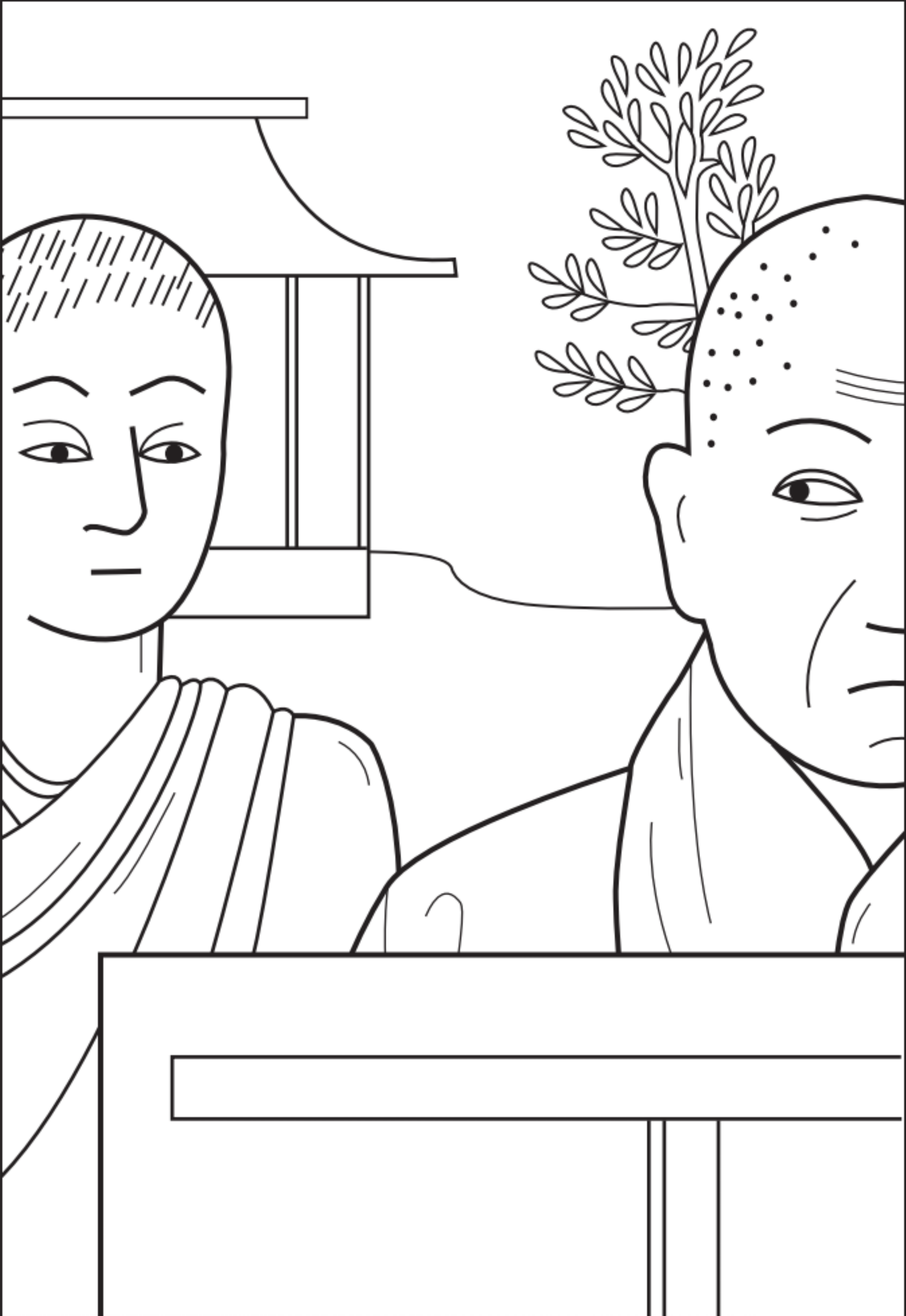






The pupil stepped out and suddenly Kosen’s thinking mind disappeared, and the working mind took over (the mind in the moment).

Thinking mind is the mind that vacillates between the past and the future. It delves into memories and creates innumerable future scenarios. The thinking mind is never in the moment.



The pupil's critical eye drove Kosen's mind to begin thinking. It (the thinking mind) took him away from what-is (the work to be done in the moment) to what-was (past) and what-if (future).

Working mind - The working mind is always in the moment and doesn't vacillate. There is no thought here, it is simply working at whatever needs to be done.



The working mind does derive from past experience, that is, Kosen's skill as a calligrapher is in action, to do the work at hand in the best way possible: however there is no past thought involved.

Quietening the thinking mind and letting the working mind do what needs to be done is the gateway to peace and happiness.

So how does one cultivate the working mind?

By knowing that one is not the doer.

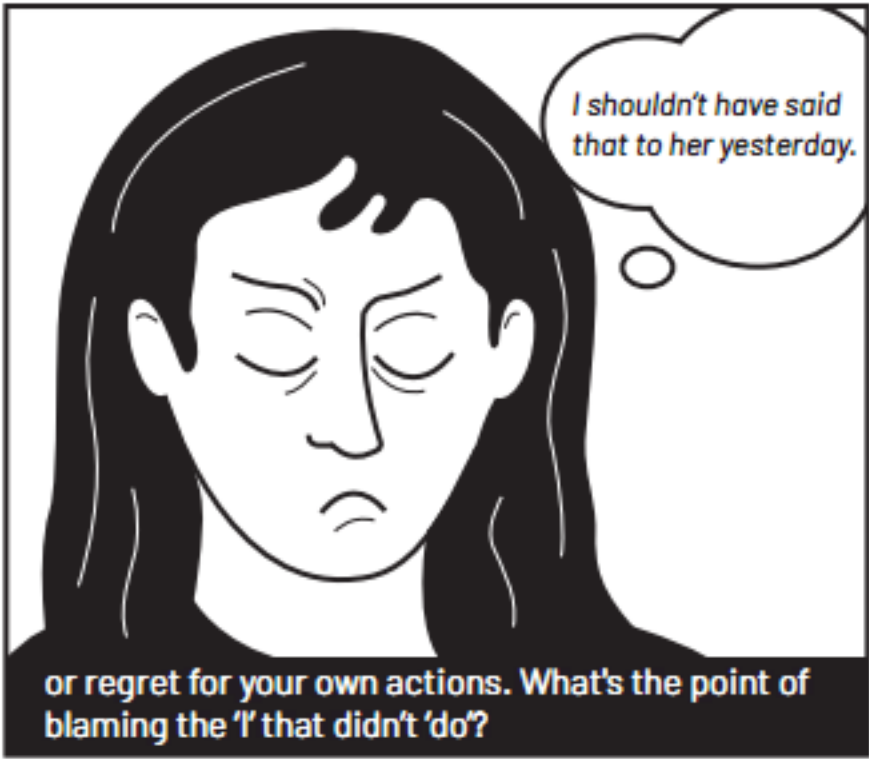
Abandoning doership will immediately quieten the thinking mind.

In this example, if Kosen had the realization (a complete acceptance) that he is not the doer then the past and the future thoughts won't appear in his mind. Because 'I did' something in the past, therefore, a regret because 'I will fail to do something' in the future and hence a worry.

But if I'm not the doer then who is failing and who has regrets?

In the absence of a doer, worrying what 'I'll' do and 'I' won't be able to do is of no consequence. Worries are pointless. Think about it.

Since the 'I' didn't do anything and neither did the other 'I's' (others) do anything, hence thoughts and feelings that arise out of assumed doership shouldn't arise...



An interesting (difficult to digest) example is that of a serial killer. He killed because of genes and conditioning and he will be punished as per societal norms.

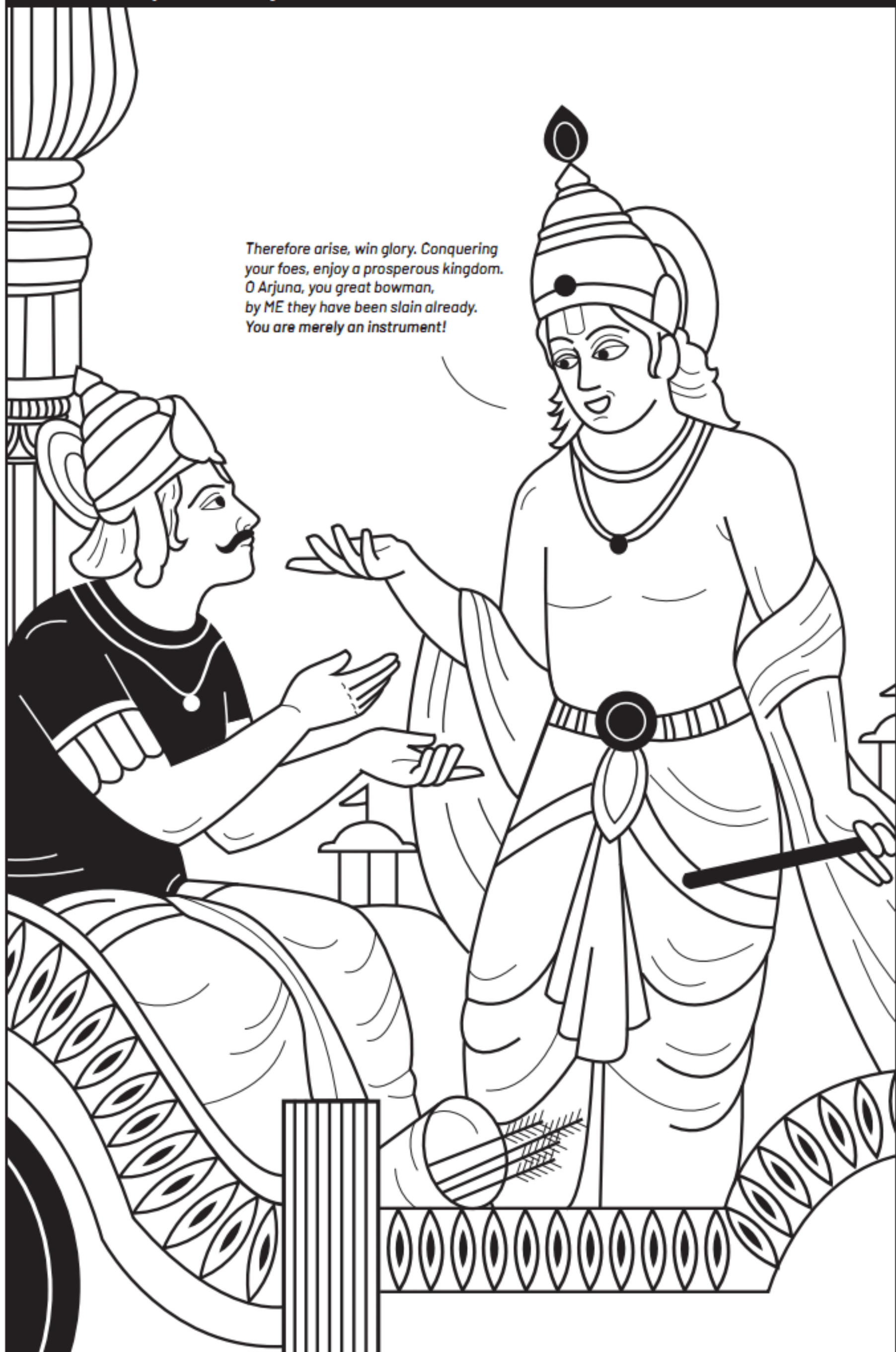


Sri Ramana Maharshi sums it up when he says:

'Actions form no bondage. Bondage is only the false notion.
"I am the doer." Leave off such thoughts and let the body
and senses play their role, unimpeded by your interference.'

Whatever needs to be done, your body-mind organism will do and what's going to happen will happen.
As Krishna told Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita-

*Therefore arise, win glory. Conquering
your foes, enjoy a prosperous kingdom.
O Arjuna, you great bowman,
by ME they have been slain already.
You are merely an instrument!*



Notice that Krishna tells him to act (to conquer his foes) and also that they are slain already by HIM. These two concepts can coexist as beautifully explained in the Bhagavad Gita:

No man can, even for a moment, rest without doing work;
for everyone is caused to act in spite of himself, by the 'gunas of nature'.*

~The Bhagavad Gita (Ch 3, Verse 5/43)



He whose nature is deluded by egoism, thinks 'I am the doer'

~The Bhagavad Gita (Ch 3, Verse 27/43)

**read genes and conditioning*

Some folks on reading this wonder -

If I am not the doer then why don't I just lie on the bed all day long and do nothing?

or

If I am not the doer then why don't I go out and murder someone?

Both the questions are flawed. You can't lie down all day long till it's in your genes and conditioning to do that. You can't murder someone till it's in your genes and conditioning to do that.

There is 'no doer' doesn't imply that your body won't be the instrument of action. It will act according to its genes and conditioning.



The Lord bears the burden of the world. Know that the spurious ego which presumes to bear that burden is like a sculptured figure at the foot of a temple tower which appears to sustain the tower's weight.

~ Ramana Maharshi

PART 2

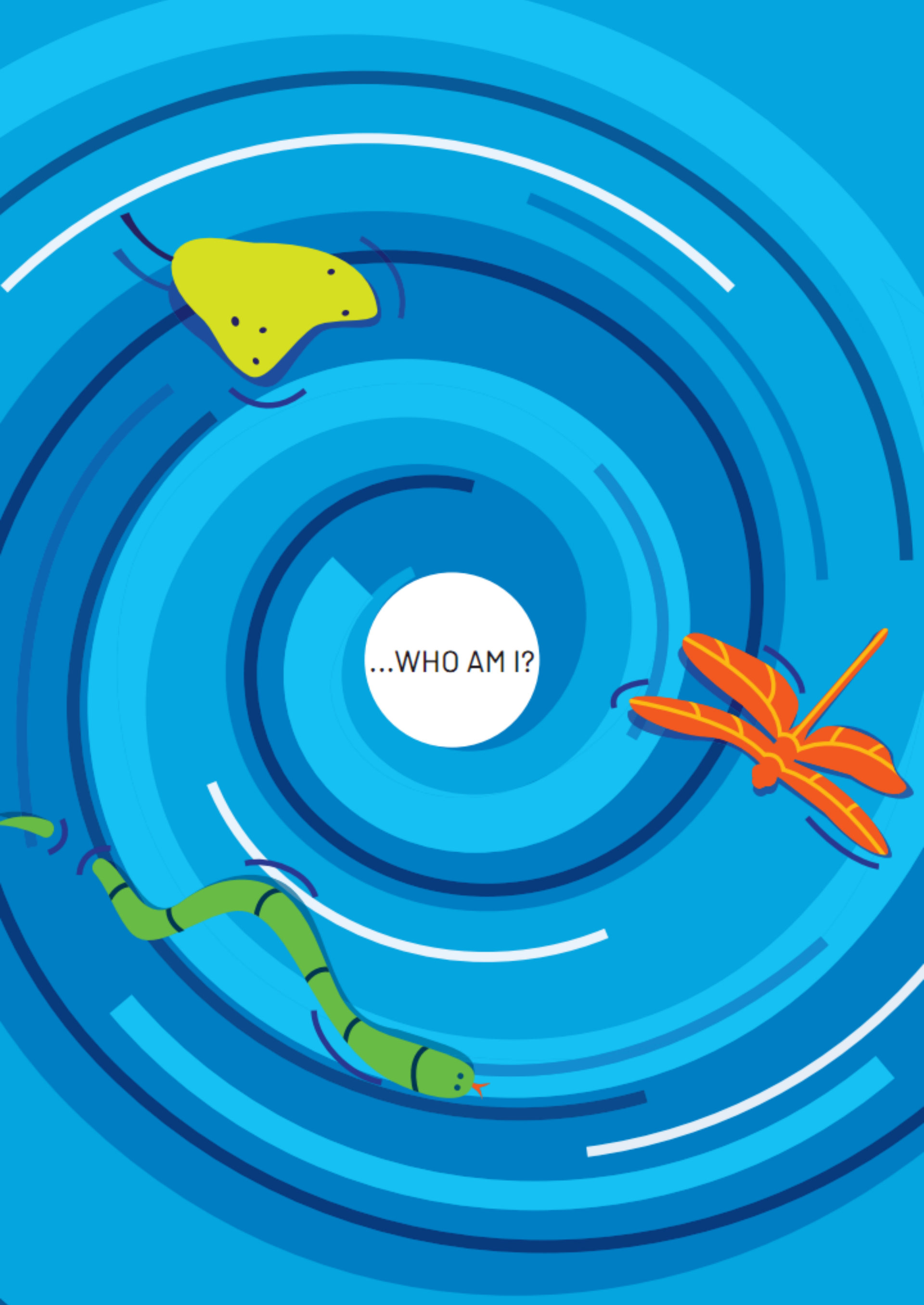
THE LEAP OF FAITH



I watched the rain from the window. 'No stepping out,' Grandma said. But it was getting dark and there was so much to explore. I snuck out. It was quiet outside. The earth smelt good and the rain didn't hurt my head. I was muddy and wet when I got back. I had seen a weird little green snake and followed it into a bush; I had nearly caught a red-yellow dragonfly, and in my pocket was my big win— a bird-pecked guava that had swum to me through a puddle.

Grandma didn't like it. 'Dirty, dirty,' she muttered. She put a bucket of hot water in the bathroom and pointed to a clean towel. I took off my clothes and sat on a plastic bench beside the tap. I mixed hot water with cold till I got the right balance. I got lost in the swirl of tap water falling into the bucket.

I felt a question rise up in me...

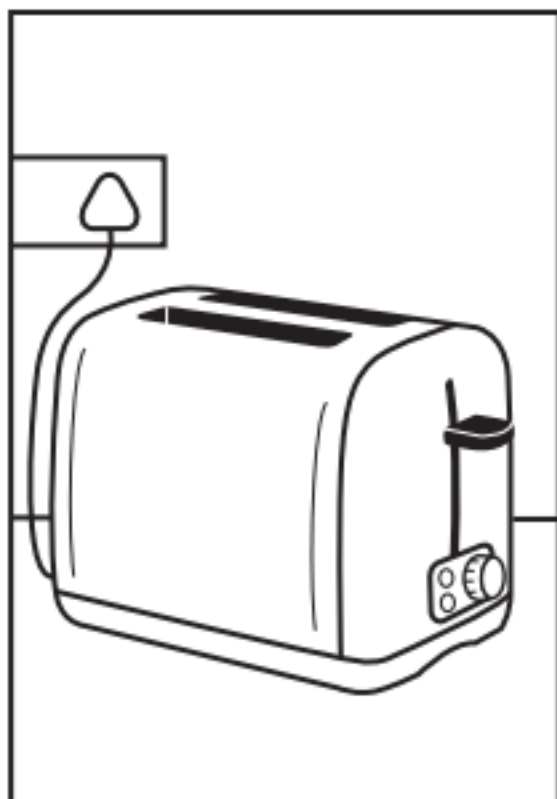


...WHO AM I?

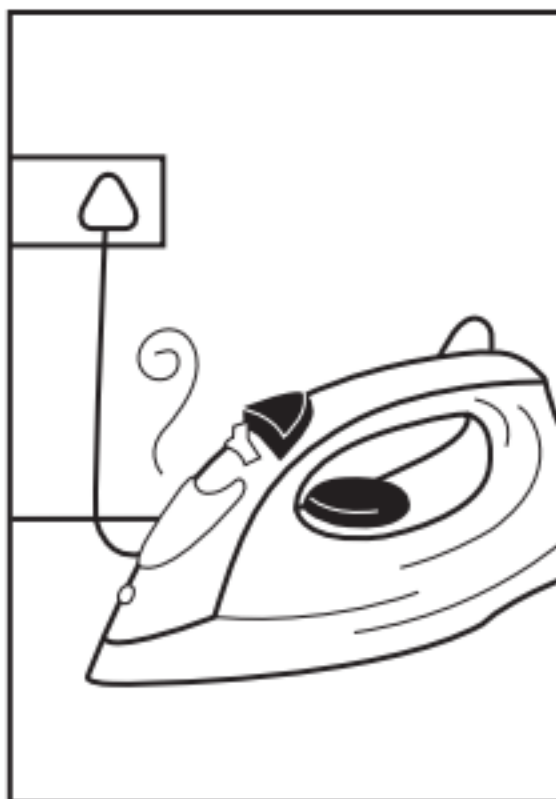
The mind jumped right in. 'I am my body. This body, this is me,' it said. The questioner asked again, 'Who am I?' My gaze fell on my arms and legs. Goosebumps. My hands went up and scratched my head. The mind's answer hadn't hit the spot.

8.

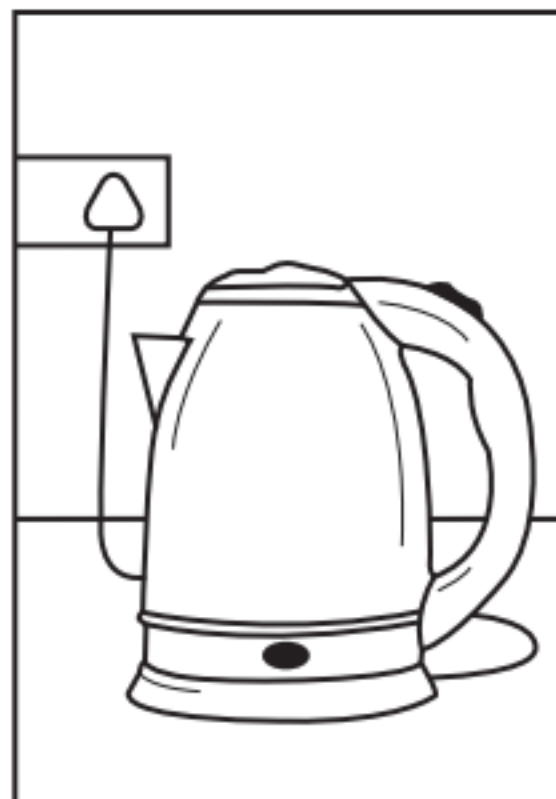
UNDERSTANDING CONSCIOUSNESS:
THE TRUE I



The electrical energy running through the toaster...



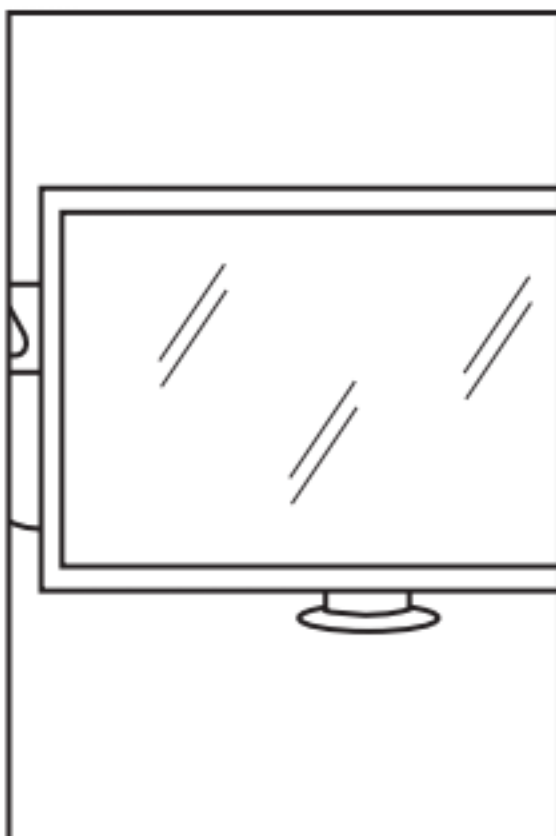
is the same as the one that's running through the steam iron...



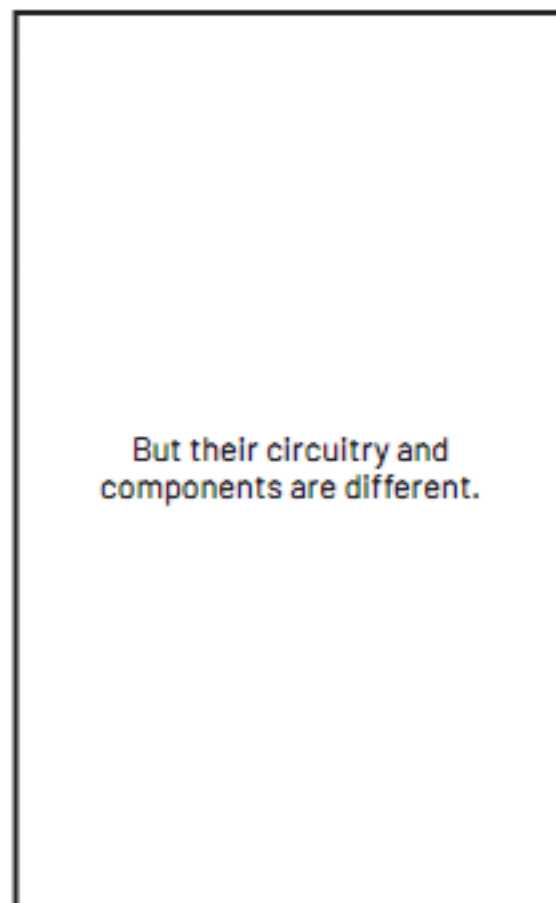
the electric kettle...



the vacuum cleaner...



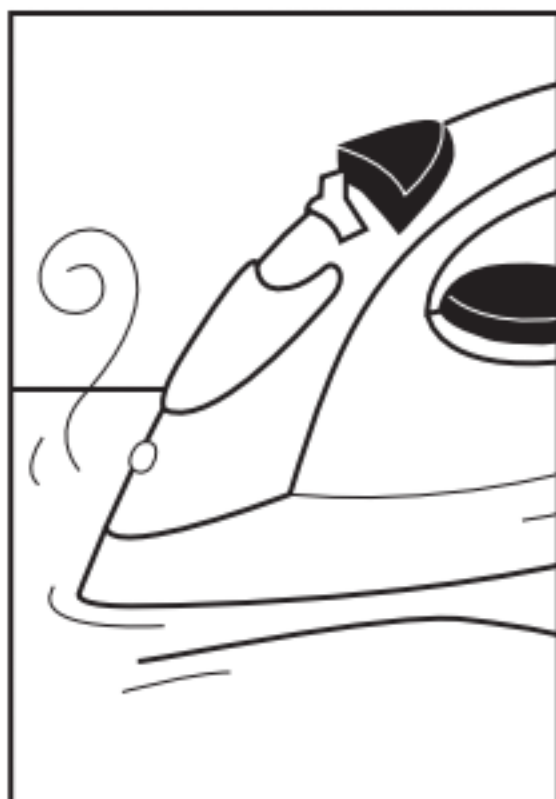
and the television.



But their circuitry and components are different.



In one gadget, electrical energy pops toast...



in the other, it helps iron clothes...

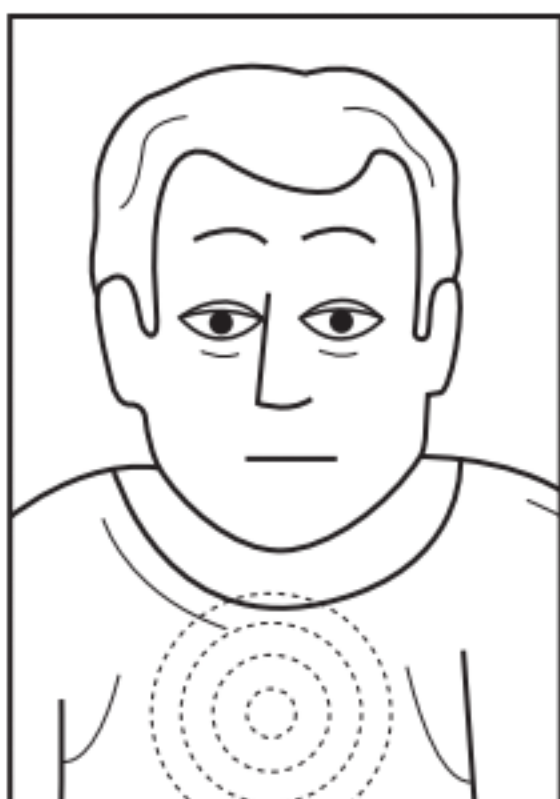
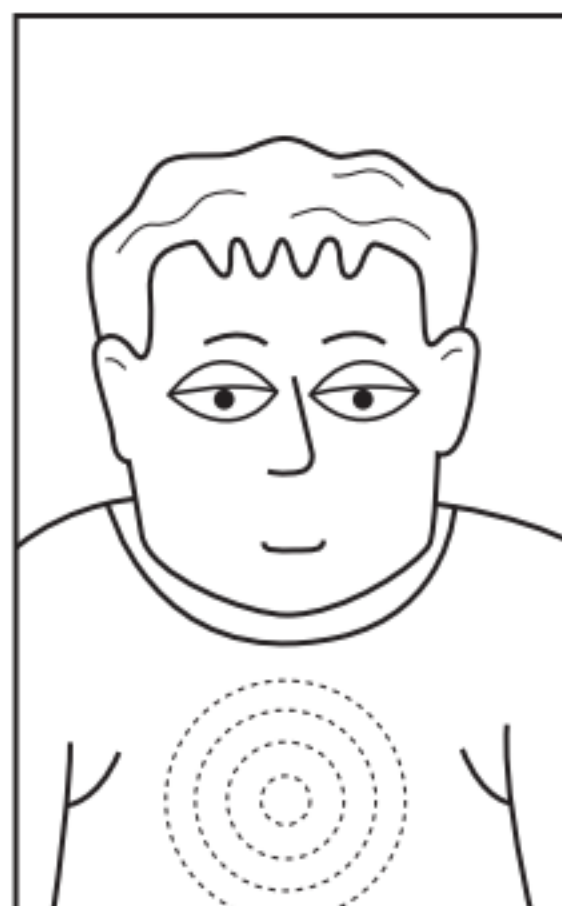


and in another it produces moving images and sound.

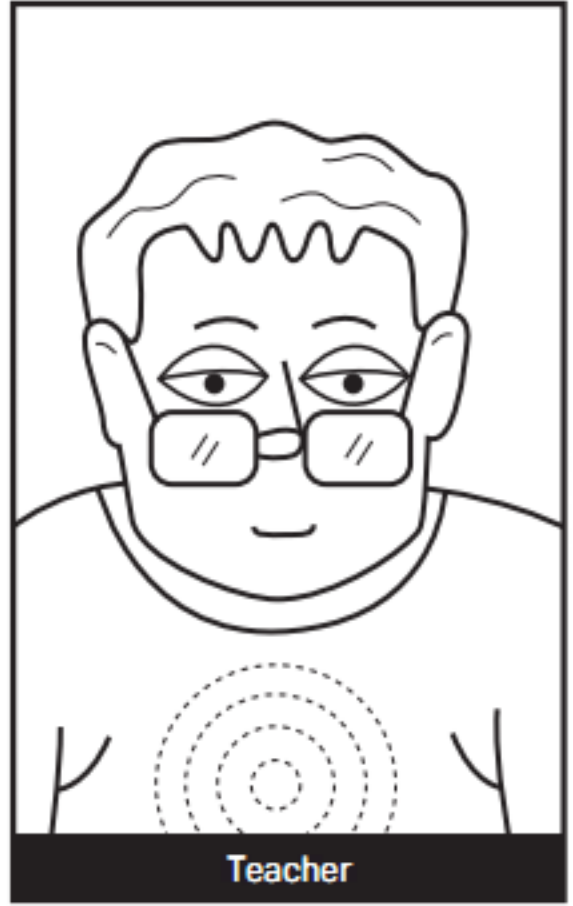
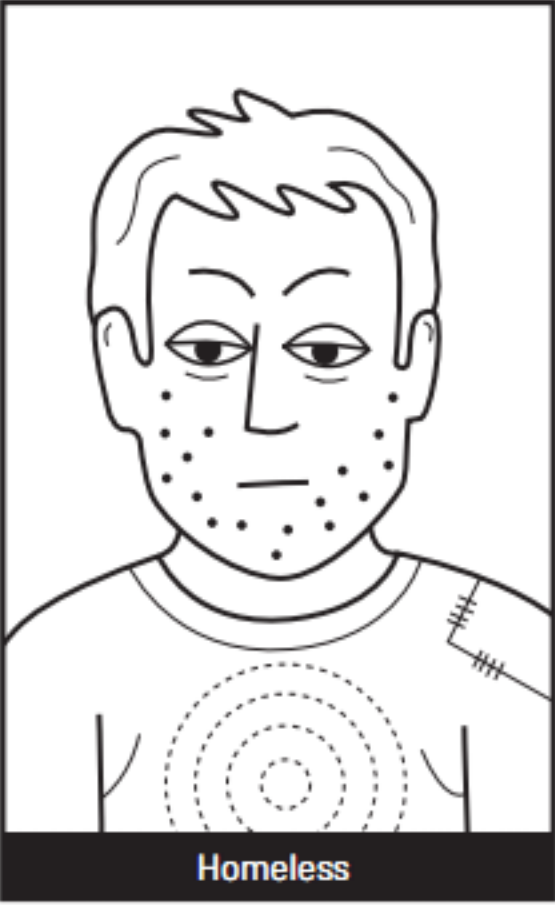
Let's extend this to the human race.

Every human being is a uniquely designed instrument, through which the same Primal Energy (or Source, or Consciousness or God) functions.

This energy brings about whatever is supposed to happen through each separate human instrument, every moment, according to a cosmic law.



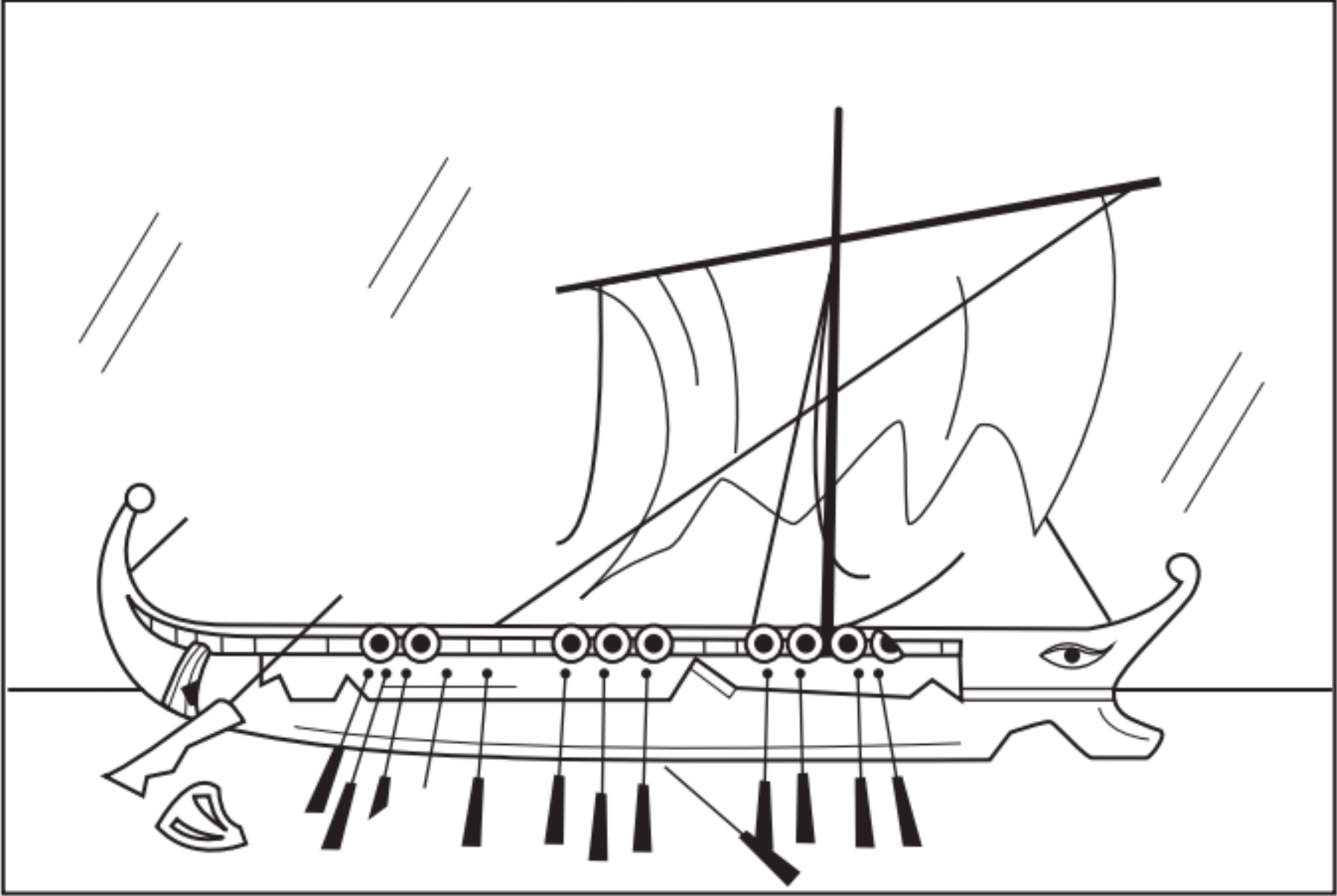
The difference as such is only with regard to the appearance and actions of the human instrument, but the functioning element is the same: the Source, the Primal Energy-Consciousness.



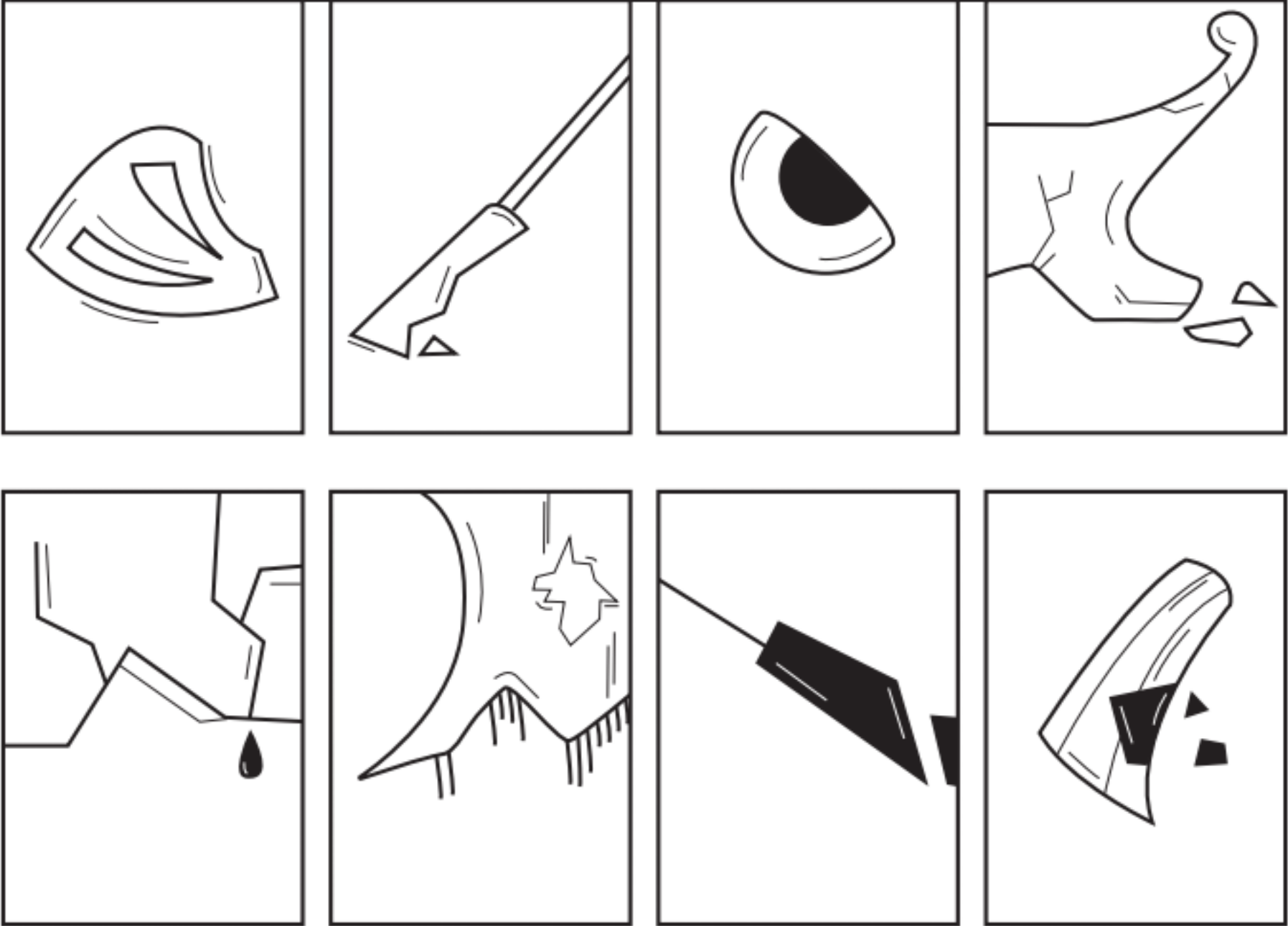
This Primal Energy functions through each uniquely programmed human gadget precisely as electricity, an aspect of the same energy, functions through each electrical gadget, producing precisely what each electrical gadget is designed to produce.

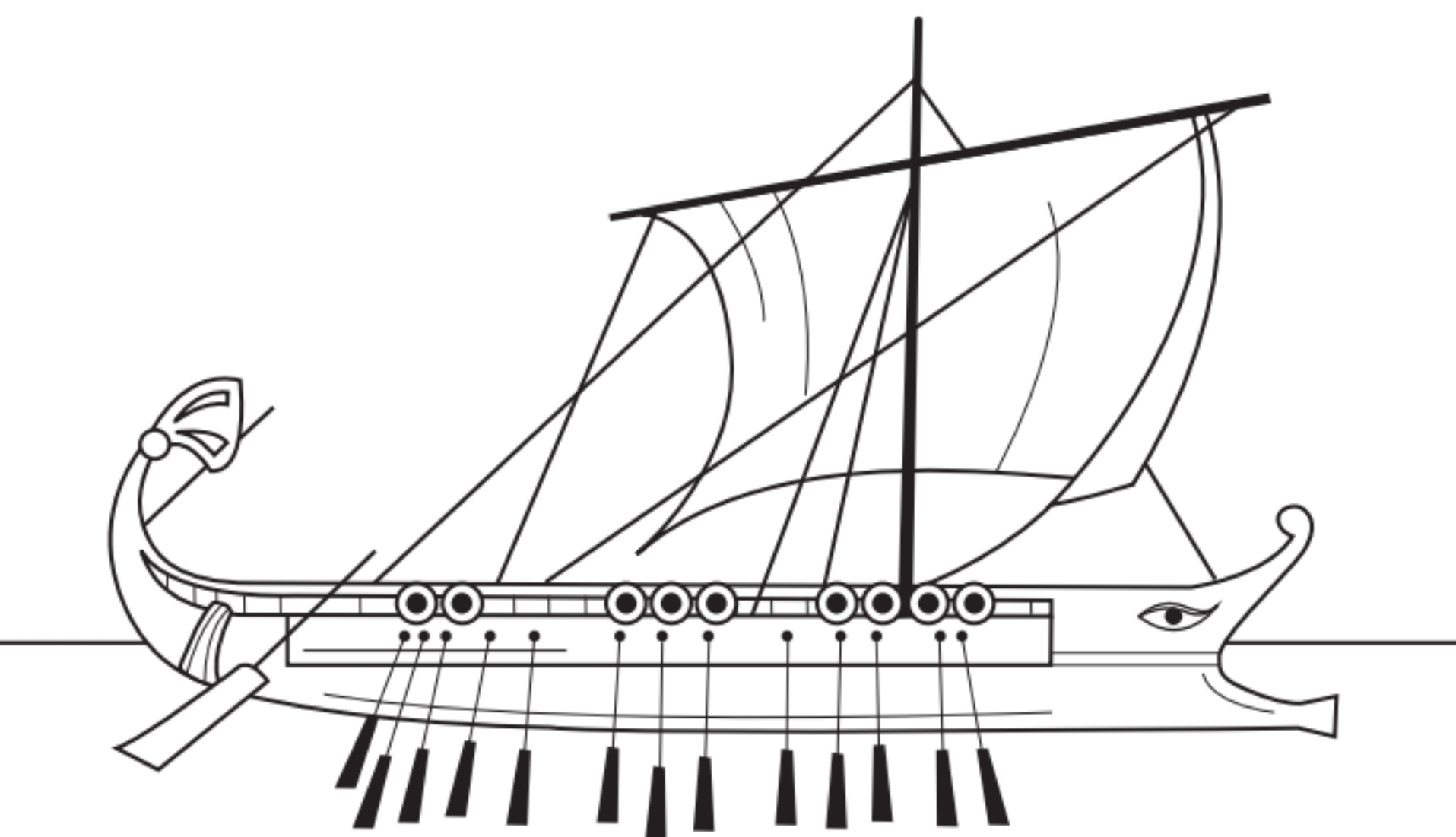
So what is this Primal Energy, this Consciousness?

There is an ancient Greek thought experiment called the Ship of Theseus.
It proposes a theory that is extreme in its denial of our everyday concept of identity.



The famous ship sailed by the hero Theseus in a great battle has been kept in a harbour as a museum piece and over the years some of the wooden parts begin to rot and are replaced by new ones. A century or so later, all of the parts are replaced.

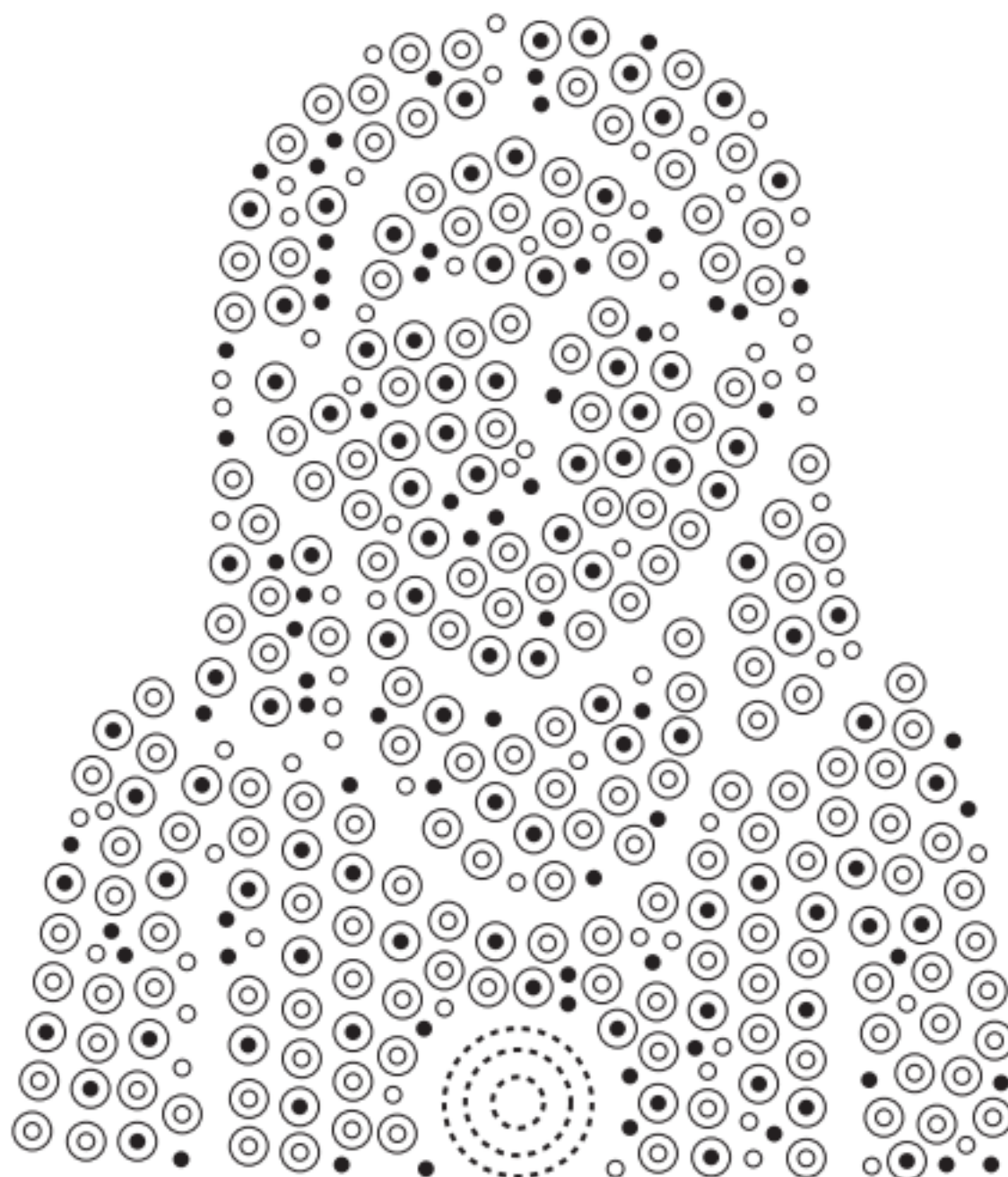




The question then is if the 'restored' ship is still the same object as the original.


According to the theory two ships, while identical in all the other ways, are not identical if they exist at two different times. Each ship-at-time is a unique 'event'.

So even without replacement of parts, the ships are different.




Let's take the individual, that is, the body-mind organism.

Every cell of this individual is changing every instant, it's ageing, decaying, growing, dying, new cells forming. So is the mind-body that was there a second ago the same as the one now, in this instant when every cell in it has undergone a change?



We consider ourselves and this world to be real but what's truly real? If we define reality as an absolute truth — as something that is, was, and will always be unchanged, unaffected — then is there something that's absolutely real?

Everything is like the Ship of Theseus, always changing, mutating, decaying, taking birth, and dying — always in a flux. Like a large rock that eventually turns into dirt and rubble over hundreds of years.



So is there an absolute reality –
that's unchanging, that was, is and will be?

Yes, there is and that is Consciousness.

So can we perceive this Consciousness? Of course, it's always with us.

Right now, as you read this, the only truth that you can be absolutely certain of is that you exist.

Who is reading? Someone's reading and that someone is you.

But then Advaita says the 'I' or the 'you' doesn't exist. If 'I' doesn't exist then who is reading this page? Who is aware of the surroundings? Who is that which sees? Who is the witness?

Who is this 'I' and where does it come from?



You were an infant once,
then a toddler...



then a kid...



then a teenager.



So the individual is changing, always in a state of flux but there is one thing that remains unchanged – this awareness possessed by an individual that makes her aware of the body-mind organism and the world around.



This awareness is mistaken as 'I'.

The illusory 'I' has seen different things, felt different things, thought different things but the seer / the awareness / the Consciousness is constant. It's always there.

Now, this Consciousness can't be the 'I' defined by the mind. The mind keeps changing and evolving and decaying. It's not constant.

So the Consciousness we are looking for — the one that's constant and unchanging is beyond the mind. It can be intuitively perceived if we withdrew our senses and stilled our thoughts.

Let's try this experiment when you have 15 minutes of uninterrupted time to spare.



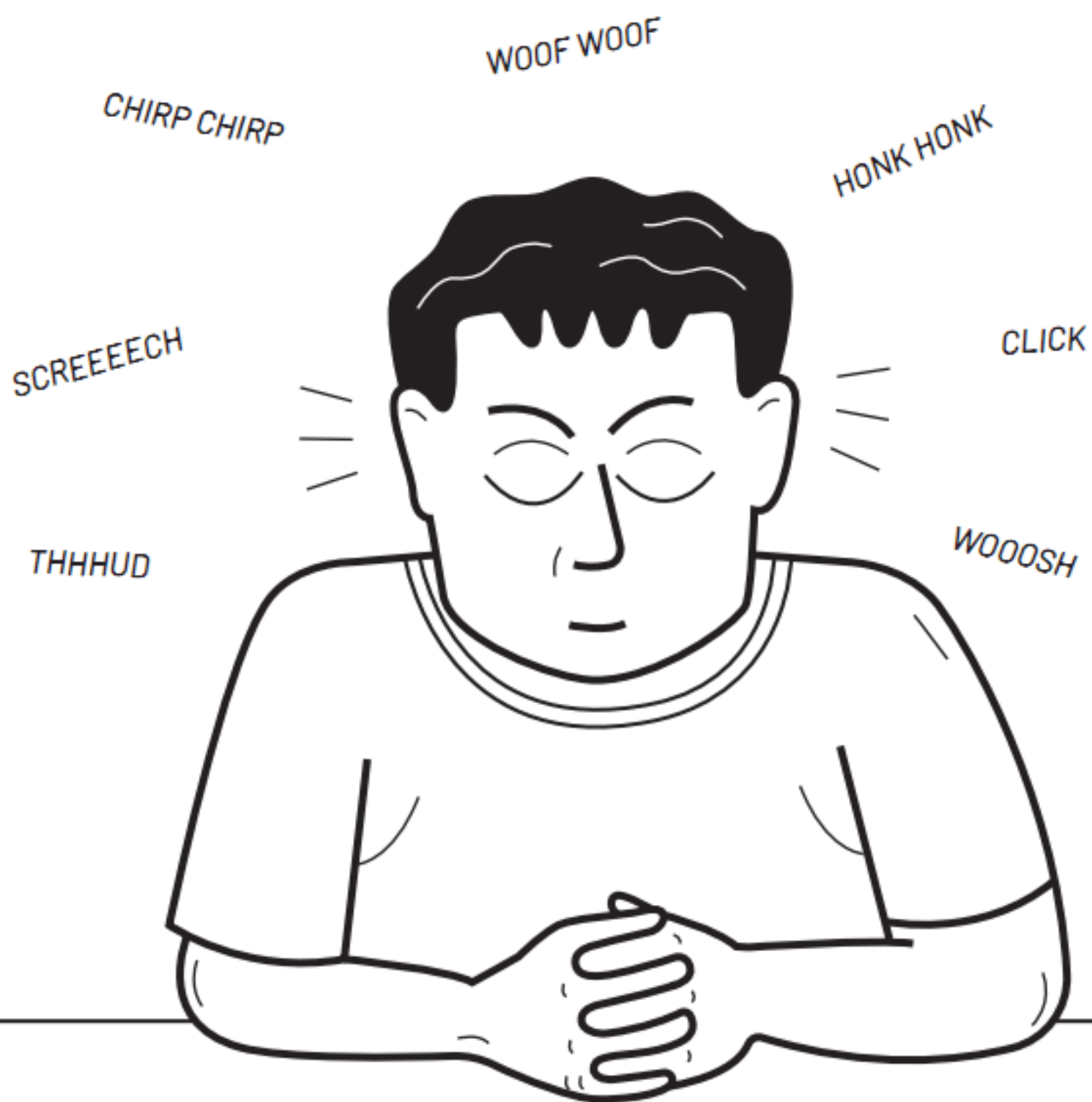
Sit in a room with minimal distractions.



WITHDRAW FROM THE SENSE OF SIGHT

Adjust your eyes to the light in the room and then close your eyes.

If thoughts arise, observe them but don't flow (identify) with them. It's easier said than done but if you observe them without forming any opinion (just pure witnessing) then thoughts will go away.



WITHDRAW FROM THE SENSE OF HEARING

Hear all the sounds in the room and get accustomed to them. Don't interpret, don't label what you hear. If thoughts do arise, observe them but don't judge or flow (identify) with them. They will go away.



WITHDRAW FROM THE SENSE OF SMELL

Become comfortable with the smell in the room.
Don't interpret, don't label what you smell. If thoughts
do arise, observe them but don't judge or flow with them.
They will go away.



WITHDRAW FROM THE SENSE OF TOUCH

Feel your body on the couch or chair. Become comfortable with all the things touching your body. Don't interpret, don't label what you feel at the touch. If thoughts do arise, observe them but don't judge or flow with them. They will go away.



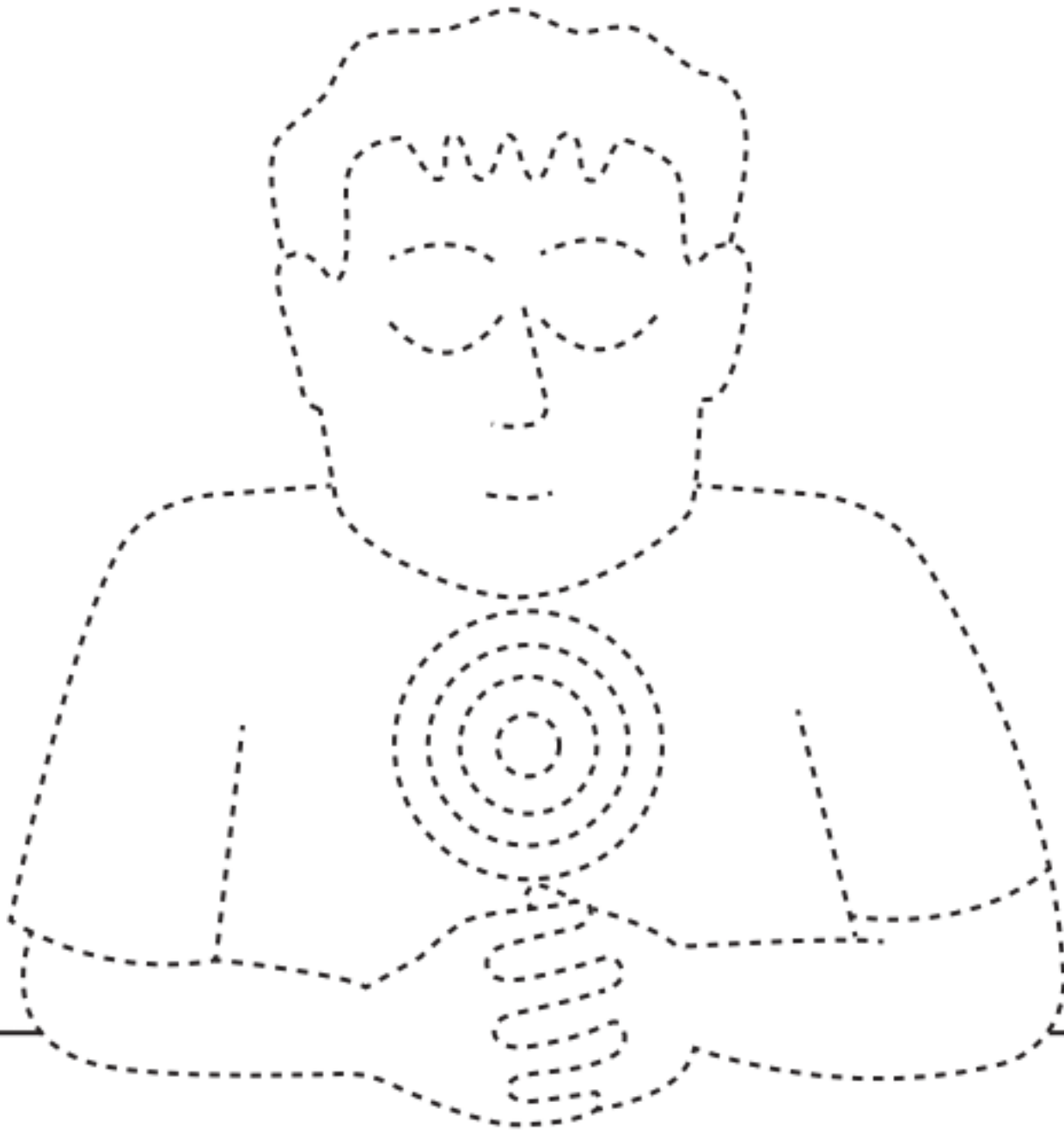
WITHDRAW FROM THE SENSE OF TASTE

Familiarize yourself with the taste in your mouth.
Don't interpret, don't label what you taste.
If thoughts arise, observe them but don't judge
or flow with them. They will go away.



Withdraw your focus from the surroundings (senses)
to the one who is aware of the surroundings.

Don't read further. Try it.



When you have withdrawn your focus from all externalizations
of the mind, then you will find emptiness.
No thought, no sense perceptions, just silence. Be here now.

This is a taste of pure consciousness. This is where we truly belong.

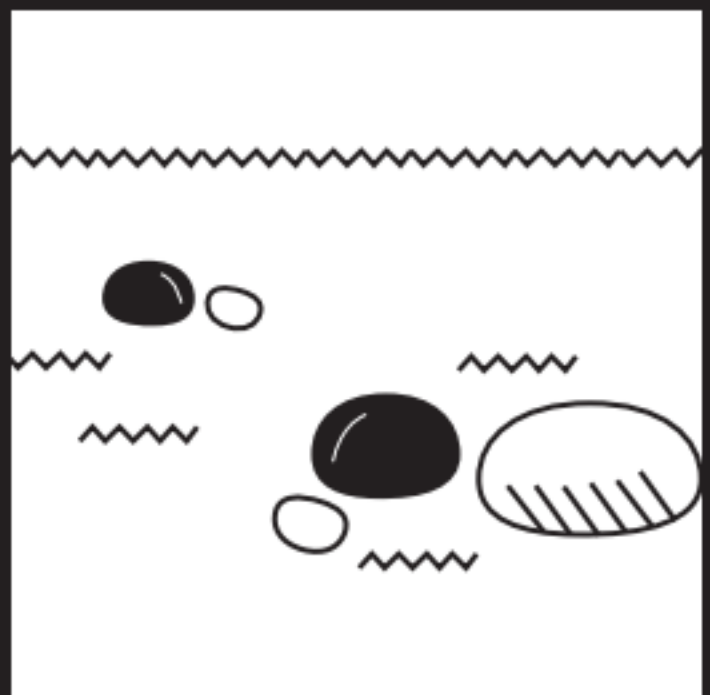
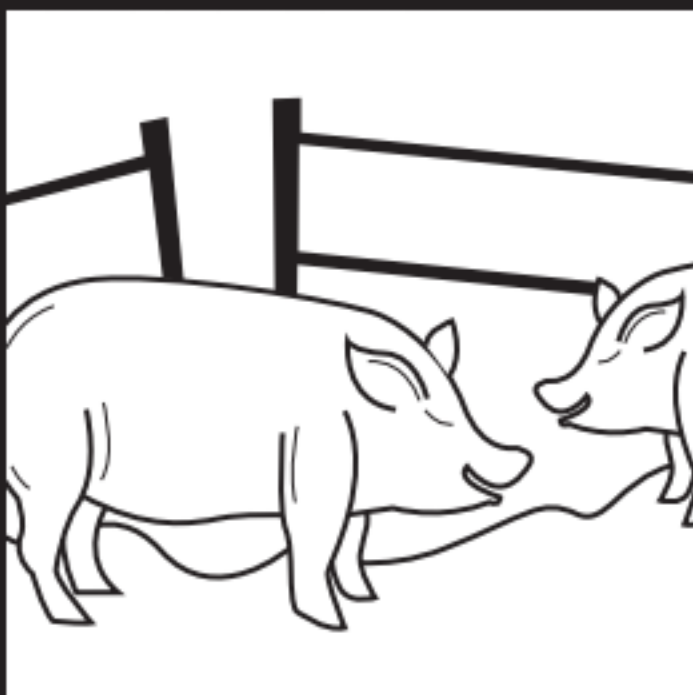


Our conditioning makes it difficult for us to stay here for long but the few seconds of silence and quiet that you felt is probably your first formal introduction to pure awareness (or Consciousness).

This is the witness, the seer, the empty canvas on which your mind paints the pictures it does – past, future, worries, anxieties, the feeling of incompleteness, of joy and happiness – everything fleeting.

The screen remains unchanged, unaffected but the scenes change and keep changing. Without the screen there are no images, there is no movie. But the screen is ever present, with or without the movie.

**This pure awareness is our true nature. This is who we really are.
We are this universal awareness.**



**The cashier at the supermarket, the stray dog, the pig in the sty and the pebble
in the garden - all are the same awareness - Consciousness.**

This is what all great teachers mean when they say we are all ONE, we are all equal.
This is the answer to the question – Who am I?

I?

The purpose of all Advaita teaching is to get you in touch with this pure reality and guide you to stay absorbed in it instead of flowing with the ego-sense or 'I'.

Pure consciousness is where the mind finds lasting peace. The mind's true abode is where it came from.

Consciousness is the only reality. Consciousness plus waking,
we call waking. Consciousness plus sleep, we call sleep.
Consciousness plus dream, we call dream.
Consciousness is the screen on which all the pictures come and go.
The screen is real, the pictures are mere shadows on it.

~ Ramana Maharshi



The whole universe is a movement into consciousness.

~ Eckhart Tolle

PART 3

A NEW LIGHT

9.

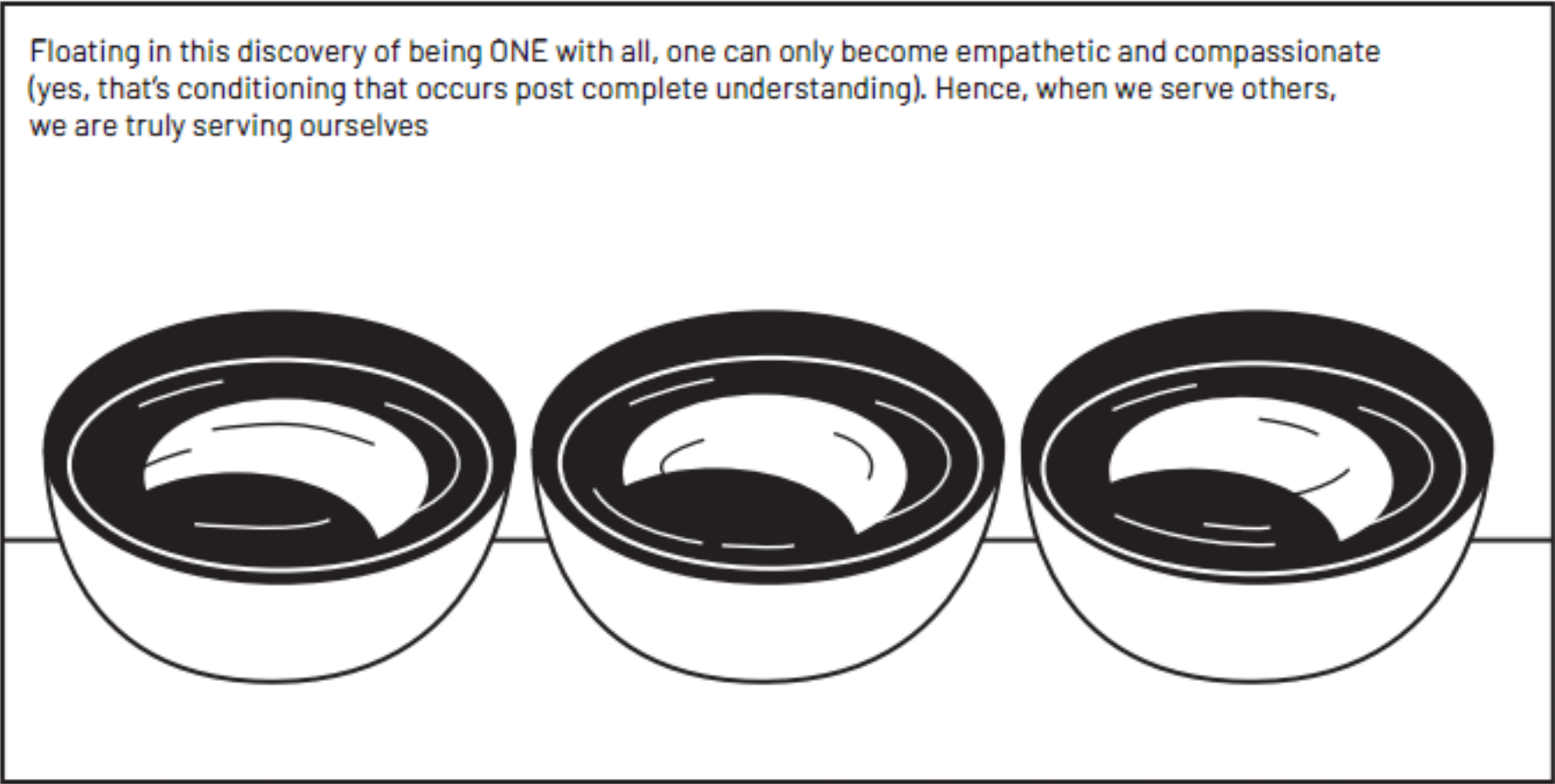
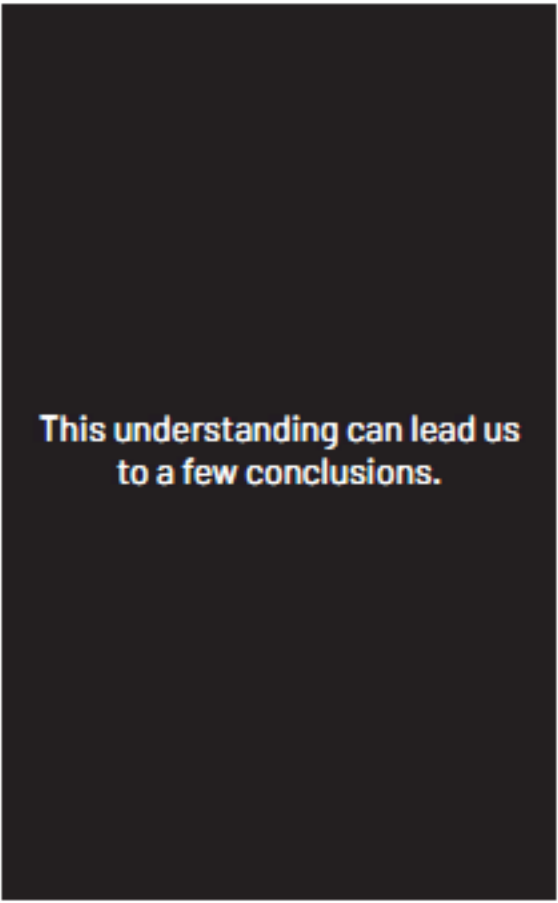
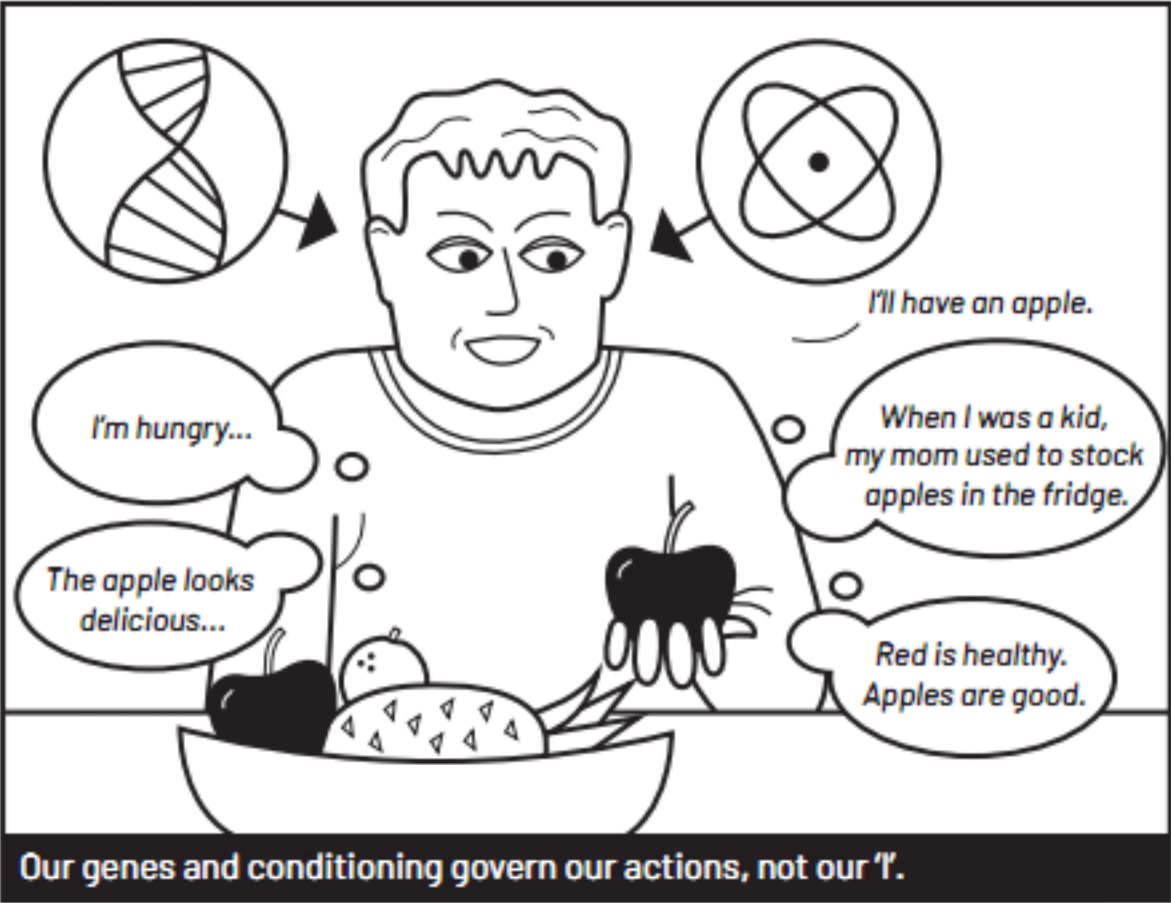
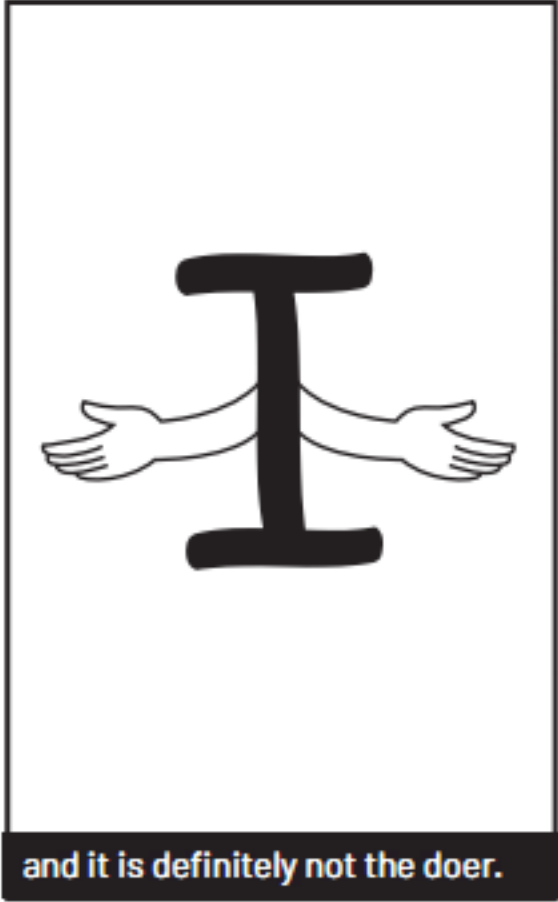
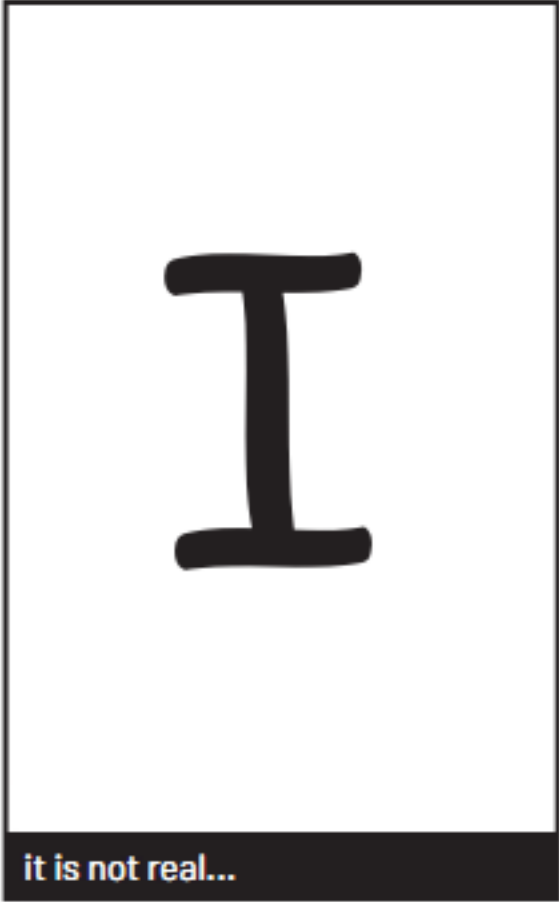
HUMILITY & COMPASSION

The only true meaning of love is to know the 'other' as yourself.

~ Eckhart Tolle



We are like vessels of water reflecting the same moon...the images are all different from each other but the moon remains unchanged. This unifying, universal Consciousness makes us all ONE (and even if we appear to be separated by our ego-sense, we are all equal)





The homeless man on the street and you possess the same universal awareness (Consciousness). The difference is in genes and conditioning, that is, his parents vs your parents, where he was born vs where you were born, how you were raised vs how he was raised. You (the 'I') didn't do anything to get where you are, neither did he do anything to get where he is.

We are all one. This understanding should lead to total humility and compassion towards all living beings.

This humility and compassion is the genesis of all other great human qualities. If you ever want to know if someone is a sage, look for these traits.

10.

ACCEPTANCE

Without desire, resolve, or effort, the sun rises;
and, in its mere presence, the sunstone emits fire,
the lotus blooms, water evaporates,
people perform their various functions and then rest.

~ Ramana Maharshi

Life happens within you and without you, life happens as per God's will or a cosmic law. How and why things happen the way they do is beyond the human mind's comprehension. Acceptance is peace.

From – I did this. He did this. She will do that. I shouldn't have done that.

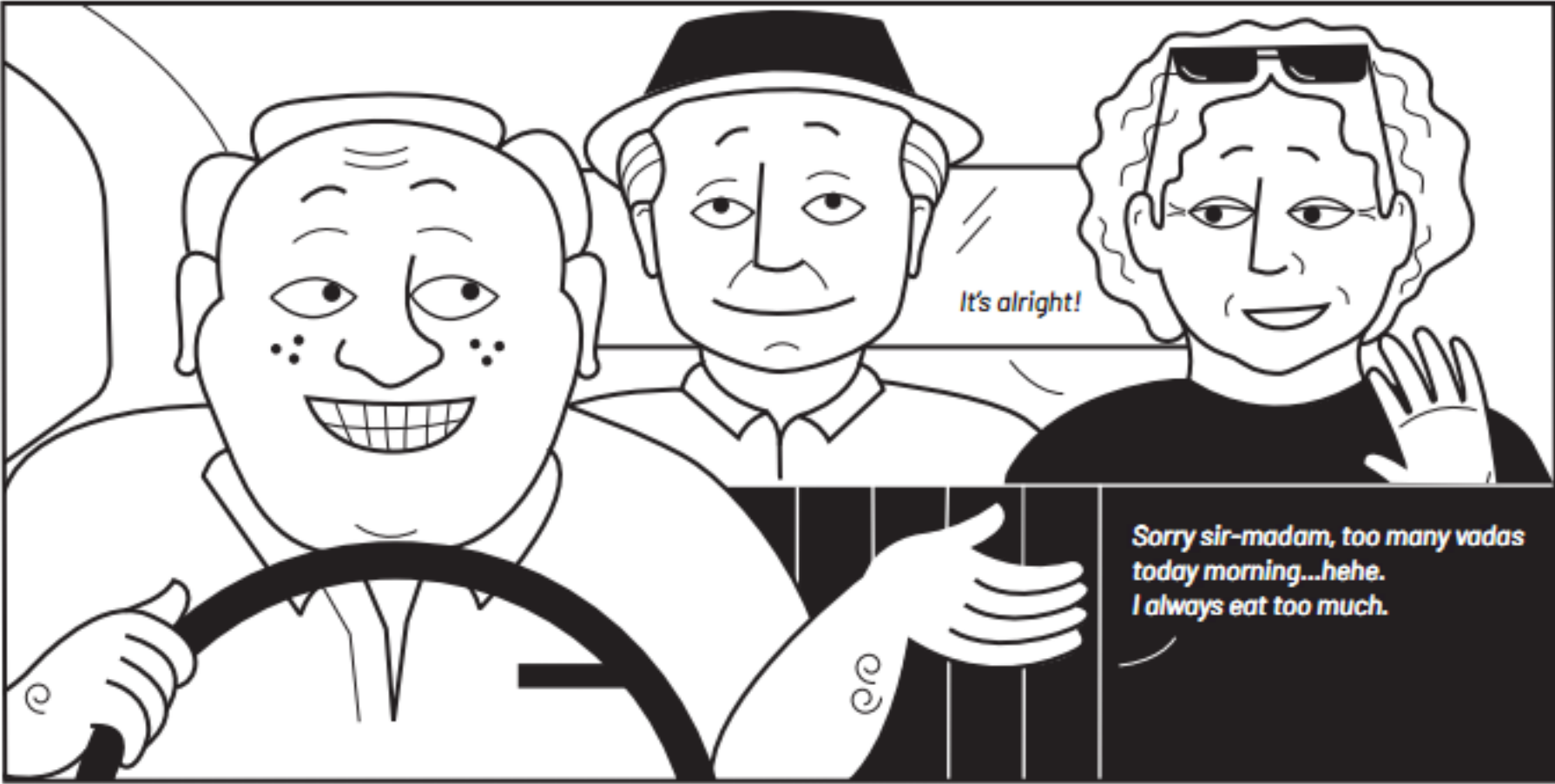
To – It is what it is. It's all happening as per God's will or cosmic law.



Mumbai. May, 1998. An elderly European couple hail a taxi. A black-yellow Fiat.



The driver belches loudly as they get into the car.



It's alright!

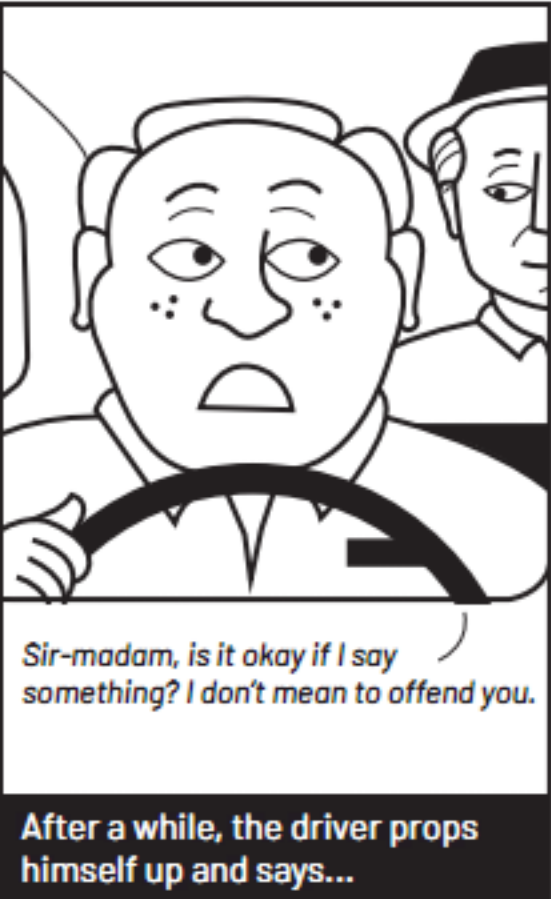
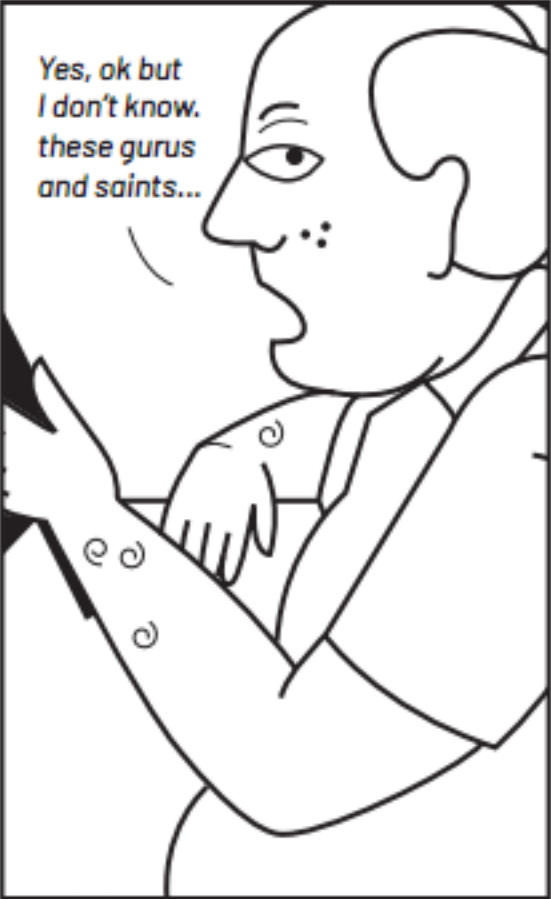
Sorry sir-madam, too many vadas today morning...hehe. I always eat too much.



Yes

Ah, I know this place. He is some kind of guru, isn't he?

The lady shows the driver an address.





Uh, well, I suppose so.



Are you sure?



Of course, you can. What is it that you want to know from the guru?

The lady was intrigued.



Since then, taxi...

taxi...

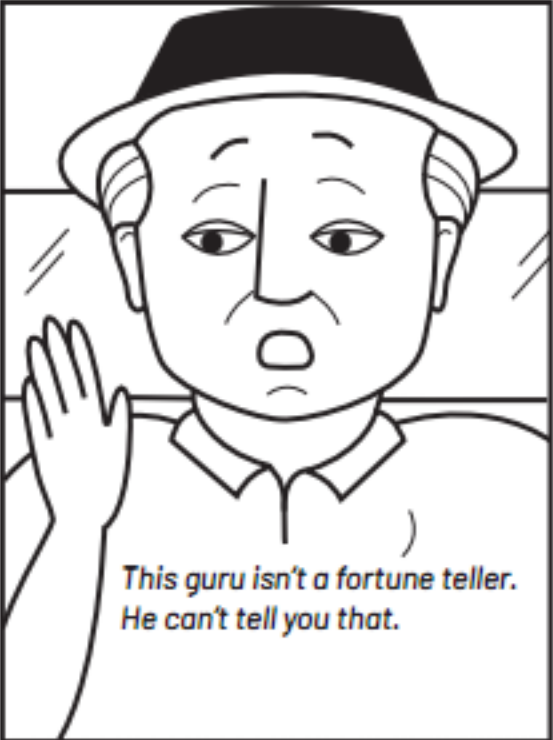
taxi... I have been at it for close to 27 years now. Same as my age when I started. Day-in, day-out, same life.

Got married, kids are grown up now but taxi remains constant. I don't think I've ever been happy.

I tried other things also, Madam. Like opened a shop, had to shut it down;...

worked at a warehouse, got lung problem, too much dust.

I always come back to this taxi and I don't like it. When will this change? When? That's all I want to know.



*This guru isn't a fortune teller.
He can't tell you that.*

**The old European man who
had kept quiet till now, couldn't
stop himself.**



What does he tell then?



*Can he tell me what to do
to make my life better?*



**The man was about to respond,
when his wife placed her hand
on him.**



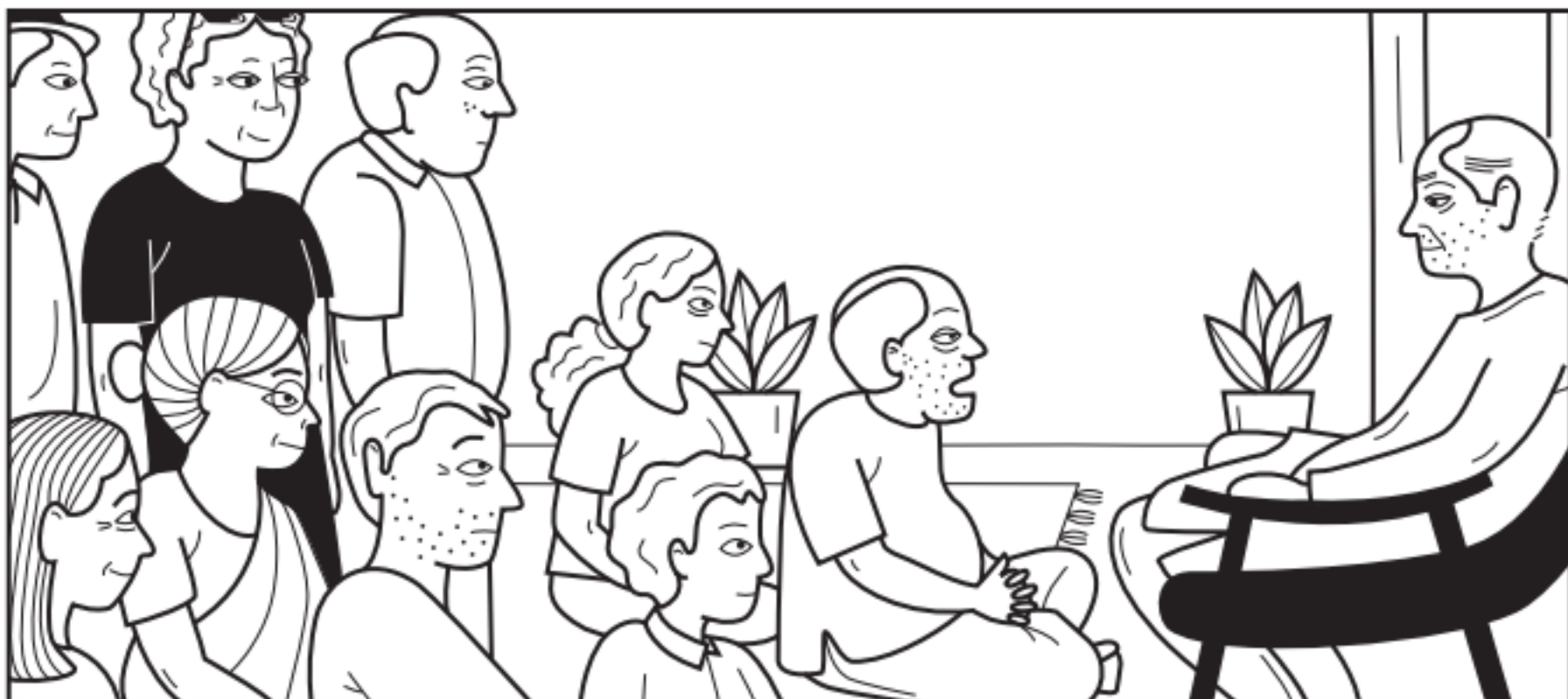
*You should come along.
There is nothing wrong in
giving it a try.*



Thank you.



**The Fiat trundled to where
it needed to stop.**



They climbed up the stairs to a crowded loft. An old man was sitting on an arm chair. He was the centre of attention amongst a motley crowd of seekers.



The European couple and their driver greeted the old man...



and sat at the back to wait for their turn to talk.



You ask your question. Don't be afraid, ok?

He nodded.



His turn came.



I began driving a taxi...

He repeated what he had told the couple earlier in the taxi.



Guru ji, I've been driving this taxi for 27 years now. I have hated every minute of this life. What should I do? Can you give me something that can change things for me?



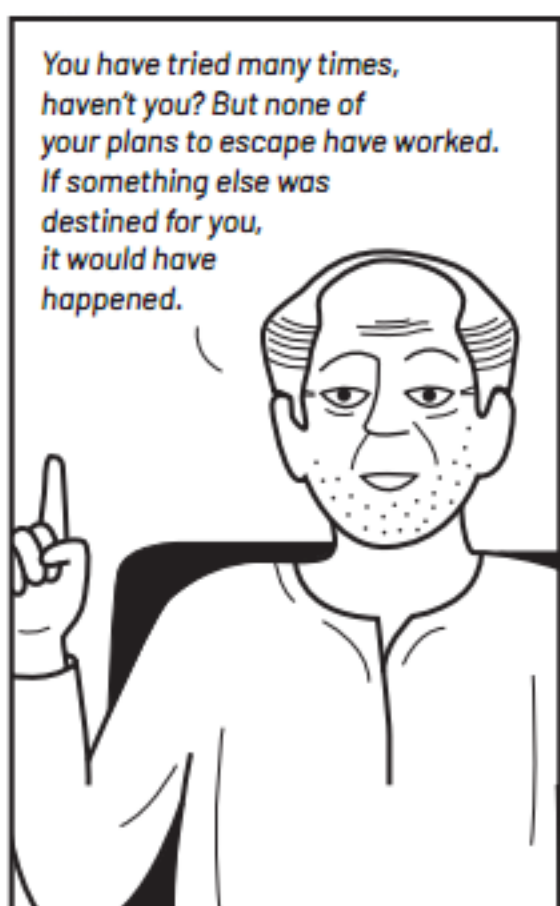
Get used to it.



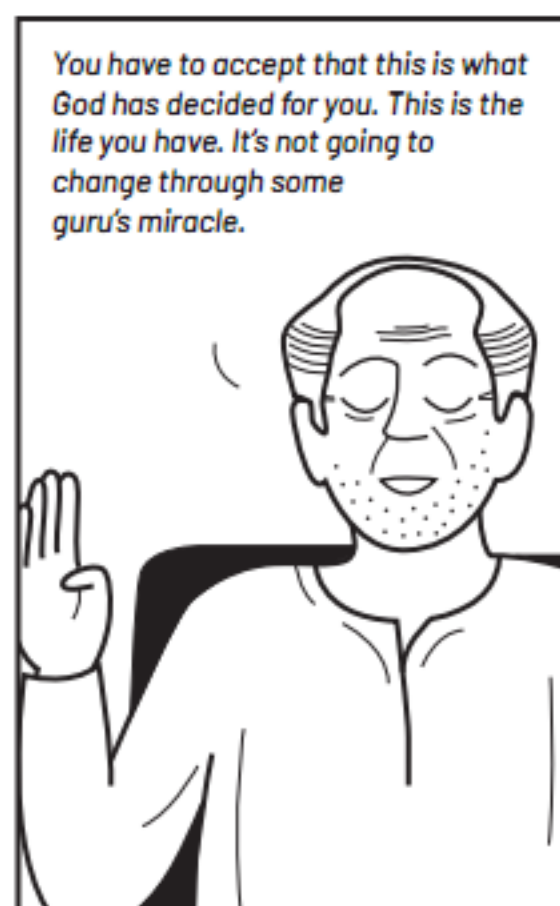
It's time you got used to it.



I have come to you with so much hope and you're telling me to get used to it. Why can't you give me a solution? Give me some way to get out.



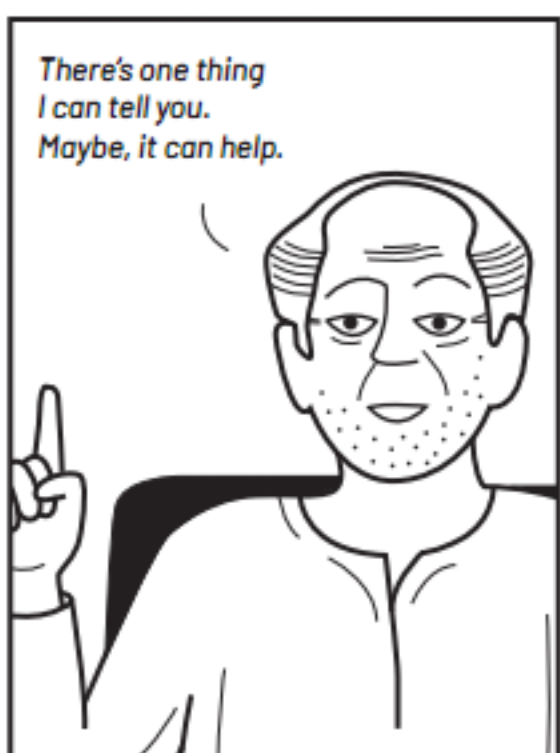
You have tried many times, haven't you? But none of your plans to escape have worked. If something else was destined for you, it would have happened.



You have to accept that this is what God has decided for you. This is the life you have. It's not going to change through some guru's miracle.



Ganesh went red in the face. He looked at the floor and mulled over the guru's reasoning.



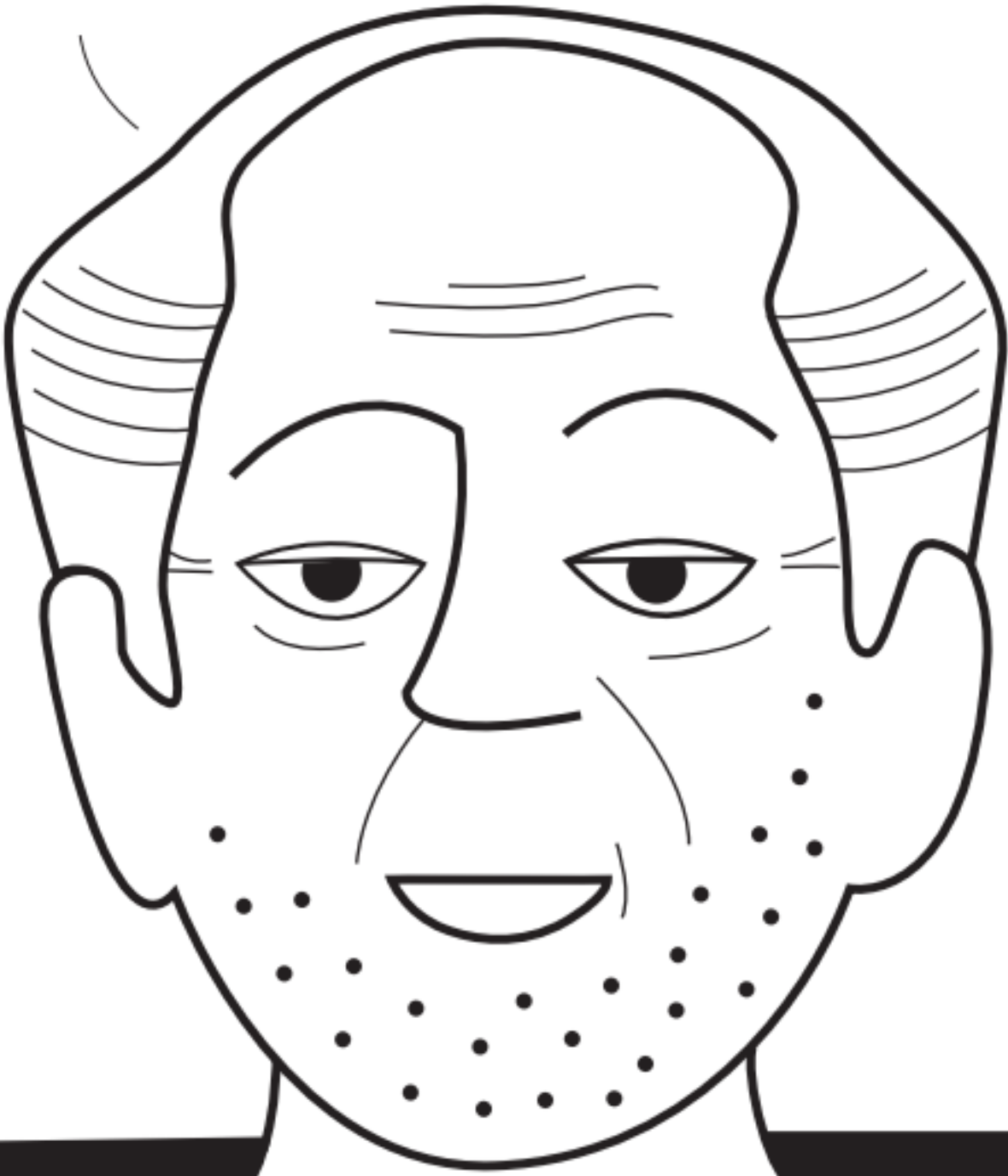
There's one thing I can tell you. Maybe, it can help.

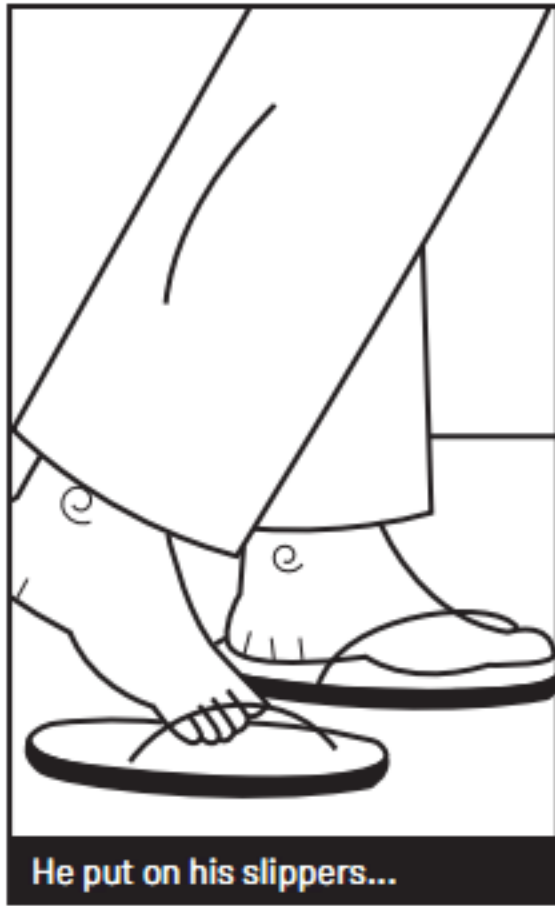
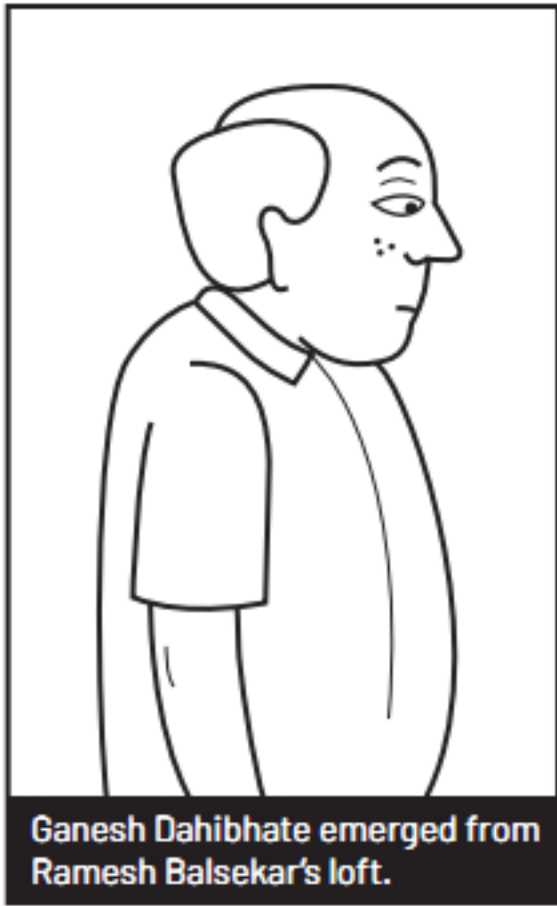
The guru sensed his dejection.



Ganesh nodded half-heartedly. He wasn't expecting much.

The resentment you feel at doing the same thing for years, that feeling, that thought – it needs to go away. Accept this as destiny, it's God's will, it's beyond your control. If you can accept, you'll find yourself suddenly free of all unhappiness.





Wouldn't we be at peace if we simple accepted the way things are instead of resisting or resenting it? But it's difficult because we believe things are the way they are because of what we did or what others have done and will do.

Getting rid of the false notion of doership opens the way to acceptance of what is. Acceptance of what is, is the way to liberation.



Whose fault is it if the traveller, instead of putting his luggage in the cart which bears the load anyway, carries it on his head, to his own inconvenience?

~ Ramana Maharshi

PART 4

PRACTICES

A quick recap.

The 'I', or ego-sense, is the primary thought that identifies with the body-mind organism, that is, the 'I' creates the illusion that there is an individual that's 'other' than the rest of the world (separateness). This illusion leads to thoughts (because all thoughts are in relation to this individual). The 'I' also assumes false doership, that is, the delusion that this individual ('I') can make choices and do things.

We must realize that (a) the 'I' is not the doer (all actions and thoughts are outcomes of genes and conditioning); and (b) the 'I' doesn't exist. It is a faux layer that hides the truth or reality of consciousness / pure awareness / primal energy.

This pure awareness is our true nature. This is who we really are. The cashier at the supermarket, the stray dog, the pig in the sty and the pebble in the garden— all are the same awareness - Consciousness.

However, people live under the tremendous weight of the false 'I' — a heaviness that stops us from attaining peace of mind. Hence, we must unravel the 'I' and go beyond it to pure awareness. This is where peace is, this is where we can find true freedom beyond anxieties, worries and regrets.

People struggle with the acceptance that the 'I' isn't real. That's where most seekers hit a roadblock. In this part, we will talk about a few concepts and practices that can be applied to overcome this obstacle in order to attain a deeper experience of peace and happiness.

11.

RAMESH BALSEKAR'S
ANALYSIS OF ACTIONS

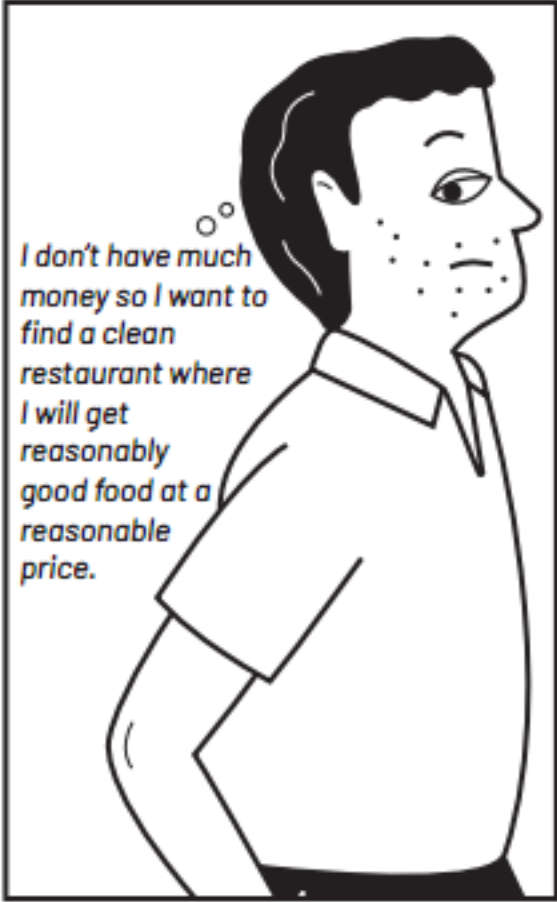
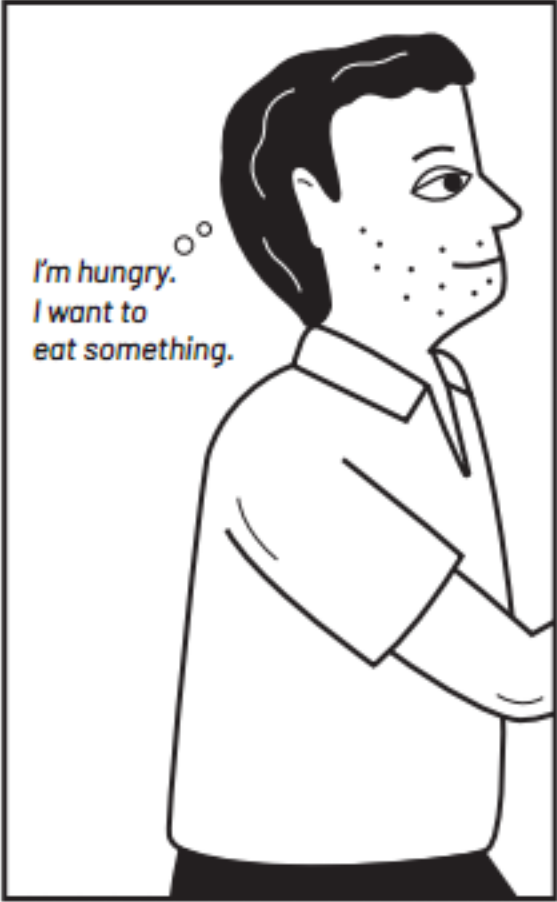
Events happen, deeds are done but there is no individual doer.

~ Ramesh Balsekar

Non-doership, once understood and accepted, is an effective way to quieten the mind – if the ego-sense or 'I' is not the doer then thoughts are pointless and needn't be pursued. But completely dismissing individual doership is really difficult (since it's so deeply engrained in us due to lifelong conditioning).

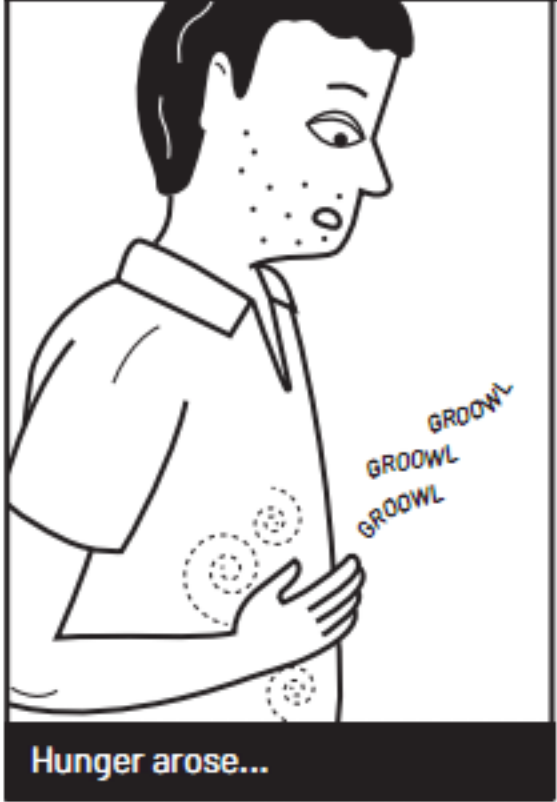
Ramesh Balsekar recommended an analysis of one's actions as an effective way of realizing that the ego is not really in control. This interesting practice is initiated by the ego, and in the process the ego itself gets weakened.

Balsekar asked us to observe closely our day-to-day lives. Here's his example of a hungry man who needs to find some place to eat.



So he asks someone.

So what happened? There was a series of thoughts. The man's brain responded to those thoughts according to circumstances over which he had no control.

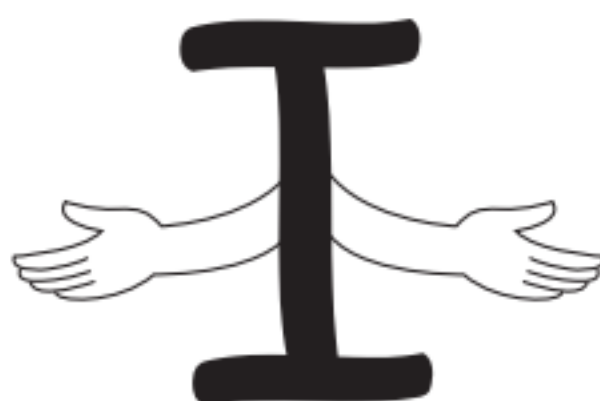


So the brain reacted to the existing situation and sought help from a stranger.

So how much was it 'his' action and how much was it a chain of circumstances and conditioning that led him to that restaurant?

When observed closely (and with practise), you come to the conclusion that it was not 'his' action.

'I was suddenly hungry, and 'I was led to a restaurant
by a set of circumstances over which 'I had no control.



Ramesh is suggesting that we review events that occurred during the day and see our actions from the perspective of how much of it was in our control ('our' here implies the ego-sense or 'I').

While we are acting, we do feel we are in control. That's why he wants us to review our actions at the end of the day and not at the time when the action is taking place. There are two key things that need to be observed for this practice to be effective:

1. **The focus is on analyzing actions and how they came about**
(do not delve too much on emotions and feelings)
2. **The analysis has to be done at the end of the day**
(and not during the time when the actions occur)

This practice (or sadhana) is aimed at erasing our pre-programmed conditioning that takes 'I' as the doer.

Once I know I'm not the doer of actions being performed by my mind-body, I need to then ask a simple question – if I don't do anything, then who am I?

That's where Ramana Maharshi's Self-enquiry comes in.

12.

RAMANA MAHARSHI'S
PRACTICE OF SELF-ENQUIRY

In order, therefore, to gain that happiness which is one's (true) nature and which is experienced in the state of deep sleep, where there is no mind, one should know oneself. To achieve this, the Path of Knowledge, the enquiry in the form of 'Who am I?', is the principal means.

~ *Who am I?* Ramana Maharshi



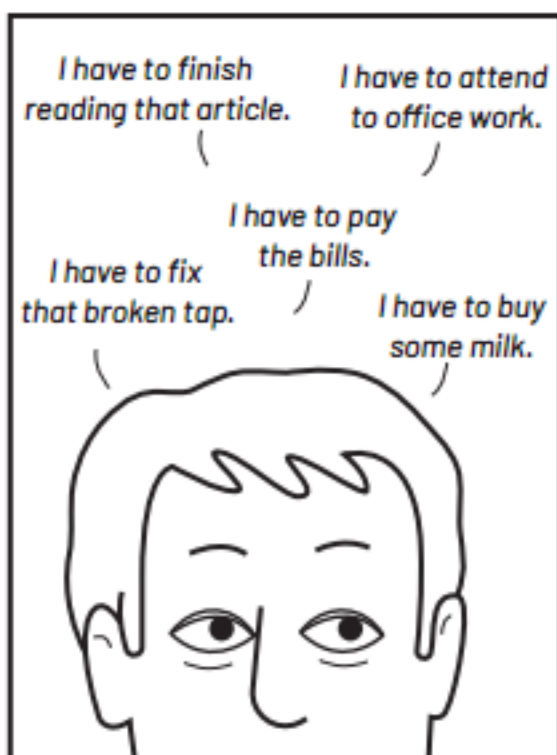
What happens when you are fast asleep, that is, in dreamless, deep sleep?



You say 'I slept around 10 pm', so you do remember the approximate time you fell asleep.



When you wake up, you first become aware of your own existence (this is something you're so used to that you never notice).



And then the world springs up with all the things you need to 'do' and worry about.

But what happened in between?



The only thing that you hear yourself say is 'I slept well' or 'I had a good night's sleep'.

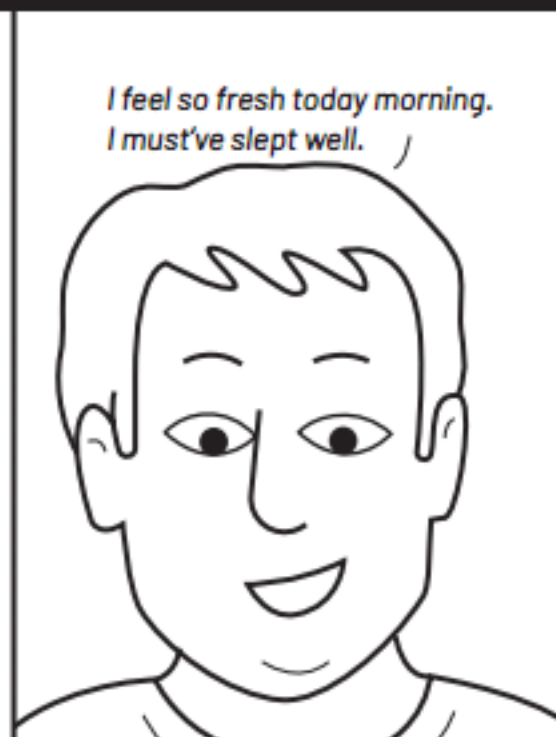
All your troubles, all your worries, all your fears disappeared in deep sleep, didn't they? The whole world is going to the dogs, your life is in a mess but at 10 pm you lie on your bed, something clicks in place, and for 7-8 hours you're gone. No worries, no anxieties, no problems.

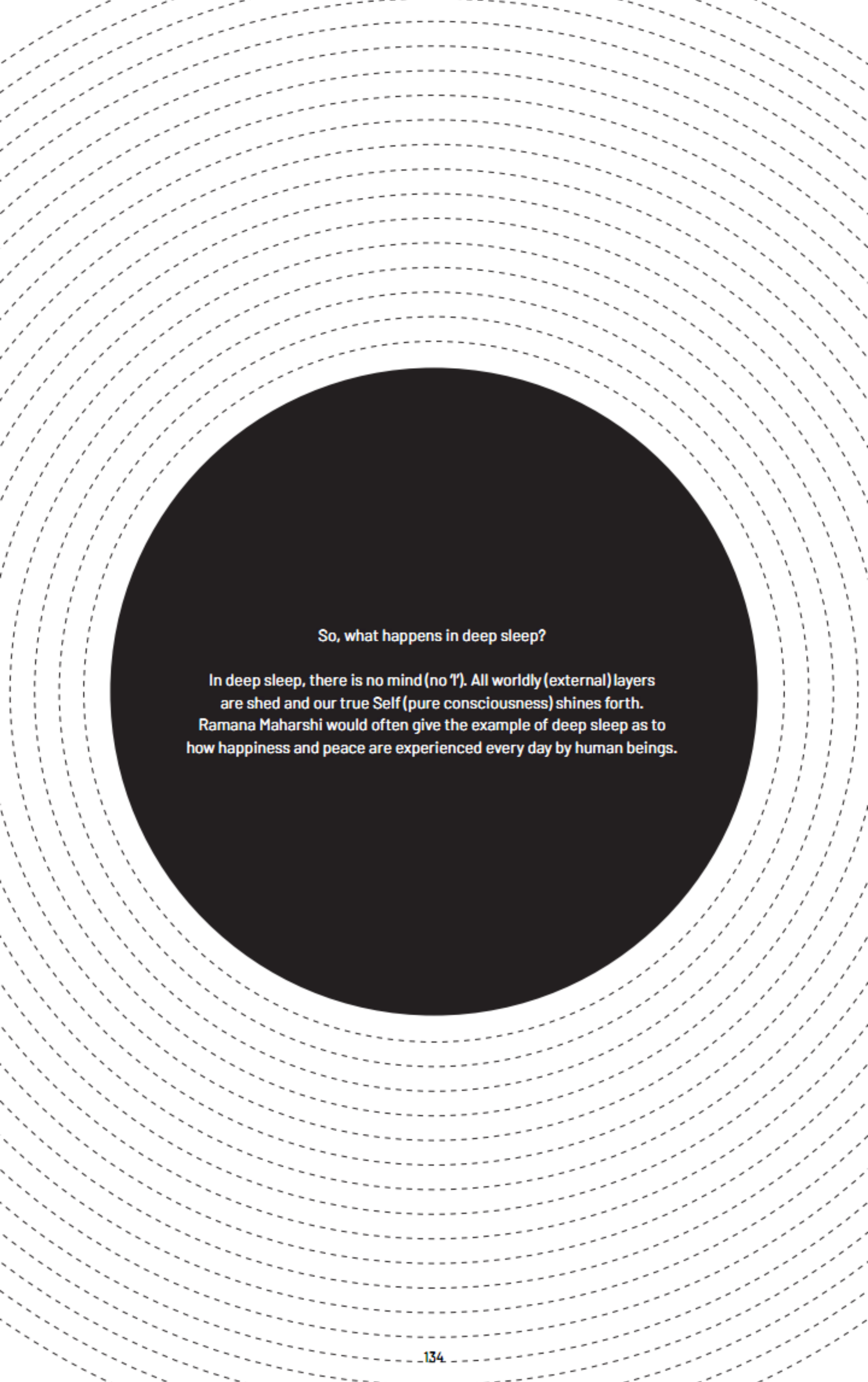


The YOU is gone.



And if your worries and anxieties didn't catch hold of 'you' the moment you woke up, you'd actually feel happy and at peace.



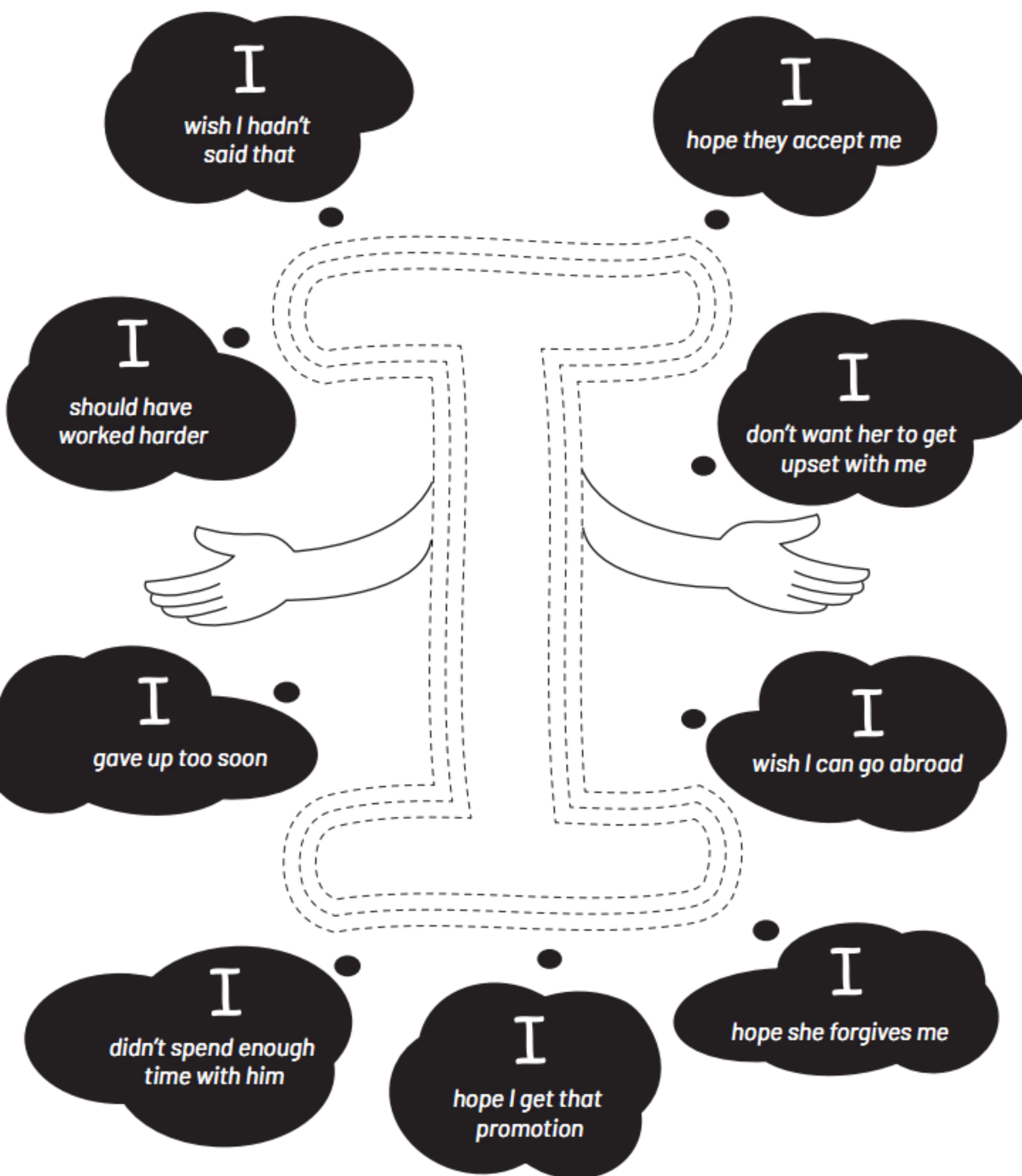


So, what happens in deep sleep?

In deep sleep, there is no mind (no 'I'). All worldly (external) layers are shed and our true Self (pure consciousness) shines forth. Ramana Maharshi would often give the example of deep sleep as to how happiness and peace are experienced every day by human beings.

But what about the waking state, that is, the life that we have to live every day?

We know that past and future thoughts (thinking mind)
are useless. These thoughts arise to a primary entity 'I' that doesn't exist;
and these thoughts also assume doership of this non-existent 'I'
(while in truth, there is no doer).





True happiness and peace are attained by residing in one's true nature. Having 'no mind' or no 'I'. We have to figure out a way to quieten the mind. That is why human beings invented meditation, breath control and chanting – all tools to reduce thinking and quieten the mind.



I should have worked harder.

I gave up too soon.

I don't want her to get upset with me.

I hope I get that promotion.

I wish I hadn't said that.

I hope they accept me.

The only challenge with all these practices is the mind that had quietened during practice goes about wreaking havoc as usual once the practice is over. If only we could stay in the thoughtless state all the time. That's where Ramana Maharshi's Self-enquiry can help.

The practice of 'Self-enquiry' is a life-long practice and an effective method to quieten the mind. At first glance, Self-enquiry appears straightforward but its subtleties need to be understood before the practice is begun.

Here's how the Maharshi describes Self-enquiry:

When other thoughts arise, one should not pursue them, but should inquire:

'To whom do they arise?'

It does not matter how many thoughts arise. As each thought arises, one should inquire with diligence, 'To whom has this thought arisen?' The answer that would emerge would be 'to me'. Thereupon if one inquires 'Who am I?', the mind will go back to its source and the thought that arose will become quiescent. With repeated practise in this manner, the mind will develop the skill to stay in its source.

When the mind that is subtle goes out through the brain and the sense-organs, the gross names and forms appear; when it stays in the heart, the names and forms disappear. Not letting the mind go out, but retaining it in the Heart is what is called 'inwardness' (antarmukha). Letting the mind go out of the Heart is known as 'externalization' (bahirmukha). Thus, when the mind stays in the Heart, the 'I' which is the source of all thoughts will go, and the Self which ever exists will shine.

~ Who am I? Ramana Maharshi



When we observe thoughts and ask to whom do these thoughts occur? The response is immediate: these thoughts occur to 'me'. In other words, who is thinking? Of course it's 'I' or me who's thinking. The 'I' can respond to this question easily enough.

But...the next question is

Who is this 'me'?



Asking this question can occur in two ways.



You can ask this to the false 'I'.



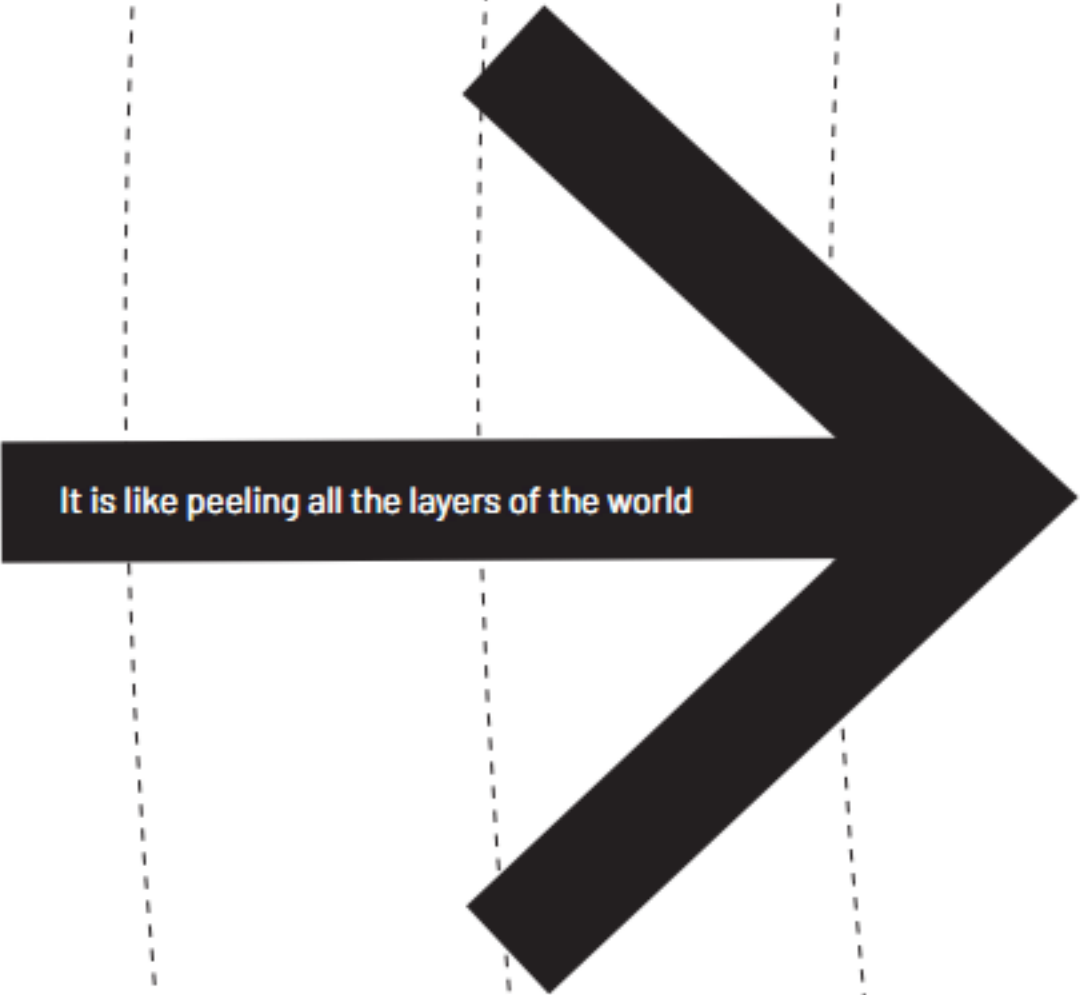
The mind will respond with something like 'I'm this body'.



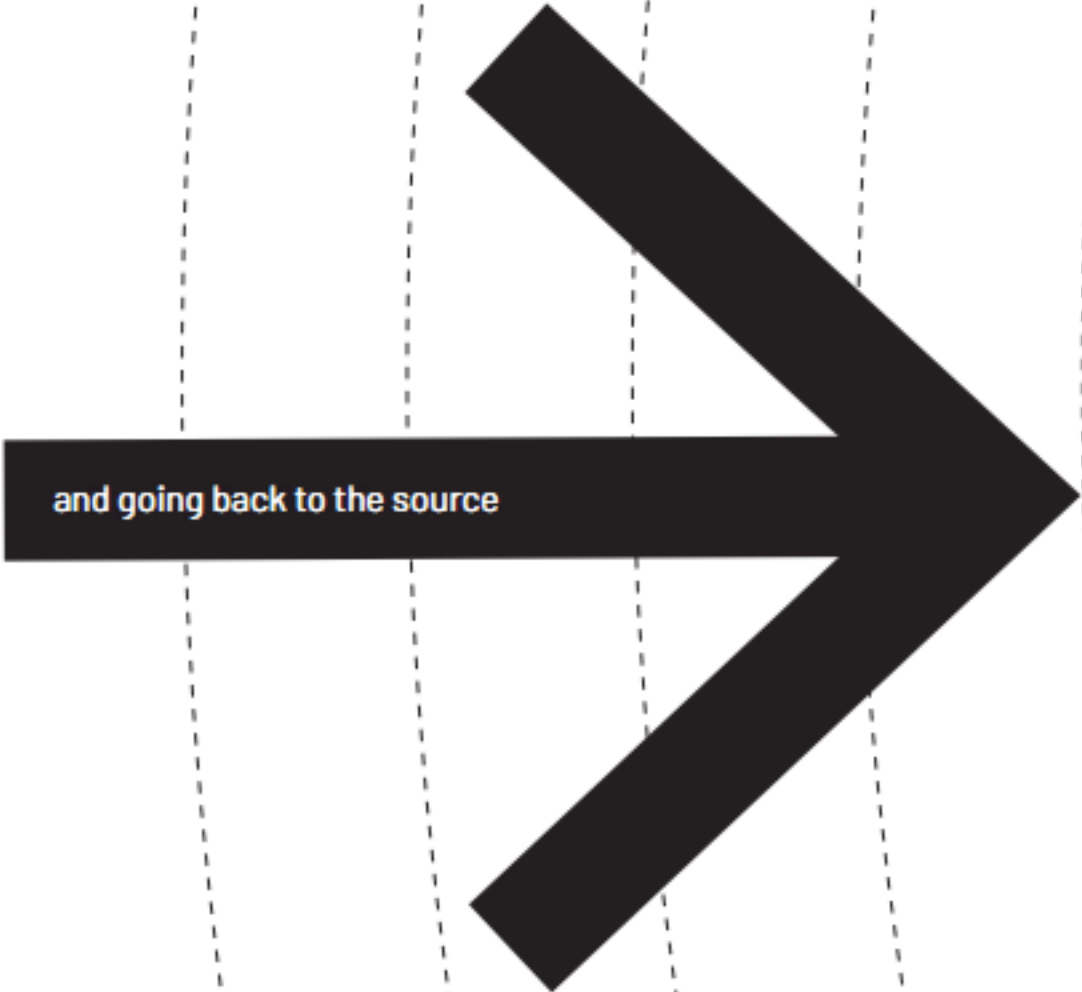
Or I'm so and so who lives at such and such place.

But that's not what Maharshi is asking us to do.

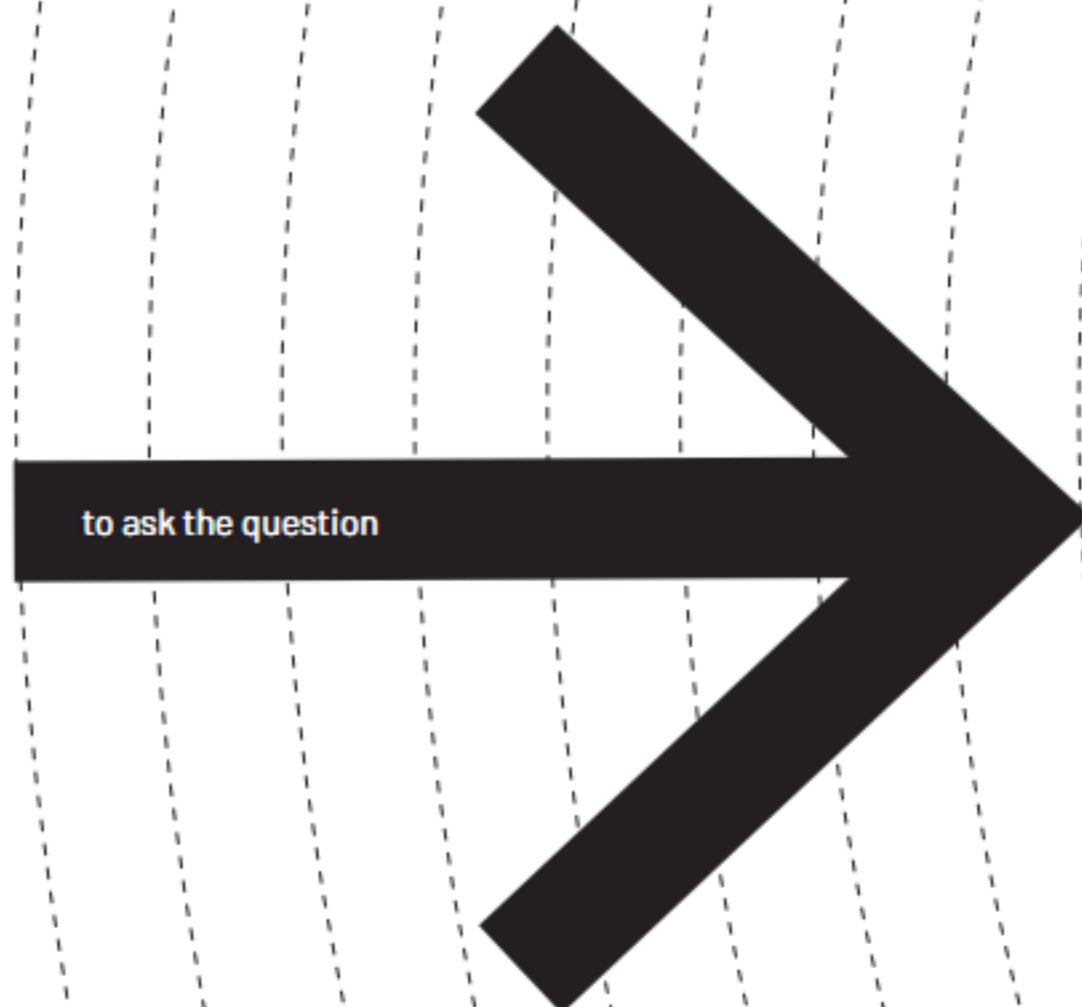
He is keen on taking us inward – there is no need for the mind to answer this question (which is tempting because it is conditioned to do so). This question needs to be asked to the source itself (to the Self or pure consciousness).

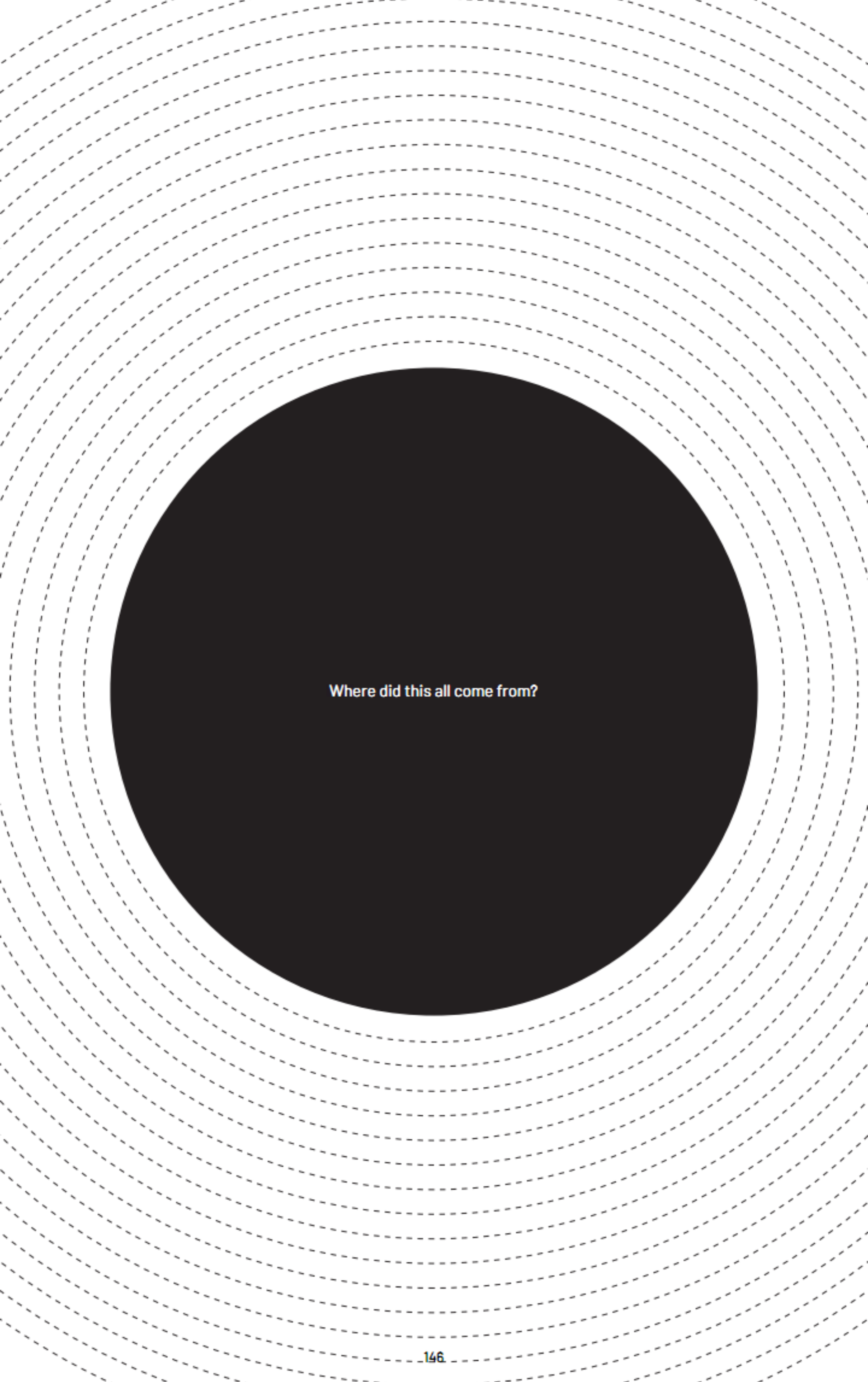


It is like peeling all the layers of the world



and going back to the source





Where did this all come from?



Taking the 'I' back to its source. That's what Self-enquiry is meant to do. It quietens the mind and with constant practise thoughts start disappearing, fewer thoughts arise, and seldom are they able to stay for long. The mind turns inward. With constant practise, the mind is at peace at all times.

Self-enquiry is a difficult practice for three reasons (all these have to do with deep-rooted conditioning).

1. First, our heavy reliance on the mind. Asking the question and without seeking an answer from the mind is not easy and needs faith in the method.

2. Many would turn it into an intellectual question-answer session and would get nothing out of it (except a dizziness that comes from going round in circles).

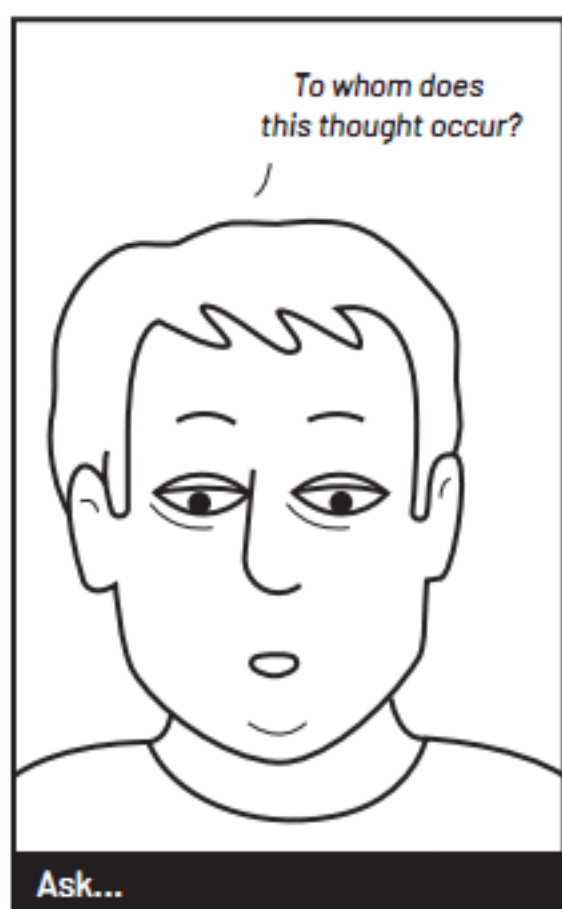
3. The practice takes time to yield noticeable results. After all, it is up against years of conditioning, it is (in a manner of speaking) fighting millions of thoughts that pass through our brains unhindered each day. Someone who is looking for instantaneous results or a quick 'spiritual experience' would be disappointed.

The Maharshi isn't suggesting you do it for an hour a day, he is saying you do it every single moment of your waking life till the time you have attained complete peace of mind.

Here's the practice as I understand it.



It is really important to cultivate this skill to observe thoughts as they occur instead of flowing with them.



Dwell in the silence that ensues from this question.

According to the Maharshi, this is the only direct method to experience the absolute reality as it is, that is, to realize the Self.

Practise Self-enquiry with diligence and the mind subsides and merges in the natural state of a thought-free, 'Self' conscious being.

This is true happiness.

The thoughtless state

When the swordsman stands against his opponent,
he is not to think of the opponent, nor of himself,
nor of his enemy's sword movements.

He just stands there with his sword which,
forgetful of all technique, is ready only to follow
the dictates of the subconscious.

The man has effaced himself as the wielder
of the sword. When he strikes,
it is not the man but the sword in the hand
of the man's subconscious that strikes.

~ Zen Master Takuan Sōhō

One-pointedness is a state in which the mind has detached itself from the world and turned inward to merge with its source (consciousness). A one-pointed mind is thoughtless. In such a state, the ego may exist but it is no longer assuming doership. Like the swordsman in the quote above, the ego has effaced itself as the wielder of the sword.

No thought is peace of mind. No thought is happiness.

But going thoughtless would be scary for most. How will the body operate if I'm not thinking? How will I live a normal life without thoughts?

The answer to such questions is - your body will operate the way its supposed to and you will live the life you're supposed to be living. The thinking mind isn't needed

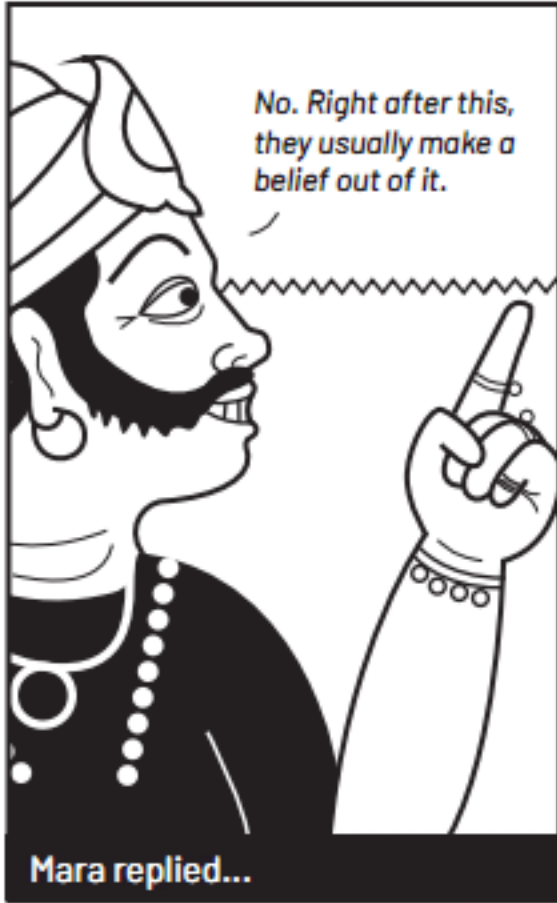
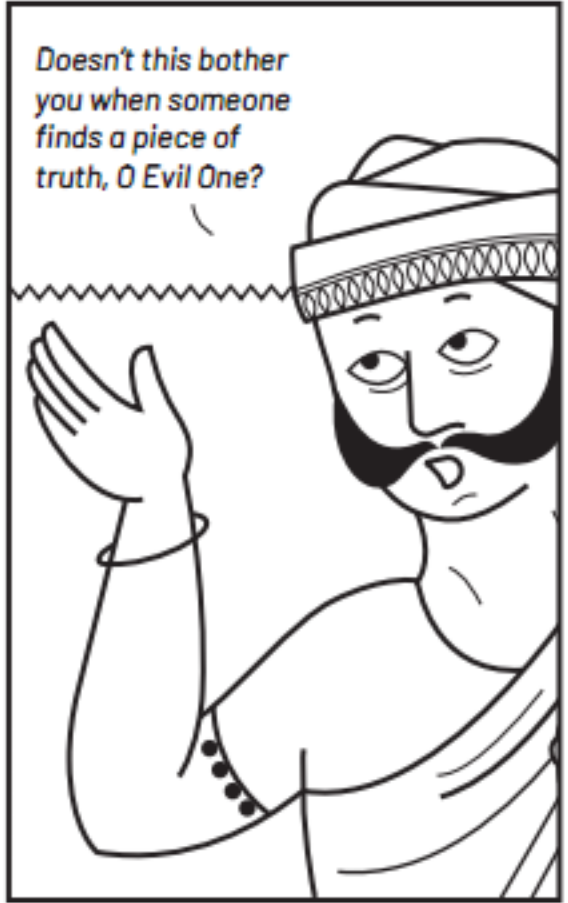
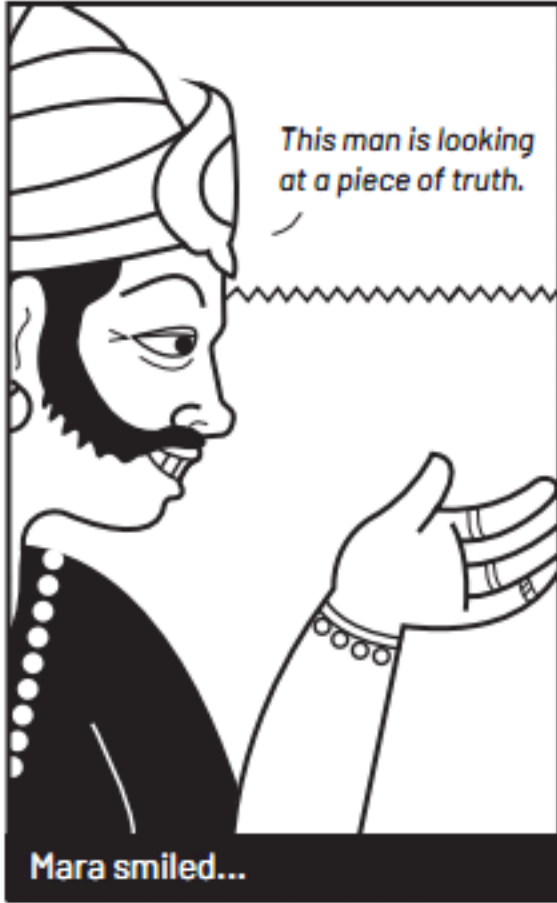
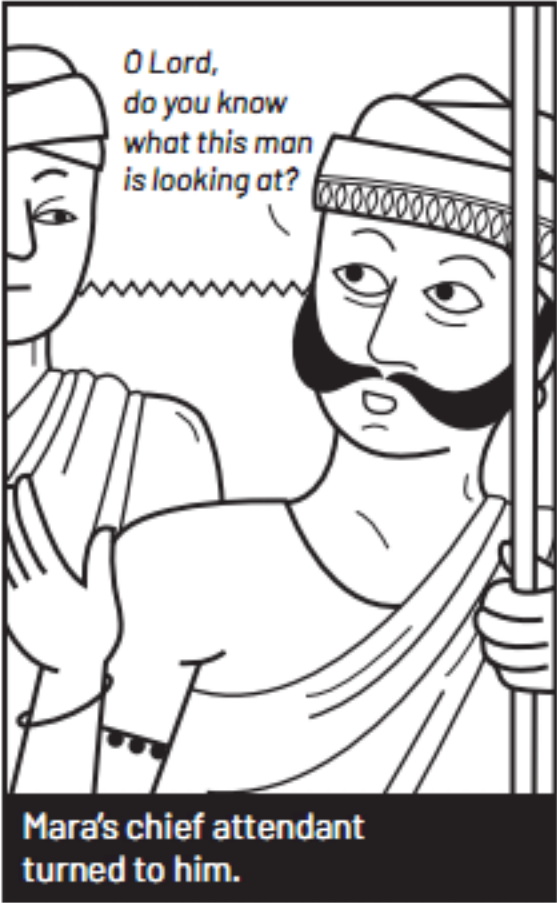
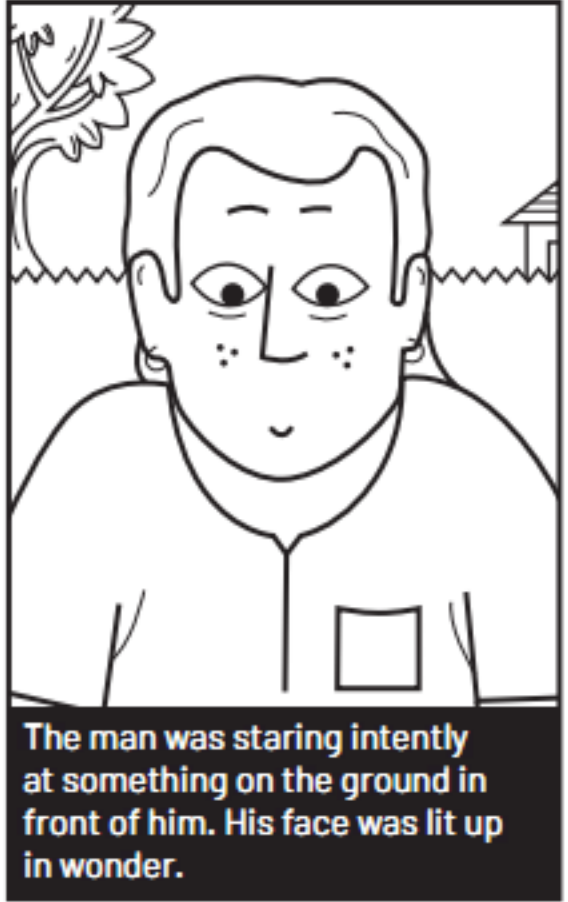
to live or to be happy. Only the working mind, flowing naturally and free of thoughts is necessary. The working mind acts without a motive from the past or an expected future outcome (without doership). The working mind is the natural flow of pure consciousness.

Therefore the sage acts by not doing
and teaches no thought.
The ten thousand things arise
and vanish without him.
He works without motive,
indifferent to outcome.
Because there is no doer,
his actions are timeless.

~ *Tao Te Ching*, Marshall, Bart. (Tr), The Perennial Way, Tat Foundation.

AFTERWORD

A PIECE OF TRUTH



The teachings in this book offer a 'piece of truth', but they are not meant to be believed blindly. The masters would want you to enquire and explore and experience for yourself instead of turning their words into a faith.

May Ramana and Ramesh's teachings act as a catalyst to your spiritual journey.

May your seeking bear fruit.

RECOMMENDED READING

Here's a reading list. Each one of these books is a spiritual classic. I would highly recommend that you read at least some of these.

Books on Ramana Maharshi's teachings

Maharshi, Ramana, *Who Am I?*, Sri Ramanasramam.

Maharshi, Ramana, Godman, David (Ed.), *Be As You Are: The spiritual teachings and wisdom of Sri Ramana Maharshi*. Penguin.

Maharshi, Ramana, Arthur Osborne (Ed.), *The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi in His Own Words*. Sri Ramanasramam.

Balsekar, Ramesh, *Pointers From Ramana Maharshi*. Zen Publications.

Books on Ramesh Balsekar's teachings

Balsekar, Ramesh, *Consciousness Speaks*. Zen Publications.

Balsekar, Ramesh, *Confusion No More*. Zen Publications.

Sachdeva, Gautam, *Pointers from Ramesh Balsekar*. Yogi Impressions.

Other recommended reading

Marshall, Bart, *The Perennial Way: New English Versions of Yoga Sutras, Dhammapada, Heart Sutra, Astavakra Gita, Faith Mind Sutra, and Tao Te Ching*. Tat Foundation.

Prabhavananda, Swami, Isherwood, Christopher, *Bhagavad-Gita: The Song of God*. Penguin USA.

Prabhavananda, Swami, Isherwood, Christopher, *How to Know God: The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali*. Vedanta Press & Bookshop.

Sekida, Katsuki, *Two Zen Classics: The Gateless Gate and The Blue Cliff Records*. Shambhala.

Scientific research on how Genes and Conditioning influence decisions and choices.

Skinner, B. F, *Beyond Freedom & Dignity*, Hackett Publishing Co., 2011

Mitchell, Kevin J., *Innate: How the Wiring of Our Brains Shapes Who We Are*. Princeton University Press, 2018.

Tan, Monica, *Are we products of nature or nurture? Science answers age-old question*. The Guardian. May 2019.
https://www.theguardian.com/science/2015/may/19/are-we-products-of-nature-or-nature-science-answers-age-old-question?CMP=share_btn_wa

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https://www.theguardian.com/science/2015/mar/19/do-your-genes-determine-your-entire-life?CMP=share_btn_wa

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<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/sep/14/yuval-noah-harari-the-new-threat-to-liberal-democracy>

Scharping, Nathaniel, *Can We Blame Our Genes for Our Decisions?* Discover Magazine. December 2018.
<https://www.discovermagazine.com/health/can-we-blame-our-genes-for-our-decisions>

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Kalyani would like to thank

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And her parents, for everything.

About the author

Siddharth Tripathi was born in Allahabad and schooled in Banaras. He is a B.E from NIT Trichy and an MBA from MDI, Gurgaon. *The Virgins*, published in 2013, is his first novel. *Blowfish*, his second novel, was published by Bloomsbury in September 2017. His first two books are now being adapted for a serialized OTT release.

For the last five years, Siddharth has been a practitioner of the non-dual path to freedom and has extensively researched the Advaita teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi and Sri Ramesh Balesekar. This book is a culmination of that journey.

About the illustrator

Kalyani S. Naravane is a gold medalist from NIFT, New Delhi, with an MA in Illustration & Visual Media from LCC, UAL. She has completed five years as a graphic designer at GCD Studio, New Delhi. Kalyani is setting up her freelance practice, with the idea of integrating her love of illustrations and knowledge of graphic design in a challenging and creative way.