A violent encounter on the streets of Manhattan forces Wall Street banker Maximus Pzoras to confront questions about suffering and mortality that have dogged him since his mother’s death. His search for a mentor takes him to the farthest reaches of India, where he encounters a mysterious night market, almost freezes to death on a hike up the Himalayas and finally, finds himself in an ashram in a small drought stricken village in South India where strange things begin to happen to him. But are Yogis who walk on water, do impossible poses, and live agelessly for 200 years the stuff of fiction or fact? Can a flesh and blood man ever truly achieve nirvana? Max struggles to overcome his rational skepticism and the pull of family tugging him back home. In a final bid for answers, he embarks on dangerous solitary meditation in a freezing Himalayan cave. Will Max penetrate the truth of human suffering, or is enlightenment just a new age illusion?

THE SEEKER is both a page turning adventure story and a journey of tremendous inner transformation, a SIDDHARTHA for our generation.

AN EXCERPT FROM THE MIDDLE OF THE BOOK

“Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ.”

Max turned around and smiled at the kids who were chanting. They had been following him from the bus station in Madurai. He glanced at his reflection in the ATM machine’s glass door. Loose shirt, long brown hair, light beard, sun-burnt skin, weighing at least sixty pounds less than when he had first come to India; he did look a little like Jesus. Although he didn’t feel much like him right then. He couldn’t produce gold coins from air. He couldn’t even get an ATM machine to work. The ATM machine in Pavur, the town near the village, had rejected
his card. He had just enough money to pay for the twelve hour bus ride from Pavur to Madurai. Now, he needed money for the train journey ahead. He didn’t know where he would go yet. After spending three years at Ramakrishna’s Ashram, he felt overwhelmed by people, smells, shops, traffic—and getting simple things to work.

His debit card was rejected yet again.

Max fingered the card’s silver strip. Had they frozen his bank account because he hadn’t used it in more than two years? Max walked out of the ATM machine to look for a telephone booth.

He collided with a tall, lean man on a bicycle who was staring open-mouthed at him.

“Sorry, boss, sorry,” said the man.

“Pen, pen, pen, Jesus Christ,” chanted the boys following him.

Three vegetable vending women, a man selling newspapers and magazines on a cart and a few passer-bys collected around him.

Max wasn’t used to the attention. He hadn’t gone beyond Pavur for three years and everyone there had known him. Here, he felt like a foreigner once again. Even so, he was surprised that the locals followed him when he walked to the phone booth. Madurai was a temple city and saw its fair share of tourists. Some were on the street right then. He spotted a young blonde couple, an older Russian looking man and another white family of four, but no one followed them around or gaped at them. He found a phone booth. People gathered around the booth to watch him. Puzzled, he turned his back to the street and concentrated on dialing the phone number listed at the back of his bank card.

“Please enter the last four digits of your social security number,” said a mechanized voice.

In his previous life, he would have pressed a series of #’s to bypass the prompts and connect directly to a live voice. Now, every thought, every action was an exercise in complete truthfulness. For there could be nothing relative in the path of the Yogi. He couldn’t speak a half-truth, the same way he couldn’t squash the mosquitoes ravaging him or covet a more comfortable way of traveling than the lowest class available on the train. A Yogi lived in absolutes. Truth, non-violence and austerity were his religion. It rid
the body of physical craving and the mind of ego, thus reducing the pull of the world.

Max punched, dialed, corrected, then re-punched and re-dialed his social security digits, birth date and erstwhile street address on the broken phone console before finally being connected to a live voice.

His ATM access had indeed been blocked. They needed the exact amounts and dates of his last three ATM withdrawals to verify his identity.

“Is there another way?” said Max. “I haven’t withdrawn money in three years. It will be hard to tell the exact dates.”

“I realize the difficulty, Mr. Pzoras but the bank’s international fraud protection policies aim at safeguarding customers’ interests first and foremost,” said the efficient male voice. “Alternatively, we request a notarized letter stating your reason for not using the bank account. We will process it within seven business days of receipt and reopen the account.”


“Notarized by whom?” he said eventually.

“Any recognizable US body. Like an embassy or a consulate in your country of travel,” he said.

The nearest consulate was probably in Chennai, another ten hours away and there would probably be more red tape there. The Yogic test had been performed. Max was now clear that it would utilize far less prana to perform samyama, a blend of deep concentration and meditation resulting in complete merging with the object of focus, on the withdrawal dates. In the last year, Ramakrishna had taught him to practice samyama on his body to reveal its inner workings. Now, Max would make his own mind the object.

“Could you hold for just a few minutes?” she asked.

Max closed his eyes, shutting out the curious crowd outside. He inhaled and exhaled, concentrating on the Ajna Chakra in the center of his forehead, the storehouse of all memory. First, he drowned out the lingering images of leaving Ramakrishna and the previous 24 hours of walking and bus journeys, next, he zoned in on the ATM trips he had made more than three years ago and finally, he retained his breath, flowing his
entire living, breathing energy, his prana towards the Ajna Chakra, merging with the man who walked into the ATMs many years ago.

He opened his eyes, weak and breathless. His shirt was soaked with perspiration. He gripped the phone tight so that it didn't slip from his sweaty grip and rested his head against the stained glass door.


“Yes, yes, yes, exactly right. Date and withdrawal amounts are both correct. I don’t have the exact time or place printed in front of me but it must indeed be right. Thank you for confirming, Mr. Pzoras. Your account is now unblocked,” he said. He paused. “What a miracle you’ve kept the receipts all these years. God, I wish I was that organized,” he added in a slightly embarrassed tone.

Max thanked him and set the phone down. The crowd watching him outside had swelled. Max stepped out of the phone booth and sat down on the side of the road. He felt dizzy and spent. If remembering three dates had taken so much concentration, so much prana, how much more would walking on water and levitating require? Yes, Max could do much if he performed deep samyama on something. But Ramakrishna was right. Pursuing extraordinary powers broke the natural laws and distracted one from the goal. Every breath spent on clinging to the earthly realm took energy away from merging with the divine. Just like healing Katie had left him weak and feverish for months. Now he understood his urge to finally leave Ramakrishna more than a year after his kundalini had awakened. The veil separating him from pure consciousness had thinned, but to penetrate any further, he would have to conduct his own experiments with truth. He had to verify the knowledge he had received with his own experience, only then would it fuse into his every breath.

“Photo, photo, photo.”

People jostled to sit beside him on the pavement. They put their arms around him and asked their companions to click their photographs with Max. One, two, ten, twenty, Max clicked pictures with kids, shopkeepers, vegetable vendors, newspaper men and
their customers. He recovered his breath after more than an hour and walked back to the ATM. This time, his card worked. He withdrew the money, settled the phone booth bill, bought pens for the kids and began walking towards the railway station.

People rushed towards him.

“Thank you, Thank you, Jesus Christ. Come again, Jesus Christ,” shouted the delighted kids, shaking his hands.

The vegetable vending women touched his feet. “Bless, bless.”

A legless beggar on a wooden cart scrambled next to him. He tugged Max’s cargo pants, urging him to put his hands on his head.

The phone booth owner prostrated in front of him.

More people joined him. Now, a crowd of folks lay before him.

“Stop, please stop,” said Max surprised and dizzy.

“God, God, God,” chanted a short, fat woman in a yellow saree.

Others picked up the chant. More people joined them.

The noise overwhelmed him. “No, I’m nobody. Stop, stop, please stop,” said Max.

A woman in a bright dress came forward and showed him the camera with the photograph she had just clicked.

“Look, you are God. Light. Shining,” she said.

Max looked at the photograph.

He smiled and exhaled slowly.

His Guru had taught him well. Despite the holes in his well-worn clothes, his unkempt hair and tired face, Max’s skin glowed like a lamp—though it was a pale reflection of the ethereal glow on Ramakrishna’s skin. There was much more distance to cover.

“No, not God,” said Max. “Just a Yogi.”

He walked away from the surging crowd, towards the railway station.

The man at the ticket counter asked him where he wanted to go.

He could go anywhere. All he needed was solitude. He remembered the remote beautiful places he had visited before or heard of in India, Dhanushkot, Sarnath, Arpora, Dagshai. But he knew there could be only one answer. Despite it being winter again, his
home, the mountains, the mighty Himalayas were calling him back.

“Haridwar,” he said.

“2nd AC or 3rd AC?”

“General.”

The man stared at him. “You can't go in General, machi. They are unreserved compartments. No seats. No place to sleep. Standing room only. Completely packed. It is a 60 hour journey. Impossible.”

Max smiled. “In the beginning, even the journey within is uncomfortable.”

The man hesitated. “So 3rd AC then?”

“No. General.”

The man’s eyes widened. “You are not well. Do you have fever? Your face is very shiny,” said the man.

Eventually, Max convinced the man to give him a ticket.