



Polishing the Mirror: How to Live from Your Spiritual Heart

Ram Dass , Rameshwar Das

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Moments of boundless love and realization do occur spontaneously, reflects Ram Dass, but it is our daily life practice that clarifies the mind and heart-and makes these experiences an abiding part of who we are.

For over five decades, Ram Dass has ventured across the globe, into the depths of consciousness, and along the path of service to others. With *Polishing the Mirror*, he gathers together his most essential practice-based guidance for living fully in the here and now.

Readers will find within these pages a rich combination of perennial wisdom, humor, teaching stories, and detailed "nuts-and-bolts" instruction on Ram Dass' most valued spiritual practices, including:

- .Bhakti Yoga-opening our hearts to universal love
- .Practices for living, aging, dying, and embracing the natural flow of life
- .Karma Yoga-how humility and service profoundly transform us
- .Working with fear and suffering as a path to grace and freedom
- .Step-by-step guidance in devotional chant, mantra and mala practices, and much more

For those both familiar and new to Ram Dass' teachings, here is this vanguard spiritual explorer's complete guide for polishing the mirror of the soul, discovering who we are and why we are here, and reflecting fully the light of our true nature.

Polishing the Mirror: How to Live from Your Spiritual Heart Details

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Mike Radice says

I really enjoyed getting inside Ram Dass' spirit. And he makes Hinduism accessible and easy to understand. Now, I want to go to India.

NISSIM RAUL HAMRA SASSON says

Easy and pleasant to read!

Ram Dass writes this exceptionally well . He invites readers to embark on a heart opening spiritual journey from ones personal experience and motivations.

Heidi The Hippie Reader says

I watched Fierce Grace on Netflix and wanted to know more about the wisdom teachings of Ram Dass. This book was a great place to start and I enjoyed this so much that I think I'm also going to have to delve into Be Here Now.

There were multiple places in this text where his words felt very true and it was as if I was remembering something that I had somehow forgotten. Isn't it funny when a book affects you like that?

In the chapter entitled Conscious Living, Conscious Dying, he had a whole section about grieving that brought me to tears. I lost a beloved family member this year and I'm still working through the grieving process. Here are the words that brought me some much needed healing:

"When you and another person enter into love together, you enter into a unitive moment that transcends death. Recognize that you feel enriched by everybody you have loved, instead of deprived by the loss of their form. You'll realize they continue to live in your heart. Everybody you have ever loved is part of the fabric of your being. And that is where grief gets transformed into a living, loving space, a spiritual transcendence of the pain."

Thank you for the reminders, Ram Dass. May all beings be free from suffering.

Nate Greuel says

I loved this book so much that I read it twice in a row, and I didn't want it to end. From what I gather it incorporates a lot of material from his previous books in a concise way. Spiritual people who are not interested in religion will find this book full of wisdom and insight. Having said that, people of any religion can learn something here and find it enjoyable. Ram Dass has a unique way of communicating that feels

truly genuine. This book brings people together instead of driving them apart.

I feel like I have a better understanding now of some key Eastern philosophical concepts and vocabulary, and it's striking how familiar it all feels. Religions are not so different, after all. The teachings about how our ego and our attachments limit us were truly profound. The chapters on aging and death were very moving and gave me new perspective.

After reading, I feel a curious sense of joy... somewhat like I've been flying through the clouds and just rose above them into the sunshine where things are clear and not so complicated or muddy. And you can see the clouds below for what they are.

Justin says

I received this book, for free, in exchange for an honest review.

This is a good book that I learned a few things from. It feels less filled with love/wisdom than Be Here Now but is a better book than most books in this category. Thus far this has been my second favorite Ram Dass book, but the gap between this and Be Here Now is appreciable.

In this book Ram Dass tends to focus on a few topics throughout the course of the book so it feels a bit slow/repetitive/boring to me. That being said, I tend to like my books dense and others will probably appreciate the amount of detail. This book feels more spiritually infused than many similar books (including some of Ram Dass's other books) and I enjoyed reading it.

Alika Yarnell says

LOVED this book. I can see myself referring to many of its passages over and over again. I especially resonated with the following quote on page 72:

"How do you get on with it? You give up the things that don't get you to God. What do you give up? It's not just material stuff. It's also the ways you identify yourself, how you feel about yourself. For instance, give up your unworthiness. Don't analyze it--just give it up. Keep giving up your guilt, your anger, and your preoccupation with your own melodrama. It's just a melodrama, a soap opera. Don't you already know how it comes out?

"You took this birth because you have work to do that involves suffering and the kinds of suffering you find yourself in. This is your curriculum for this birth. Where you are now with all your neuroses and problems is just the right place. This is it, and it's perfect. Live life fully and richly as a partner with God and accept what comes with openness and love."

Ram Dass is a powerful teacher and lives up to his name ("Servant of God") and I'm thankful that he is continuing to write books and share the lessons he has learned to new generations.

Courtney says

Fantastic! I hope I get to reread this at multiple checkpoints throughout my lifetime.

D says

I remember picking up Ram Das' book, Be Here Now, about 40 years ago. This one continues in that vein, and includes tips for later years... as he's aging.

I don't know anything, so I remember you, Son of the Wind;
grant me strength, intelligence, and wisdom,
and remove my impurities and sorrows.

- Invocation to Hanuman Chalisa. Translation by Krishna Das, from Flow of Grace

Along this shift in the locus of our inner identity, there is a process of external reflection, as we see our inner being reflected and projected onto every experience of the outer work. With patient spiritual practice, we can bring our external experience into ever-closer alignment with our inner being. This is yoga - not just yoga of the body, but yoga of the mind (jnana), of the heart (bhakti) and of selfless action (karma yoga).

As the veils of illusion begin to become more transparent, as we recognize the limitation of identifying solely with thoughts and experiences, with 'objective' reality, we begin to reflect a purer state of being. As the layers become more transparent, the light shines through us, and we begin to dwell in a less content-laden, ever-clearer state of awareness. Awareness in the heart flowers into love, compassion and wisdom.

Polishing the mirror, this process of reflecting on ourselves by witnessing and by bringing our external life into harmony with our true being, resolves when we identify fully with our soul.

This book is a travel guide for the path to now-here, how to find that precious sense of inner peace and spiritual reunion.

Only you can know for yourself if polishing the mirror is working. You'll know if you become quieter inside, more loving and compassionate, more peaceful and present, more content with your life.

May we treat ourselves with compassion and patience, and not take ourselves too seriously. After all, there's nothing to accomplish. We are just allowing ourselves to be. - In Love, Rameshwar Das

Introduction

Being Here Now

BEING HERE NOW sounds simple but these 3 words contain inner work for a lifetime.

Love is opening to merge with another being, whether with another person or with God (in the end they're the same). Love is the doorway to oneness with all things, to being in harmony with the entire universe. This return to oneness, to a simplicity of just being, of unconditional love, is what we all long for. This unified state is the real yoga, or union.

Each of us has our own path to follow, our own karma (selfless action). You can't imitate someone else's

trip. Listen to your heart to hear what you yourself need, take what you can from these practices, and leave the rest.

Bhagavan Das (a 23-yr-old surfer from Laguna Beach) would say: Don't think about the past; just be here now. Don't think about the future; just be here now.

Although he was compassionate, he didn't involve himself in dealing with my emotions.

Simple truth: Love everybody, serve everybody, and remember God.

Namasté

I honor the place in you

Where the entire universe resides.

I honor the place in you

Of love, of light, of truth, of peace.

I honor the place in you

Where if you are in that place in you and

I am in that place in me,

There is only one of us.

Ram Dass

Maui August 2013

Yoga sutras being with: Yoga citta vritti nirodh = unified consciousness with cessation of thoughts.

Quieting the mind allows the natural depth of the spirit to manifest.

Meditation, the practice of quieting and concentrating and purifying the mind, aligning it with the spirit, is a foundation of yoga.

Meditation stems from the truth that who you really are is more than who you think you are.

The more you desire to know who you truly are and why you are here, the more you are drawn to that truth. As you are pulled inward, you leave behind the clinging attachment that keeps distorting and narrowing your vision.

Your mind can take you into the spirit, but it can also keep you deeply attached to your ego, to who you think you are. There are other ways of knowing. The thinking mind is only part of our being. The reality of oneness is greater than what is available to you through your sense and your thoughts.

A more skillful use of the intellect is contemplation. It is also a form of jnana yoga, the path of knowledge and wisdom. For example, take a holy book and work with 1 thought throughout the day. If we reflect on love, equanimity, kindness or compassion, we begin to take on those qualities. Sri Ramakrishna said: If you meditate on your ideal, you will acquire its nature.

If you're reading this, you already recognize you're on a spiritual journey. When you awaken to your predicament - that you are trapped in illusion - you see through the veils. Everything you thought was real, you see as maya (illusion).

Motivations and desires affect our perceptions. We don't necessarily seem things as they are. We see them as we are.

Gurdjieff taught that if you think you're free and don't know you are in prison, you can't escape. Unless we understand how we are conditioned by our desires, we remain stuck in the reality they create.

In the West, we get rewarded for rational knowledge and learning. But when you see the assumptions you've been working under are not valid, then you can possibly change your mind. Einstein said: A new type of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive.

In the Vedic lore of India, the ancient sages say there are 3 ways to acquire spiritual knowledge:

- 1) Through your own experience
- 2) From somebody you know who knows, and they tell you
- 3) Study or learn from books with your logical mind.

Other ways of knowing = intuition

What you seek is already within you.

Cool out so we don't create heavy karma for ourselves.

Where the journey leads is to the deepest truth in you. The spiritual journey is not about acquiring something outside yourself, but penetrating the veils to return to the deepest truth within.

Instead of filling your mind with daily news, fill it with stuff that helps you become more conscious, that liberates you. Go within to your spiritual heart, and watch the drama that is your entire life. Then watch with unbearable compassion for yourself and all beings.

At first you may be distracted and remember to witness only now and then. Later, you start to remember sooner. Just notice. You don't have to change anything. Things will change naturally. After some practice, it gets more subtle, and then, you are always here and now, residing in each instant of living.

Relax, be light, dance through it all, trusting, quieting, flowing... Your witnessing lives in the flow of your love and the quietness of your mind. Keep your eye on the mark.

Allow life to become simpler and more harmonious. Less and less you grab at this and push away that. You listen to hear how it is rather than impose a structure. You are just being. Sit simply, live simply, just be where you are, with whomever you're with when you're with them.

Aldous Huxley: The body is always in time, the spirit is always timeless.

All of life becomes a meditative act. Not just sitting on your meditation pillow. You follow the breath. You don't stop your mind. You let it flow. But keep coming back to one thought. You spiritualize your life. Convert it all by maintaining a frame of reference with the dual capacity of centering you and increasing the power of one-pointedness. Maharaj-ji: Bring your mind to one point and wait for grace.

Because of the purity of your seeking, many high beings are present, and with them comes the spiritual substance out of which all form derives. Breathe in the energy of the universe. Breathe out all the separateness. Let breath be transformative.

Look toward people toward whom you have felt less than loving. Look to their souls and surround them with

light, with love and peace. Let go of anger and judgment.

We may sing to the Beloved, we may pray, or just dwell in the sweetness of remembering God. Once you have set out on the river of love, all you have to do is let it carry you to the ocean.

Lovers don't finally meet somewhere. They are in each other all along. - Rumi

Many of us are afraid to let go of our judging minds to fall into love, to be absorbed into the liquid flow of the universe. To enter the space of conscious love, you become love -- not someone seeking or loving someone, just being love.

Love's truth is that love is in all of us, and that we are one in love.

Love is a state of being. It isn't possessive. We can only become it.

As you grow in devotion and focus more on the Beloved, you tune in to a deeper place within yourself. The emotional qualities give way to where you see everyone and everything as Beloved.

The guru is a mirror that reflects your higher Self, and allows you to see that place of love and pure being in yourself. The guru finds you. Teachers point to the way. The guru is the way.

Observe: the process of stepping back takes you out of being submerged in your experiences and thoughts and input, and into self-awareness. With self-awareness comes the subtle joy of being here, alive, enjoying the moment.

Your first job is to work on yourself. The greatest thing you can do for another human being is to get your own house in order and find your true spiritual heart. The quickest way to get through your stuff is to listen to that place inside. Honor your own path, and trust there is a place that knows best. Intuition.

The deeper impulse of every human relationship is to evoke the love and oneness that unites us.

Don't be dependent on the other person to reflect love back to you.

That's part of the illusion of separateness. The reality is that love is a state of being that comes from within.

The only thing you really ever have to offer another person is your own state of being. When not entrapped by another person's appearance or behavior, you see behind all that to a deeper level of their being. Shift your focus to see their soul. That soul quality is love.

If you don't appreciate me, that's your problem. If I need your love or approval, that's my problem. The power other people have to shake you out of equanimity and love has to do with your own attachments and clinging of your mind.

Use relationships as a vehicle to freedom -- learn to listen. Quiet mind and open heart. Listen. Become an antenna to the nature of another person. Then add truth.

Money and truth have nothing to do with one another.
Tao Te Ching: Truth waits for eyes unclouded by longing.

Work with the desire until you are no longer attached to it.

As your spiritual practice gets stronger, you are able to see your emotional stuff before it gets so overloaded and invested with adrenalin. You no longer let it get that intense. If feelings are out of control, the best thing is to sit quietly. Let them pass.

Bhagavan Das: Emotions are like waves. Watch them disappear in the distance on the vast calm ocean.

The capacity to dwell in the witness makes all the emotional stuff and stresses of life much lighter. The art is to cultivate the other planes of consciousness, then you no longer have to push the stuff away because it falls into perspective. You just shift your focus and are no longer identified with the way you were thinking.

Look how deliciously human I am.

At the root of almost every problem is a feeling of inadequacy or not-enoughness. That wisdom leads to compassion and love for yourself and others.

When you hunger for love, that is the longing to come home, to be at peace, to feel at one with the universe, where lover and Beloved merge. It's a place to be fully in the moment, to feel completely fulfilled, to just be in love.

Love everyone and tell the truth.

Fear is a protective mechanism. It makes you want to hold on to familiar structure in love. When you identify with your soul, there is no fear. The soul doesn't identify with the ending of the incarnation, which we think of as death. Love is the antidote for fear.

Satsang is a community of truth seekers.

Goethe: The world is so empty if one thinks only of mountains, rivers and cities; but to know someone here and there who thinks and feels with us, and who, though distant is close to us in spirit, this makes the earth for us an inhabited garden.

Much of the suffering of aging comes from the memories of who we used to be.

As we age, we live more economically. Patterns of life change. My energy becomes less reliable. Ah! another new moment...

In India: You've earned the respect due an elder. You're someone whose wisdom we can rely on and whom we will listen.

Wisdom is learning to live in harmony with the world. With the deep understanding that we are all in the same boat. Now isn't preparation for later.

Rilke: Love and death are magnificent gifts, which many of us leave unopened.

Lamas read aloud from The Tibetan Book of the Dead to their monks when they are dying and in the days following death.

Here and now is it!

Maharaj-ji: The body passes away. Everything is impermanent except the love of God. The body dies, but not the soul. This world is all attachment. You get worried because you are attached.

When the South Indian saint, Ramana Maharshi, was dying his devotees cried: Don't leave us. He replied: Don't be silly, where can I go?

Each separate being in the universe
returns to the common source.
Returning to the source is serenity.
- Lao-Tzu

The love you shared with that person is still here. Allow them to merge into your soul... in love.
You feel enriched by everybody you have loved, instead of deprived by the loss of their form.
They continue to live in your heart.
Death is only a moment. A moment of transition.

If you identify with your own soul, you can communicate with other souls, even though they are on a different plane.

Meher Baba: The divine Beloved is always with you, in you, and around you. Know that you are not separate.

Aldous Huxley: So now you can let go, my darling... Let go... Let go of this poor old body. You don't need it anymore. Let it fall away from you. Leave it lying there like a pile of worn-out clothes... Go on, my darling, go on into the Light, into the peace, into the peace of the Clear Light.

One dies as one lives.

Give Me your mind and your heart and you will come to Me. Always think of me, always love me, and I will guide your heart and your actions.

Much of my sense of contentment comes from my relationship with Maharaj-ji and the constant remembrance of his presence in my life. Being in relationship with him is like having an infinitely deep pool of love and wisdom that always mirrors my deepest being.

And you are ever again the wave
sweeping through all things
-Rainer Maria Rilke, Book of Hours

He is constantly here, moment by moment, I'm just hanging out with this being of consciousness, of love, of flight, of presence.

Maharaj-ji said:

The worst punishment is to throw someone out of your heart.
You should not disturb anyone's heart
Even if a person hurts you, give him love.

The joy you get from being completely in the moment brings contentment. Contentment as a practice is difference from satisfaction. It's not a feeling of accomplishment from doing something. Contentment is just being complete in the moment.

What am I doing here?

What is it that blocks my contentment?

How did the rose ever open its heart

And give to this world all of its beauty?

It felt the encouragement of light against its being,

Otherwise we all remain too frightened.

- Hafiz, How did the Rose?

Graduate from a deprivation to an abundance model. It's abundant because you are it: you are radiating love wherever you go. As you become love, when you walk down the street, everyone is the most beautiful person all over again. You look and appreciate. You may meet another's eyes. And you both recognize the love, but you don't have to do anything about it.

The art form of relationship is to realize that every relationship you're in -- everything at every moment -- is a vehicle for awakening love. And it's up to you. The Beloved is everywhere.

Remember, it's always right here.

Don't go outside your house to see flowers.

My friend, don't bother with that excursion.

Inside your body there are flowers.

One flower has a thousand petals.

That will do for a place to sit.

Sitting there you will have a glimpse of beauty

inside the body and out of it,

before gardens and after gardens.

- Kabir, "A Place to Sit"

We are on an inevitable course of awakening. You enter your spiritual practice because in your soul there is really nothing else you would rather do.

In Sanskrit, there is a state of weariness with worldly desire where only the desire for spiritual fulfilment is left: vairagya.

In the end, you become receptive, become soft, become open, become attuned, quiet. You become the ocean of love.

The soul is made of love and must ever strive to return to love. It can never find rest nor happiness in other things. It must lose itself in love. - Mechthild of Magdeburg

In the end, all our other desires merge in the immense longing to have no barrier between us and our real Beloved. - Eknath Easwaran

May the Blessings of God

Rest upon you
May his Peace
Abide with you
May his Presence
Illuminate your heart
Now and forever more.
- Sufi prayer

We're all on this path, spiritual family and friends. It's just one big family. We're all relatives until we realize we're all the same and there's only one of us -- one loving awareness.

Fitsum says

Could not put down this book, finished it in one day, I think this is the fastest book I have read. I loved every chapter.

Emily Shearer says

This book should be required reading for anyone on a spiritual quest. It doesn't take itself too seriously (After all, Ram Dass was Richard Alpert, Timothy Leary's colleague and psychedelic sidekick.) and writes in plain language what it really means to "Be Here Now." I highlighted and underlined so many passages, I finally just put my pen down and tried to read with the mindset that Ram Dass espouses, which is to Love everybody and tell the truth. Every word, when received with loving awareness, is truth. From the last page, "The good news is that awakening is built into the system. It just takes its own time. . . . Sometimes it's like having a tire with a big leak in it. You pump it all up, and then you turn around a moment later and greed, lust, and fear have all returned, and it's flat again. You wonder what happened. . . . I'm learning to listen more carefully to who people are and where they are in their spiritual evolution. I'm learning to really honor people, and myself, for who we are in the moment, to understand the appropriateness of a practice and that our karma and our awakening are unfolding perfectly."

Jennifer Marlowe says

A down to earth guide on practical methods to set out on a spiritual path. He breaks down the concepts of guru, teacher, candid thoughts on dying and death as just another part of life in our present body.

I reread several sections of this book over and over before finally reaching the end. Truly magnificent book with tips on how to reframe challenging real life experiences into 'teachings' that we learn from. We are our own guru, after all.

He shares how bhakti yoga can amplify other methods of spiritual and physical practice to open our hearts as the 'easy path'.

Ram Dass says 'work we do on ourselves is our gift to others'. Polishing the Mirror means to me that going within and revealing what's hidden under the mist and fog of our own thoughts, can reveal so much that we

can clear away and also learn from.

Markus Molina says

Wow! Great book! Big peace! Good writer! Tranquil exercises on the now and the forever as well. Life lessons in your corner.

David says

As a teenager, I thought the book Be Here Now was the most important thing I had ever come across, and I believe I had a poster of Ram Dass on my bedroom wall. That was a long time ago, so when a friend sent me a brand new book by Ram Dass, I wondered if it would speak to me. To my surprise and delight, it was just the book I needed at this moment in my life. How great is that?

Being a book nerd, I read the acknowledgments, and learned that this was originally going to be an e-book, but they changed their mind and decided to make print copies, too. I am so glad, because if someone had sent me this as an e-book, it would have gone on the list with all the other e-books that I keep acquiring but not reading (I think I've got about five of those going right now, and that's not counting the classics that I am planning to read someday...). So glad that the gift of the printed book made me pay attention, because that is what life is all about, right? Be Here Now!

Korbi Kay says

If only this knowledge was taught in school! After reading this, I'm tempted to explore Ram Dass's famous book, Be Here Now (written in 1971, and supposedly quite a contribution to counterculture).

As for Polishing the Mirror, existence and the meaning of life have never been reframed so eloquently. This book isn't enough for a total inner transformation--reinvention is strictly through a spiritual lens, and this book serves as more of a guide than a step-by-step implementation of different practices. But Polishing the Mirror has too many words of wisdom and concepts worth knowing to not add this to your reading list.

Anne Speckhard says

Fantastic book, full of love and wisdom. Highly recommend it!
