

~ Chapter Nine ~

LIVING IN HEART-CENTERED AWARENESS

*W*hile consciously seeking love in each other, we also sense the need for completion in God. This is our innate desire for unity. We intuitively search for God's love to come through every relationship. Our natural state is to live within the creative motion of love—to share love freely and joyfully, to offer and receive compassion. This is what it means to have a flowering heart, a heart that is open and receptive to love everywhere.

Living with heart-centered awareness is the most practical oneness teaching. The heart is the center of compassion, the place where joy radiates. A person who is joyful is one who has heart-centered awareness and sees life as the Divine sees it. When you begin to rise in consciousness and your heart fully opens, you realize that *you are the love and loveliness of God*. You become a magnet for love, because you can see life through the eyes of the Beloved. Joy emanates from your inner world, and because you are an open channel, God can express his consciousness through you. You and God are expressing love and being loved at the same time in a symbiotic relationship.

Characteristics of joy

What is the purpose of life? The purpose of the entire universe, and for all life, according to the oneness teachings, is to live. Life must live itself, because consciousness experiences itself through each one of us. And joy is “loving engagement” in life, a very beautiful expression. This is a state of total awareness of *what is*, there in the present moment. Because we try to create value or significance for each and every action and embark upon an endless search for meaning, we find it difficult to experience a simple joy like eating a bowl of soup. Joyful people see their egos in action and observe how their minds try to escape reality by protecting an image. They are aware of the mind’s avoidance games and can set those games aside in favor of experiencing reality to the fullest. Sometimes there is no other reason for doing something than *just being*. Joy is experiencing what is

in front of you. Choose to dwell in it.⁷⁶ Can you work, eat, dance, watch a movie, and play sports and just be with the activity? Smell a dish of crême brulée? How about resting your gaze on beautiful scenery? Any action is an invitation to experience joy, a spiritual exchange between you and the Divine. When simple acts become enjoyable experiences, you're living joyously.

How is joy different from bliss, ecstasy, or happiness? Joy permeates a person. It is a constant state of being, an external and internal alignment with your purpose and the present moment. You feel aligned with life and rejoice in your aliveness. You feel a deep sense of gratitude; you feel one with all things and every being without worry or fear. When you express gratitude and joy together, you establish an energetic flow with the universe and awaken your trust in the Presence's spontaneity and creativity. You actively participate in life as a cocreator with the Divine.

Unlike the duality of happiness and unhappiness, there is never a dual aspect of joy. Joy is not conditional or dependent on events; you can go within and know joy in an inner reality, no matter the outer circumstances. Joy is a feeling of centeredness and wholeness, and not an either/or experience.

Joylessness is about lack and limitation in your mind. How often do you say, "If I only had a car, more money, a bigger house, or a different job, then I would be joyful?"

76. We are encouraged to dwell in love, which constitutes the higher vibrations of Christ consciousness. See John 15:9–17 for instructions on loving and living in joy. See likewise Svetasvatara Upanishad 4:17: "This divinity who created the universe and who pervades everything always dwells in the hearts of the creatures, being finitized by emotions, intellect, will, and imagination. Those who realize this become immortal." Dwelling in love and joy is the way to eternal bliss.

Or, “I would feel joy if the people in my relationships were different!” This is the perception of lack. You will never align with joy by expecting others to overcome your limitations or false beliefs for you. That’s like expecting the world of illusion to be real. Joy is about making a commitment to being free from the illusions of life. Joy is being clear in your alignment with God and feeling a sense of harmony with all beings.

Heart-felt compassion

Because joy, love, and compassion are inextricably intertwined, all three can be enhanced with greater levels of self-awareness. And all three are contagious to our fellow humans. If you are certain you are loved by God, you will feel loved. This love always moves you into compassion. Compassion frees joy, and joy links you with your divine nature. If your joy and compassion are sincere, it’s easy to illuminate others with your energy. Joy and compassion can enlighten a darkened mind.

Compassion is seeing with the eyes of nonjudgment. This includes banishing harsh self-judgment. Do you seem to harshly judge yourself, especially if you are a parent? Do you feel you did a less-than-stellar job of raising your children? Could you have done better? The past cannot be changed. Even if you feel that your parenting was not successful, today you can make a decision to move forward with a compassionate spirit. Know that if you had right and loving intentions, then there should be no guilt. If you have caused your children harm, be self-compassionate first: forgive yourself tenderly. Open your affections and ask your children for forgiveness. Forgiveness always frees the heart of the person asking.

Love and compassion are very powerful when you intend to make those qualities part of your everyday experience. To be “pure in heart” means you are free from any ego-generated motives.⁷⁷ But for any quality or situation to manifest in your life, you must vibrate at that frequency. Like attracts like. Whatever you place value or attention on is what you become. This is because every emotion or thought carries a vibration, and so for anything you desire, you must first *become it*. To attract love, you must choose to embody the idea of love in your consciousness. *Be* the idea of love in order to create love in your reality; learn to be soaked in God’s love, seek to know God in your heart.⁷⁸ You can never offer anything to anyone that you do not already have within yourself. To wholeheartedly receive compassion from others, you must also vibrate at that frequency.

An incarcerated heart is one that belongs to a person who does not love himself or herself. It interferes with the natural flow of unconditional love that is constantly broadcast from the Divine. To open to the flow, go within and gently look at situations or characteristics in yourself that have not demonstrated love or compassion. Ask the Divine to unblock those channels so that love and compassion can flow into those areas. Visualize being the heart, hands, voice, and ears of the Divine. Imagine what compassion would feel like to the Divine and then *be that feeling*. To demonstrate compassion from the heart, ask yourself, “How would the

77. “How blessed are those whose hearts are pure; they shall see God.” Matthew 5:8.

78. “Provide for yourselves purses that do not wear out, and never-failing treasure in heaven, where no thief can get near it, no moth destroy it. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Luke 12:33-34. When your state of mind and heart, or your inner state is secure, your outer world will reflect your security.

Divine give compassion? How would the Divine give love?" This heart-centering exercise will change your vibration and open the doorway to remembrance of your authentic self. When you acknowledge the presence of compassion within yourself, you can grow it and share it with others and, later, transform the planet through loving service. Be sure to love, nurture, and support yourself in equal measure as you love, nurture, and support others.⁷⁹

Compassion is not the same thing as sympathy. Sympathy, if it is expressed as pity, is recognizing another person's predicament without entering into their emotions. It carries an air of superiority or detachment. Compassion is felt deeply, and there is an empathetic (but not sympathetic) interaction between you and another person's emotions. Also, compassion cannot be offered by one who believes in victimhood. A truly empowered individual believes he or she can never be a victim and that life's circumstances are hidden blessings. They see difficult circumstances as part of the pattern of all interrelated human self-development lessons, and they honor that learning process.

Compassion also leads to freedom, because it frees our minds from images and patterns that do not help the whole of humanity. To be truly free, you must rid yourself of all negative assumptions about others—about their religious orientation, color, social status, income level, weaknesses, or political beliefs. Compassion does not recognize boundaries

79. The rewards of giving are illustrated in Luke 19:11–27, the Parable of the Pounds. All things correspond to their level of vibration. We often perceive, however, that there is a risk in giving and not knowing what will be returned, though if we don't give away what we most desire, such as love, nothing can be harvested. We lose not only the immediate benefits of a return on investment, but also an opportunity to learn and practice the spiritual law which can be applied to other areas of life. The lesson of equal measure is also presented in Luke 6:38 and Matthew 7:1–2.

between communities and nations, but is rather an open pathway for the expression of love. Do you believe a poor person is lazy and chooses to be dependent upon others? Perhaps that is their reality, but with this assumption, how can you freely offer compassion with judgment? Negative assumptions squeeze the heart like a vise, making it hard for love to trickle out. You can only offer what you would choose to receive yourself. To open your heart, freely give what you want to receive.

Amma Amritanandamayi says the very first step in leading a spiritual life is having compassion. A person who is kind and loving never needs to go searching for God, because God rushes toward any heart that beats with compassion. That's God's favorite place. I think it is important to practice, so be authentic and offer someone the deepest part of your heart at this very moment. If they are in your presence, honor them by being fully present and looking deeply into their eyes. Love them deeply and listen to their words. Hug them. A hug is a good thing when it's energetically loaded with love and compassion.

Forgiveness comes from the heart

When you are able to go beyond forgiveness and honor the person who deserted or abused you, you offer compassion at the highest level and rise in consciousness. People who challenge us to live in the present are among our greatest teachers in our search for truth and eternal life. Accepting negative past experiences, releasing them, and honoring the lessons are among the toughest, most difficult spiritual tasks we take on. Honoring what happened in the name of God is a doorway to our own expansion.

For example, as a child, Steven Hairfield, a Buddhist

monk, writer, and modern holy man, was severely abused by his father. After he enlisted in the army and was sent to Vietnam on his eighteenth birthday, Steven found that his life as a soldier and his postdischarge experiences were filled with anger and emotional scars, not only from the war but also from his childhood. As he began to find his spiritual path, one of his teachers in India, Master Lobsang, reminded him that every life experience has a perfect purpose on the path of knowledge, one that is uniquely laid out for each individual. In a spiritual lesson on karma, Master Lobsang told Steven that if we label our experiences as bad, we will hold onto them and carry them as a heavy load. While we cannot physically live in the past, we *can* be fully present in the present. If we view experiences as good, we can easily release them, and if we release every experience and learn from it, there is no need to repeat the lesson. If we cling to a negative past, however, especially to memories that bind us in hate and anger, the lesson is sure to return. We will experience our suffering repeatedly in different forms, especially in relationships. Clarity of mind has to do with the present, which is where we create life. "If our past is in the present," said Master Lobsang, "then we are recreating our past."

When we accept responsibility for our own events, whether we feel we caused them or not, we can move into our higher nature. "Rising above" a situation not only means forgiving our trespassers but also transcending the infringement completely by recognizing its value as an important teaching and offering thanks for the lesson. After grasping the depth and importance of this principle, Steven came to consider his father a major instrument in his spiritual growth and identity today. Every time he speaks of this experience, he adds that this is something he never believed

possible until he understood that a belief in victimhood only holds the believer in captivity. He was finally able to offer his father gratitude for setting him on a path leading to self-development. As Steven learned, and as have I in my personal life, developing a peaceful nature and learning the true meaning of peace can be gifts presented to us by the most difficult teachers. We can easily get stuck in the action (what they did to us) and not see beyond what they did.

Reflecting on our life's tutorials is one of our greatest challenges, especially the lessons that deal with the heart. This is because opening your heart and allowing compassion to emerge often seems to be very difficult. But it symbolizes the crucial action we must take to express our true essence in the world. Andrew Harvey once said that when our heart is shattered beyond recognition, it feels like a hammer has pulverized our chest cavity until nothing is left. What remains is zero space, nothingness. A broken heart can be empowering if we choose to live without bitterness or negativity. When a heart is no longer contained, it can finally be receptive to love. Karmic situations and the teachers that reside in our families—even those who have performed unspeakable acts of violence—challenge us to rise above our sorrows and release our attachment to the idea of separation. God is eternally within us and steers us toward greater levels of self-awareness by challenging us to love, no matter how difficult the circumstances. Expanding the heart might seem painful at times, but when we succeed, we spiritually grow beyond any measure we thought possible.

Practice self-love and self-sensitivity

When conflict is absent in your life and you are in love with your authentic self, which is the spark of divinity within, you can easily love other people and your service to them

without resentment or weariness. That's how you become a loving, compassionate person. Choices based in right action become much clearer. But to grow in your connection and devotion to the Divine and practice compassion for others, you have to first give yourself some attention. You cannot be a good servant to humanity when you dismiss your own needs. Indeed, people who lack self-compassion may have learned to take care of their physical needs or material desires, but they're still suffering. Irresponsible people are insensitive to themselves, which is one reason why they do not have any compassion for anyone else and can't live from the heart center.

So, love your talents, qualities, and everything that makes you a unique expression of the Presence. If you like to build houses, if you enjoy being a CEO and managing your company's profit center, if you love to sell shoes, cook, or run the 5K—then do what you love with an open heart. Pour love into everything you do. Get out of bed each day with the intention to enhance your own life and well-being by doing what you love to do.

If you have awakened to your own suffering, you're beginning to be sensitive to yourself. Because you are an energetic expression of the Divine, and the Divine has many avenues to creatively express itself, make your everyday actions a conscious, cocreative expression. It's how you develop a symbiotic relationship with God. An outwardly loving and compassionate person practices human-self love and God-self love. It's a process of loving all creation.

Joy and relationships

Someone else can neither make you happy nor create joyfulness in your life. Joy is a self-responsible state! If you

are not responsible for your own joy, compassion, generosity, or patience, you can't experience a healthy exchange of these qualities in the context of a relationship. You can't give something you are *not*. In relationships, we often want the other person to fill our empty emotional spaces. We want him or her to show us more love, pay more attention to us, give us gifts, adore us, nurture our talents, put our needs at the top of their list. We might even tell them we want them to be joyful around us so we can feel their joy. But that means we're hoping their joy will rub off on us, which leads us to think that, by having the relationship, we may be able to lead more joyful lives. However, all this craving soon becomes a drain on everyone and turns us into energy vampires.

There is an old custom in which a potential bridegroom asks the bride's parents, usually the father, for her hand in marriage. I suppose I can see the sense in this custom if it preserves a family's important and positive traditions, but what I object to are the reality TV shows dealing in wedding protocol and all things "bridezilla." When the boyfriend asks the father for the potential bride's hand in marriage, she stands by and glows while the potential groom promises he'll "do anything to make her happy" and assures the parent that such happiness is his total objective in life. Thinking her man will present her with the total happiness and joy package, the bridezilla shines even more brightly when she hears his words. "That's his job," she thinks. "And if I'm not happy in this relationship, then *he* is letting *me* down."

But a relationship that begins with this type of expectation cannot possibly sustain itself. Both the bridezilla and her dedicated groom must be their own sources of joy for the sake of *being joy* and nothing else. A joyful relationship is one in which both parties already resonate deeply with joy. Joy is the most important gift one can bring to a marriage.

It's much more important than any gift delivered from the bridal registry.

Expecting others to be joyful because we believe their joy will uplift us (and fix the relationship or heal our bitter outlook on life) is only a temporary fix. For adults, it makes us falsely believe that the other's joy comes from us. But it doesn't. We may be interpreting their joyful expression as a reflection of how important we may be in their lives, but we've got it backward. Nobody can make another person permanently joyful. Joy must be fully and independently anchored within each individual. In a relationship, if you feel joyful and your partner does not, this may lead at best only to short-term happiness for that person.

The practice of expecting others to be happy and joyful around us is especially destructive in a parent-child relationship. If a parent is unhappy and expects the child to act joyful and happy to make the parent feel good, eventually, the child will turn that false expectation into a host of assumptions about life. Children raised in such homes learn that they are only worthy if they show joy or happiness; their parents thus condition them to be inauthentic; to *act* joyfully without teaching them the meaning of joy and how to experience it. They lose touch with their true feelings and learn to bury them as they strive for perfection. As a result of this conditioning, they are trained to be emotionally absent and as adults have difficulty relating to others.

Personal and spiritual growth is not only measured by how much love and compassion you project, but also by your level of ease and self-love. When you're totally at ease with and love yourself, you can live from the heart. When you experience and accept the content of your life, you begin to experience and express truth constructively, even when you have a few nonjoyful days. One day, you may get

up in the morning and say, “I don’t feel love or joy today,” but this is the truth of who you are at that moment, and you can be with those feelings. The nontruth would be, “I *should be* feeling love and joy today.” Don’t live in the “what should be.” Live in the present moment. And when you are honest with yourself, you lay the foundation for loving and successful relationships.

The difference between joy and pleasure

Joy originates in consciousness, awareness, and silence. Joy is not sustained by mental activity, but is naturally there as an experience of reality. Without interference from the mind, and with acceptance of the present moment, you can experience more joy. Because joy requires nothing and is independent of any situation, you can experience all situations the same way. It’s not about the pursuit of anything or becoming something. It just requires you to be yourself.

Pleasure, on the other hand, is fleeting. It is conditional, situation dependent, and cultivates restlessness. It requires constant maintenance and a search for new ways to generate highs or excitement. A pleasure-seeker is someone who is always in their head, not their heart, because they are searching for an experience of the mind. But the pleasure only lasts as long as the mind remains active, and it takes a lot of life energy to sustain a merely pleasurable experience. Pleasure is mind-dependent. When the mind’s needs are met—for example, when you feel significant, secure, welcomed, or loved—what you feel is pleasure. All human life seeks pleasure, which is normal, but if the *pursuit of pleasure* is your primary focus, then you will be very restless. Pleasure-seekers are stuck in their minds and can’t fully experience life.

If two people in a relationship are pleasure-seekers and not joy-seekers, there is no solid foundation to that relationship. If the relationship is exciting and built upon keeping both people in the “height of awareness,” it cannot last. Both people need to offer something deeper. If you only look for more pleasure and are full of expectations, chances are your individual needs will not be fulfilled. If the relationship hangs from the thin thread of pleasure-seeking, it will be a stormy relationship.

A relationship that is built upon joy, on the other hand, feels naturally secure. Joy is unconditional, infinite. There are no expectations, because both people are already full inside and accept each other. They put pleasure in a balanced perspective. The relationship is beautiful, because neither person is searching for complete fulfillment in the other individual. Such relationships become our greatest self-development curriculum, and our most important lesson lies in finding our own joy and getting out of the pursuit of pleasure. When people live in their *own* experience of joy, there will be less or no conflict in the world. The mind, whose job is to compare and contrast, will be set aside, and a person can experience the joy of being. With pleasure, there is always comparison, because it comes from the mind. We are continually asking, “Did I have enough? Did he have more than me? Did I experience what I was supposed to?” The beauty of joy, however, is that there is nothing to measure.

Although relationships can be enriching, they also challenge us to love and have compassion for another person, often our own family members. They reflect our inadequacies and weaknesses and show us our issues. We can rise in joy by encouraging our partner to find joy and sustain it. Experiencing total and complete joy in a relationship is among the most beautiful experiences we can have on the

planet. All it requires is awareness. Seek joy in yourself first, then cultivate it in your relationships. *Resonate with joy*. Be willing to experience what is there, even if hardship exists in your reality. This is consciously living from the heart, which helps you evolve faster and grow into a better human being.

The heart blooms through awareness and meditation

In the East they speak of the “flowering heart.” At a oneness process, my next-door neighbor’s roommate was irritated, not only by the food, but especially by the suffering part of the program. She seemed to be distracted by just about everything, in fact, and appeared to avoid problems inside herself. After the first two days of the program, she went to her guide. “Can you see my heart flowering yet?” she asked him. He replied, “Only you would know,” which was a frustrating but wise response.

A big part of spiritual development is observing ourselves, learning to trust our intuition, willingly work with spiritual precepts, and practice them. We must always be willing to look within for wisdom, and not require a guru or spiritual leader to tell us everything. If the guide had said to this woman, “Oh, yes, your heart has definitely flowered,” would this statement have changed her reality? Would she have fully seated the qualities of a flowering heart in her consciousness? Spiritual teachers can help you grow, but they can’t do the growing for you. They can fertilize your environment, direct you, prop you up occasionally, and help you see the light, but you must turn toward that light yourself and trust it. While you must be willing to evaluate yourself, you must also believe in your own spiritual potency,

be willing to accept enrichment for the sake of your own life, and not worry too much about what others think. If you were willing to observe your soul expansion in action and if your heart flowered, you wouldn't need to ask.

When the lotus flower, an ancient symbol of purity of heart and mind, opens to the light, this symbolizes spiritual awakening. While the plant's roots are in soil deep under the water, its stem grows upward toward the sun. Above the water's surface, the lotus buds and blooms. Its petals open. It's a common teaching that our potential is like the lotus. When we awaken, we liberate our energies by allowing them to travel from the lower levels of mud (materialism, ignorance, reactive impulses, and conditioning) up to higher levels of awareness, where our actions are dedicated to God. Our individual passage out of the debris of life to spiritual consciousness encapsulates the human journey. As our hearts flower, we open to the light of the Divine. Hindu scriptures tell us that the Atman dwells within the lotus of the heart, whence our brilliant light emanates. This is where the God-self dwells, the site of our inner wisdom. When we are pure in heart, therefore, and rise toward the sun of God, we rise in consciousness.

Heart awareness can begin in unusual ways. In yogic philosophy, the crown chakra, the energy center at the top of the head, called the *sahasrara*, is thought to be the doorway of the universe, the birth center of our highest aspirations.

In art, this crown chakra is represented as a thousand-petaled lotus, the *padma*, or symbol of God communion and final revelation as we express our purity and divinity. During a meditation in Fiji, I once had a vision of the *sahasrara*, though at the time I didn't realize it. I saw an enormous, round, carved, yellowish-golden structure. It was luminous and did not resemble any human-made artifact I'd ever

seen, although I initially sensed it was organic because of its size, proportion, and symmetry. It seemed cerebral, very sophisticated, and I thought it might be some sort of portal. In this vision, I stood next to this mysterious structure and studied it. I sensed this complex structure was ancient and wise. As I gazed, I noticed an infinite number of layers of multifaceted, intricately arranged petals circling the structure. The more closely I examined this object in my mind's eye, the more complexity I saw in each petal. Some sort of scripture or symbol was engraved on each one, perhaps an encoded design. They were beautiful! I became engrossed in the symbols, and as I looked closer, I began to sink into the pattern of symbols.

We don't have the human language to adequately describe such mystical visions, but later, after much contemplation, I came to understand that I had been looking directly at my own crown chakra. The symbols I saw were the vowels and consonants of the Sanskrit language. What was being shown to me was my own knowledge base and life record, which was ready to be liberated.

Opening the heart through energetic transmission

When I give a blessing, or deeksha, I instantly feel the receiver's emotional state or physical pain, because I'm already tuned into my own ability to generate compassion. I listen to a person's heart, feel it, and drop any preoccupation I have with my own stories or dramas. Then I can extend my awareness to that person's experience. A blessing giver is most effective when he or she is both passionate about God and compassionate toward humanity, and when he or she allows the Divine to heal in any way it sees fit. When a

blessing is delivered through my hands, I feel the energy, but I know I am only a conduit. When my heart opens before I give a blessing, compassion emerges from a place that is not entirely my own but part of the Presence. Energetically, a healer needs to be in this deeply loving space to provide value without any negative perceptions about life—no guilt, shame, or self-pity. A healer or deeksha giver must be in a higher state of awareness, not reviewing a weekly grocery list in his or her head. The healer must not have addictions or self-sabotaging habits, but must be in a state of nonjudgment. Here, he or she can wholeheartedly offer empathy.

Darshan is another one way we connect with the Divine. In the Hindu tradition, this is a blessing of spiritual energy transmitted by a holy person, a saint, a spiritual master, or a deity. Sometimes we need only be in the presence of the holy person who has a glimpse of something divine and sacred. These seers have manifested God in their being. They are offering us the experience of being seen by the Divine. The holy ones give this energy through intention and prayer and through their physical presence. As clear channels for grace, they are instrumental in healing individuals at all levels, emotional, psychological, or physical. Such a process is somewhat akin to Christianity's Holy Communion. Both symbolize direct contact with God, a union where all sense of individuality is lost. It is often a tactile event, where the energy or blessing is transmitted by the hands or through an embrace. The act alone symbolizes oneness with God.

Generally, *darshan* is something the Western mind has trouble processing, because it can be a noisy, colorful experience filled with the sounds of bells and gongs and with the smells of incense, essential oils, flowers, fruit, and bodies. People stand in long lines, often hugging each other, and hold offerings of incense, photographs, or flowers. Usually,

devotees and newcomers sing and chant while waiting in line. People are joyful, sorrowful, or contemplative; they chant, pray, and grieve. Many sway to the sounds of drums and sitars. You'll see the full range of human emotions in those lines.

A *darshan* is thus a sensory experience in many ways, and each *darshan* has its own unique flavor. At Sai Maa Lakshmi Devi's *darshan*, for example, you'll wait for hours in line with hundreds of other people and chant everything from prayers to the Blessed Virgin to *Om Namaya Shivaya* before you place your head in her lap. The last fifty yards, you'll crawl to Sai Maa on your knees. When Sri Bhagavan and Sri Amma give *darshan* in India, thousands show up. Amma Amritanadamayi, the Hugging Saint, has been known to individually bless over seventy thousand people, one by one, in a twenty-four-hour period, without stopping to eat or rest. Her *darshan* is her embrace.

When a blessing, or energy, is transferred by a true spiritual teacher, it is a very beautiful, rare, and sacred experience. I've always seen *darshans* as interfaith encounters, because a true healer who transfers God's healing grace to us can only be in a state of heightened awareness without judgment. During a blessing, they have no need to know a person's religious status, race, or creed. Such things simply do not matter.

A few years ago, I received blessings from Uttama (meaning "elevated" or "the highest"), who is also known as Matthew Ottenberg. At the Oneness University in India, we called him a cosmic being, a oneness being who achieved very high states of consciousness and could uplift others into very high states of energy. In a state of bliss and communion with the Divine, he was filled with joy and laughed out loud. The first time I lined up for his blessing, he was escorted

into the room by another guide, Krishnaraj, who physically supported him because he was in a state of nonfunctional ecstasy. He was so immersed in bliss, he was unaware of anything else and needed an oscillating fan to cool him down because he radiated so much heat. During the blessing, he was attended by the other guides, who helped him drink water from a cup because he couldn't drink on his own.

People like Matthew have learned how to be very still, step out of the way, and submerge themselves deeply into a state of consciousness that allows them to be enormous, open pipelines for grace. He is a very powerful energy transmitter and gave the blessing with tremendous intent and focus. During his *darshan*, I saw people stiffen like boards and fall over backward after receiving his blessing. He gave *smarana deeksha*, deeksha by intention, by holding students in his awareness and allowing the energy to flow. He also gave it by placing his hands on people's heads for a few minutes, in *sparsha deeksha*. A blessing given through the eyes is called *nayana deeksha*. However it is given, or by whom, the deeksha is a transfer of divine energy, a form of divine grace that has healing properties. When the giver or receiver has a strong intention, or *sankalpa*, the energy takes a direction and seems to have a stronger effect. That is why a specifically directed blessing can be a tool for physical healing, reducing conflict, or lead to any number of practical outcomes. Multiple blessings over the course of a week or two can promote a person's spiritual transformation.

The first time I received Uttama's blessing, I focused on nothing but fully receiving the energy. The following evening, I decided to align myself with the energy again and be in a state of gratitude. That night I focused on thankfulness for his work, for the work of Sri Amma Bhagavan, and for all things divine, both Christian and Vedic. I gathered up an enormous

amount of gratitude for everything I could think of and just held an inner space for that gratitude. On both these nights, I received his blessing, but nothing extraordinary happened.

The third evening, I decide to take an intention of love. The blessing he administered that night was a chest-to-chest blessing, a hug lasting several minutes. We were instructed to just go with it, as he physically placed his heart center over ours. Just open up to his embrace, they told us, and let him hug us as long as he wants. A person delivering a heart-to-heart blessing is in a very elevated state, and it takes some practice to power up sufficiently.

I'm not sure what the cosmic being's intention was that evening, but I know about my own. I showed up with a heart full of unconditional love, not for Matthew the person, but for the Divine Presence he was carrying. In my own state of reflection, I became a lover of God. That evening he was attuned to the Divine, wildly in love with the Presence within him. As this God presence seeped out of his body, I mentally and energetically moved into my heart space. Silently I said, "I love you, I love you," and I allowed love to pour forth from the center of my chest. I visualized it with clarity and passion. I extended my arms, and he put his heart over my heart.

The yogis say that the heart is where the Divine dwells. They also say that if the giver is in an elevated state of consciousness, it is possible for a receiver to experience the Divine through another individual's heart center. Those who have reached spiritual mastery can offer their own life energy and direct it into the heart of a disciple through willpower. They help awaken a spiritual seeker's soul, which may be lying dormant. To initiate a transformation, a seeker must receive this energy in his or her heart with the right intent. If you turn your attention inward, you can actually feel this

divine energy. *Prahaḥuti*, a process of yogic transmission by a realized master, is the offering of the life-force by a guru into a disciple's heart. *Prana* means "life," and *ahuti* means "offering." I thought this was probably what we were going to do when I stepped up to the platform to be hugged.⁸⁰

When I returned to my room later that evening, my *anahata* (the chakra located behind the heart) exploded. The yogis say that the spiritual center of feeling lies at a point in the spine just behind the physical heart. This is where feeling is awakened. Once this center is activated, it must be directed upward toward the third eye, the center of Christ consciousness. If we waste the energy in emotion or let it flow downward, toward the lower centers in the spine, our consciousness is drawn into lower states. When we develop sensitivity to the heart center, we can deepen our insight and intuition. All night, I felt as if my entire chest was on fire, the heat lasting many hours. Since I was no longer spending any energy in suffering or conflict, I was able to completely anchor myself in a state of joy. Having lived my entire life in my head, I had never understood the feeling of limitless joy, so I needed to *experience* it. I trusted the Divine to fill me with such joy.

Over the years, such heart-opening experiences have shown me that the human body is affected by mystical experiences. In our lifetime, we receive the benefit of numerous teachers, because spiritual transformation is a journey, a multifaceted event that involves many people and situations. We will never get it all from the same person or in the same place. Most of the time, a lesson is not delivered

80. A person can be awakened by a transfusion of energy from a spiritual master. This is done through the heart center, where the Divine resides and is expressed. In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says, "The lord is lodged in the hearts of all creatures." 18.61.

in a way we imagine; it seems the Divine knows best how to expand our awareness and deeply anchor a teaching. In my case, my lesson was simply to experience joy.

Spiritual masters practice the art of compassion

People are always uplifted when they witness someone *offering* motherly love and compassion. But when we *embody* love and compassion, we extend far beyond normal human boundaries. A simple hug can become transformational. Hugging is an art form. Mata Amritananadamayi, also known as “Ammachi” or “Amma” (meaning “mother”), is a living example of open-heart awareness. She has hugged over thirty million people in the past thirty years. In addition to her humanitarian efforts, such as raising millions of dollars for tsunami- and Katrina relief, she also makes an offering of herself in the form of a hug. Her *darshan* demonstrates the oneness of the human-divine relationship, a form of spiritual peacemaking. Her hugs are filled with compassion and love and are a unique way of transmitting joy.

My dear Indian friend Vani, who had never received Amma’s *darshan*, once agreed to come with me to hear her conduct an autumn holy service near the town in Michigan where I live. Because I had received *darshan* from Sai Maa many years before, I knew when I arrived that evening and saw something like four thousand people in attendance that the program would last through the night. Amma has been known to give blessings for twenty-three hours and twenty-three minutes, straight through, and I knew immediately she was in it for the long haul. But I wasn’t sure I would be. I told Vani we should plan on participating in the service, receive her holy water (she blesses water and gives everyone

a container of it to take home), just enjoy the vibrations, and then go home. Realistically, I said, I could not stay there and wait in line all night.

But Vani was determined to see Amma up close and personal. After the service, she recognized a friend in Amma's organization, a colleague of her husband's who was helping to organize the lines. When the *darshan* started, we were miraculously escorted to the first holding area. I felt deeply honored and overwhelmed by the significance of this. I also felt self-conscious, as I was not appropriately dressed and had no offering. Amma sat on a platform on the stage and was attended by a large number of people who organized her time with each blessing seeker. To bless that number of people before daylight, she would have to cycle through the groups on a strict schedule and spend only so many minutes with each person. She was enveloped in a sea of people, and in between giving hugs and offering comfort, she frequently turned to fulfill other personal requests whispered in her ear. What I saw was an amazing example of multitasking, as Amma attended to everyone's needs. As the line kept going, people either prayed quietly on the stage, their hands clasped over their hearts, or cried out in anguish. The members of the group before me, an entire Indian family, spoke to her in her native dialect, and I could see that one person in that family was physically ill. They were all severely distressed, sobbing in her lap and implored her to shed her healing grace upon them.

Amma does not give sympathy. As a living demonstration of love, she offers compassion. This is her *seva*, or service to the world through the example of her own life, which brings awareness to humanity's shared suffering. In the East, *seva* is an example of the action that takes us to our deepest truth, which leads us to live fully, in the best way possible. Through

selfless action and contribution, *seva* helps us detach from the ego and allows us to witness perfect love in action. It is a way to awaken the heart. When this love is deeply felt, it leads to compassion. No particular religious path or spiritual practice, Amma says, is needed to attain this goal. Although spirituality teaches us how to understand life and see the true nature of the world, it is a practical science. To Amma, the process of self-realization is walking the path of selfless service and compassion toward all beings.

Amma spoke with this grieving family for several minutes, offering them spiritual guidance and comfort. Then she wiped their tears and blessed them. When it was my turn, I approached the dais, knelt down in front of her, as was the custom, and opened my arms. Her arms, which are among the biggest, softest, and most comfortable I've ever known, came around me and held me tightly in a loving, motherly embrace. She treated me in the same way as the family before me, despite my casual Western attire, spiritual upbringing, and race. She radiated the energy of total acceptance. As she rocked me in her arms, she repeatedly whispered in my ear, "My daughter, my daughter, my daughter..." It was a heart-to-heart blessing, simple and uplifting, yet packed with powerful energy. At the end of the hug, she presented me with a Hershey's Kiss and a rose petal. But I couldn't stand up. I couldn't walk off the platform. Her energy had knocked me to my knees. For about ten minutes, my legs were so weak I couldn't stand alone. I had to be helped over to the side of the platform to rest while others went to her and laid their heads in her lap.

Later that night, I was called back to the dais, and she issued me a *mantra* that would help me work with my mind and focus on her energy. A *mantra* (Sanskrit for "prayer or hymn," from the root word *manas* or *man*, meaning "the

mind”) is a mind tool used to bring us into alignment with the Divine as we chant a sacred word or phrase. Some mantras help us reset our meters when we fall off the tracks and our egos run amok, whereas others bring us into an energetic resonance with an idea or our guru, who has already realized the power of a particular mantra and is passing it on to us. Mostly, a mantra is a catalyst for spiritual transformation, as it leads us into a state of vibration with the idea behind it so we can begin to genuinely live that idea. This is how the vibration is translated into action.

In the months following my blessing from Amma, I chanted the mantra she gave me 108 times per session, also holding a *japa mala*. This is the Hindu rosary used for repetitive prayer. We use the beads to count off repetitions and keep track of how many recitations of the mantra we’ve done. We repeat the mantra until the energy in that phrase or sound is released into our soul. Your mantra deeply draws you into a particular vibration. In my case, it was Amma’s vibration of compassion. When I chanted it, I felt centered and motivated. *I felt her essence*. It reminded me of the importance of giving selfless service to humanity, and I eventually wound up demonstrating this in my own work.

Years earlier, I had begun my awakening when I visited Her Holiness Sai Maa Lakshmi Devi to receive a similar blessing of grace. Sai Maa, affectionately called Maa by her students, was heralded in many spiritual circles as one of the great spiritual masters of our time, reputed to be responsible for numerous healings. Her teachings are broad and flavored with an interfaith attitude of inclusion, and so she scoops up congregants from many flocks. She says the next new religion will be love, and she’s not interested in being anybody’s guru.

I’ve seen the transformative power of Sai Maa’s deeksha

as she radiates grace, fully attuned to the Divine. On *darshan* day at a week-long conference on spiritual mastery, I waited in line for about three hours to receive a blessing from Maa. By the time I reached her platform, I had chanted about a thousand *Kyrie Eleisons*, which is a Gregorian chant favored by Roman Catholics. The translation from the Greek is “Lord have mercy; Christ have mercy; Lord have mercy.” I also chanted the Jewish *Sh’ma Yisrael Adonai eloheinu Adonai ekhad* (“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One”) and dozens of Sanskrit chants. But none of these chants prepared me for the outpouring of love energy when I first laid my head in the lap of Her Holiness. It felt like coming home.

When grace moves into you, it empties and plugs the holes in your heart sieve so you are no longer wasting love but dispensing it to fortify yourself against darkness. Divine love displaces fear, self-doubt, and worry, and leaves you naked in the truth of who you are. Only peace and clarity remain, only an attunement to reality. When we allow grace to fully enter us, it chases away our feelings of loneliness, despair, dryness, insecurity, and discouragement. Grace feels like the Mother, the divine feminine presence, the comfort we’ve missed. When we surrender to it without resistance, our surrender helps us end our personal suffering.

Maa’s energy is strong; it showers you like rain and triggers an emotional downpour. I started crying and couldn’t stop after her blessing, even after I returned to my chair. My friend Sandy leaned over and wrapped her arms around me. “When we’re in the presence of complete and unconditional love,” she whispered, “it’s overwhelming.” When you invite it in, pure love washes you squeaky clean. The next morning, I still felt Maa rocking me in her comforting, rhythmic embrace. I actually felt the ocean of divine love. I could feel it *moving* inside my chest. I’d been superbly washed, dried,

and folded. Maa did this for five hundred people that day, all of them invited to open up to their potential. Our only choice was to kindly ask all our pain to move over and leave. There was no room left for anything but love.

I still remember how Maa held my face in her hands and kept repeating, "I finally found you! I finally found you!" Then she said, "You are such a beautiful soul. You will manifest great works." Perhaps, at some level, our souls recognized each other. I thanked her and knelt, lowering my forehead to the ground in front of her feet. This gesture means our heart center should always remain higher than our head. When we recognize the divine in the *acharya*, the spiritual teacher, or in each other for that matter, we are humbled by our potential to love. Seeing that potential in ourselves is the most humbling of visions. It is how we become a divine human.

Being in God's presence is expansive, whether it comes through a mystical experience or from the simple act of holding an infant, and it begins to fully open us to the magnificence of a unified universe. We are suddenly astounded by the ultimate relationship of simplicity and power. Suddenly our empathy and willingness to serve are amplified. Truth in the form of energetic touch can ignite compassion from our deepest well, where purity represents the holy unity of all things: consciousness birthed in matter and light, synthesized where human wisdom exists. Grace passed on as a simple blessing can inspire us to be conduits for the human experience for as long as we are open to its splendor.

The heart is interdependent with all life

The heart, which is the source of emotional energy and generates the largest rhythmic electromagnetic field

produced in the body, has about forty thousand neurons. It starts beating before we are born. Rollin McCraty, PhD, executive vice-president and director of research for the Institute of HeartMath, points out that our emotions affect the heart's electromagnetic field, which influences people around us. At both physiological and psychological levels, the heart is the basic building block we can use to optimize what's going on in the world.

Researchers have been investigating heart-brain interactions for more than eighteen years. They study how the heart and brain communicate with each other and how this communication affects consciousness and our perceptions of the world. In their studies, they have identified a state called *coherence*. When we are feeling positive emotions, they say—appreciating the sunset, feeling love, showing compassion, or expressing concern for someone—our heart beats out a very unique message. The heart is deeply enfolded into the unseen energy fields within and outside of our bodies, and through intention we can spread goodwill and bring harmony to the whole world. How can we use this information to impact those around us and change the world? By shifting our emotions, we can change what we encode into the field and use it to lead more compassionate and joyful lives.

When HeartMath scientists looked at the spectrum analysis of the magnetic field radiated by the heart, they found that emotional information is actually encoded and modulated into magnetic fields. All electromagnetic fields are force fields that carry energy. Like an electric current flowing in a wire or coil, these fields are capable of producing an action at a distance. Magnetic and electric fields exist around appliances, power lines, electric wiring, and even light fixtures, but electromagnetic fields are generated only when an electric current flows. Every living thing is

surrounded by a magnetic field extending out from its body, since electrical currents also flow through living organisms. These currents can be influenced by external magnetic fields, too. The magnetic field produced by the brain can be detected and measured from several feet away from the head.

But it's the heart that generates the body's most powerful and extensive rhythmic electromagnetic field, which is even stronger than the brain's. Compared to the electromagnetic field produced by the brain, the electrical component of the heart's field is about sixty times greater in amplitude. It permeates every cell of the body. Also, the heart's magnetic component is approximately five thousand times stronger than the brain's magnetic field and can be detected several feet away from the body with sensitive magnetometers. What the HeartMath team discovered in their research was that brain rhythms naturally synchronize with the heart's rhythmic activity.

These scientific studies, and others in the field of neurocardiology, suggest that the heart's nervous system enables it to learn, remember, and make functional decisions independent of the brain's cerebral cortex. The heart actually sends signals to the brain that influence the function of the higher brain centers involved in emotional processing, perception, and cognition. In other words, the heart, although it works as a pump, is also a sensory organ that has a mind of its own. Because it can make decisions, we need to think and ask from the heart more often.

A person's emotional state is communicated throughout the body by the heart's electromagnetic field, thus interacting with our organs and informing bodily functions positively or negatively. If you're angry, the beating pattern of your heart is erratic, disordered, and incoherent, whereas if you're feeling positive emotions, it beats in a smooth, orderly, and

coherent pattern. When you're feeling gratitude or love, your respiratory rhythm, along with your blood pressure and other systems in your body, entrains to your heart's rhythm. As pulsing waves of energy radiate out from our hearts, they also affect our environment, our relationships, and our experiences in our social environment. Because our heart's electromagnetic field can be detected by other people, love, compassion, and joy can change our external environment. There is also evidence to suggest that a subtle yet influential electromagnetic or energetic communication system operates just below our conscious awareness. Isn't it true that our social interactions have magnetic or repulsive components to them? That's because our hearts' electromagnetic fields transmit information between people.

When the electromagnetic fields of two hearts merge, they begin to entrain, or synchronize, to each other and exchange information. The information embedded in each field is taken in by the receiving organism. This produces an informational gestalt and becomes something more than the sum of its parts. This harmonization, or exchange of heart energy between individuals, is measureable. When we generate a smooth and coherent heart rhythm, our brain waves can actually synchronize to another person's heart.

Finally, science has proved that a clear and beautiful mind, which is the expression of love and compassion, makes us sensitive to those around us. The merging of our heart energies is a natural process. When we spiritually awaken, we can direct our attention outside ourselves and become aware of vibrations generated by our encounters with everyone else's external electromagnetic fields. When our hearts touch other people's electromagnetic fields, we can feel their encoding, and, when we are highly tuned in, we can feel the beat of every living thing. We are in total

harmony. Those who reach a state of *samadhi*, a mystical state of complete absorption into the Divine, have suspended their mind's activity, so the mind can become aware of itself, as if looking in a mirror. A person in *samadhi* will often say he or she feels one with all plants, trees, and various wild critters when absorbed in this state of loving harmony with God.

If we immerse ourselves in nature, we experience coherence with the environment and connect as a single, synchronized natural system. This might explain the feelings of awe and appreciation we gain from seeing the northern lights or the Rocky Mountains. It is our heart perceiving the electromagnetic field of our planet. Does our heart sense the Great Mother as a sentient being who has a consciousness of her own? I tend to think so. Our hearts are *meant* to communicate with the outside world and the endless energy in existence on earth. We can, in fact, extend our electromagnetic fields to beyond the planet and into infinity.

The potential of a coherent electromagnetic field leads to many powerful dialogues. It is a natural part of our spiritual awakening. To relate to the world and use all our capabilities, we need to shift more often from brain- to heart-centered awareness and elevate our heart's mind into our decision making. This is what it means to have an empowered heart.

If science says we can learn to better perceive the information encoded in the heart fields of those around us, then why are we holding back on compassion and love? In our brain-dominated world, we have lost our ability to trust our heart's conversation. Through cultural conditioning, we've been trained to discount our intuition. If we choose, we can grow more intuitively at the same time as we grow in spiritual awareness. Thomas Merton, a twentieth-century Catholic monk and spiritual writer who studied both Eastern

and Western philosophies, is widely quoted as saying, “The whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all these living beings, which are all part of one another, and all involved in one another.” That said, I think the heart is our essential identity, the symbol of our oneness. Knowing that our electromagnetic fields all influence one another, I know we aren’t separated from another person’s energy field any more than we are from our own hearts. We are one big organism. Loving with all your heart, therefore, means loving with your entire energy field, including the person sitting next to you on the bus or in a meeting. We are designed to be deeply interconnected with each other and with the planet itself. That means what we do individually really *does* matter. When speaking of the true value of the heart, the Wizard of Oz told the Tin Man that the heart’s value is not in how much you love, but in how much you are loved. I’m so glad that Hollywood and science can agree.

The anahata and oneness

Like a blessing, the transmission of love through the chest can ignite the heart both physically and spiritually. A favorite Christian icon is the sacred heart of Jesus, which is often artistically depicted as a heart surrounded by flames. The sacred heart is a symbol of divine love and compassion. It is also an emblem of the emotional and moral life of Jesus, who loved freely. Devotion to the sacred heart represents love for humanity and is central to the Christian concept of loving. In Sanskrit, the word *anahata* means “unstuck,” something we want to flow openly without constraint. As devotion is important to the body and soul, so is devotion—especially love—important to the center of our emotions. When our hearts are energetically open, we release our selflessness.

Focusing on this energy center inspires us to express ourselves lovingly. This is our most natural state of being, where we no longer need to respond to life circumstances from fear. Opening the *anahata* is like having an open window to the world.

From the Eastern mystical tradition of yoga comes the ancient system of energy centers known as the chakras. The fourth chakra, the *anahata chakra*, is revered as the center of devotion. It is located in the heart region of the human body's vertebral column, with three chakras above and three below it. According to the Hindu, yogic, and Tantric traditions, this chakra is associated with a person's ability to make decisions freely, unbound by the desires of the lower nature or unfulfilled emotions. The *anahata yantra*, a well-known design used in meditation, depicts the chakra as a twelve-petaled lotus with a six-pointed star. It is a hexagram that symbolizes balance, resting upon its center. The hexagram is composed of two overlapping, intersecting triangles, one pointing upward and symbolizing Shiva, the masculine principle, and the other pointing downward and symbolizing Shakti, the feminine principle. When these two principles are in harmony, the energies flowing above and below are in balance. Overall, the heart chakra represents relatedness, love, and compassion.

According to Anodea Judith, PhD, chakra expert, and visionary, the chakras spell out a profound formula for wholeness, not only for individual awakening, but also for the evolution of society as a whole. As we rise in consciousness and evolve vibrationally, we move up from the root chakra, which focuses on primal matters, survival, and materialism, through sexual urges, the ego, and the power-based consciousness of our ancestral beginnings to love, communication, spirituality, intuitive awareness, and,

finally, at the crown chakra, to union with God. As a society, Judith argues, we have not yet arrived at a heart-centered awareness, and so we still remain trapped in the ego's love of power and the masculine rigidity of power structures. We are still a divided world, one that is focused on polarities: development versus nature, men versus women, and battling nations that cannot seem to share resources and live in peace. We are also at war with our own bodies, she says, and cannot tend to a body-mind-spiritual balance, choosing quick fixes instead of treating disease as an effect of something deeper. Further, given our cultural obsession with excessive cosmetic surgery, we are divided about the way we look and reject our own bodies in favor of an image of physical perfection!

As humanity sheds its focus on these values and raises its consciousness to the fourth chakra, we enter into a state of love. When we can join together and move our energy out through our heart chakra, the heart of the world will flower. To truly evolve and realize, or become, our authentic nature, Judith writes, the lower chakras' attributes of the body, emotions, and personal power must be integrated with the upper chakras' realms of communication, vision, and spirituality. Balancing the upper with the lower will help move us toward conscious intelligence.⁸¹ As we mature and learn to live in balance, individually and collectively, we will also learn to embrace the full spectrum of who we are.

This union, symbolized by the *anahata yantra*, also reminds

81. Thomas 22. You enter the kingdom, the world of higher consciousness, when your inner world matches your outer world. Jesus said to his disciples, "When you make the two into one, and when you make the inner like the outer and the outer like the inner, and the upper like the lower, and when you make male and female into a single one, so that the male will not be male nor the female be female, when you make eyes in place of an eye, a hand in place of a hand, a foot in place of a foot, an image in place of an image, then you will enter [the kingdom]." Leloup, *The Gospel of Thomas*, 99.

us of the balanced view of gender necessary to ascend higher in consciousness. Hindus and yogic practitioners regard God as masculine and feminine together. The Divine is infinitely complex and, like a piece of fine art, is the medium through which information and energy are exchanged. The Divine, a creative principle, a union of masculine and feminine energies, is inherent in every individual. It symbolizes the merging of heart (emotion) and mind (intellect), two distinct but integrated principles that facilitate our self-development.

The dynamic interaction of the intellect and the emotions expresses an important truth about the cosmos and our desire to return to a state of oneness. We live in an environment of polarities that seek definition: male and female, light and dark, right and left, projecting and receiving, day and night. Everything and everyone seeks completion. We are meant to learn how to balance both masculine and feminine energies, not only interacting as a human community, but within ourselves as individuals. It is an exercise in remembering our union (*reunion*) with the Divine. By bringing polarities together in conscious communion as a single, unified reality, we will not only reestablish balance in our outer world, but also in our inner world, where we will achieve our perfect union with God.

The heart is the only reality

According to Bhagavan, whatever the heart says is the honest truth. It determines perfect action. Residing in the heart of every human being, the Divine is the only reality. Bhagavan says that, if your heart tells you to help another person, that helping is perfect action. If your heart says not to help a person, and you don't help him, that is also perfect action. But how do we know what comes from the mind

and what comes from the heart? How do we know what is perfect action? The mind can never know. All we can know for sure is that living from the heart is taking action based on guidance from cosmic consciousness, where God originates. As we enter a new age of awakening, therefore, we must recognize the Divine as our internal GPS system and best decision maker. To live from the heart is to live from your God center and accept divine guidance regularly. Listening to your heart means listening to God. It just takes a little practice to learn to pay attention.

Part of Christ realization is knowing the difference between the part (you, the human being) and the whole (God, the Divine). The part must obey the whole; it cannot act independently. If the whole is already within you, doesn't it make sense to rely on God for guidance? Most human beings today do not obey the whole; instead of following their hearts, they only follow their minds. That's why the world is so untidy, Bhagavan says, and why people are confused. When people spiritually awaken, it means they are fully aware of following their heart, which is the same as following Divine will. If we align our intentions with our heart center and follow Divine will, the earth can be transformed.

It is our job to have heart-centered awareness and, at the same time, direct joy, adoration, passion, and compassion outward, toward every facet of life. Thanks to science, psychology, and mysticism, we already know that the world is a reflection of what goes on in our hearts. We can lead a lifeless, unconscious existence, or we can flower into a divine human being, one who has an illuminated mind and possesses both wisdom and acceptance of life. The heart is both our moral compass and an expression of God. It is the deepest place of joy, where our journey toward completion begins. When our hearts flower, we blossom into oneness,

into that expansive state of being that brings everyone closer together. We can then take perfect action and our service can unfold through joyful living. We can achieve unlimited potential. When humanity as a whole lives with passion and clarity from the heart center, human consciousness will be raised, and there will be peace everywhere.