



HEART to HEART

Consciousness speaking to Consciousness

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Living

From

Grace



Heart of the Matter

Grace

By A. Ramana from *Consciousness Being Itself*, pp. 202-204



Ramana: Rather than cursing the darkness, light a candle. Rather than going for hours, or for a day or two, being at effect, out of sorts with yourself, use the Inquiry. Just make a contact, or a Buddy Call, and come back into alignment, or connection with the Heart. That's what the Buddy System in our programs is for. I'm sure there is

someone here who would be willing to talk with you for a minute or two and say, "OK, man! Let's just be here together." Then, sure enough, you are again "back together with the Self, in the Heart."

What are you feeling right now?

Questioner: A contraction.

Ramana: OK. So there is a contraction. Right now, be aware that there is a contraction. Be aware of the space prior to the contraction. Look and see for yourself. Is the Awareness that is aware of the contraction, contracted?

In order to be aware of the contraction, there is an Awareness that is aware of it. This Awareness itself is not contracted. That's the simplicity of looking *prior to* whatever is objectively being experienced.

Prior to the objective experience, into the subjective Awareness that is aware of the experience, the subjective Awareness has no contraction. It's like the mirror that reflects fire has no heat in it, or that reflects water has no wetness in it. This Awareness that is aware of the contraction has no contraction in it.

It's just that simple, just that close. That's the location of happiness. That's the place of abidance, in *this* Awareness.

Now, paradoxically, we say, "I've looked, and I am That." Well, remain *as* that "I AM," that's all. Just remain *as* That. When it takes effort, if it *does* require effort, it is still a stage of practice, that's all. Just keep practicing. Continue to practice the process. When it is no longer taking effort, that's the natural state. Then it's Abidance. Ultimately, when it takes no effort at all, but remains *natural* Abidance, at all times, that's Enlightenment.

So, just stay in the Awareness. When I say, "stay in Awareness," it means to cease identifying objectively, and just *abide*. This silent abidance unravels the contraction from within. It's like buying a ball of string that's machine rolled. Instead of efforting to unwind it, get hold of the string's end on the inside of the ball. Reach up in the hole of the ball and find its end on the inside, and pull on it from the inside. Then

holding the outside of the ball, keep pulling the inner end from within, and it will begin to unwind from gravity doing the work. The first thing you know, you are holding only a mushy outer shell or form of string with a pile of string on the ground. It's naturally unwinding itself from within. This is like the process of the Grace of the Heart.

It's really very simple. It's just that we are caught up, kind of like some poor animal that's tethered and is caught up or entangled in its tether; and, while struggling to get free actually tightens the tether even more. Pulling on the rope, or restraint, trying to struggle with it, we seem to get further caught, further entangled, rather than just relaxing and letting go!

Simply let go! There is so much Grace in surrender, if we are capable of surrendering, to allow Grace to reveal itself. Instead, we resist! The sense of being a "doer" is a strong one. It has been associated with and identified with for lifetimes. Not just this one, but *many* lifetimes.

In fact, that's why we are here now in this life. After so many lifetimes of being the "doer," the habit is firmly established, it's strongly entrenched! We now "have to" *keep doing*, so we must take on another body, and then another, and another, just so we can have "time" to do something more – more "doing." Therefore, we "have to" come back for even more lifetimes in order to "do" more "doing."

Mukta, which in Sanskrit is Liberation... Freedom... is what we're *really* after! Freedom from what? What is it that we want to be free of... or free from? We want to be free from this compulsive behavior... free of this compulsive attachment to... and identification with... this karmic cycle of "doing"... of birth followed by death... and death followed by birth... This continuous recycling of death and birth, and birth and death... and falling free of all of this "doing"... remaining free of it *all... prior to* it all... not pulled by all of this... by *any* of it...

We don't get it, that true freedom is *only* when we are abiding freely in the Self, or Heart, *prior to* all of this "doing." There is no freedom to be found *within* all of this *samsara*, meaning this world of phenomenal manifestation or *worldly* existence, which is compulsive "doing," or ongoing activity.

The *very configuration* of all that, or the duality in which it is all apparently occurring, is bondage. It's seeking. And seeking is suffering. Therefore, we have to *constantly* hear the argument of the Truth, *repeatedly* hear the logical or wise explanation of Reality. We have to be reminded *constantly!* Why? Otherwise, we constantly forget! *Truly hearing this is Grace!* ♥

Love Note From The Heart

Simply Being Awake

By Elizabeth MacDonald, AHAM's Assistant Spiritual Director and Senior Trainer



A Society of Sages where ...
Truth is our Guide and not the so-called individual.
Where "me" is no longer on center stage.

Only the Pure Light of Awakeness,
of Awareness,
as our True Self Nature,
is present Here and Now -
Eternally.

Seeing without an "I" seeing.
Only honoring what is True and Real -
This is what is looking out from everyone's eyes.

Being only Love, Compassion and Grace
in every experience,
no matter what the appearance.

The "two-ness" transformed into Oneness -
Seeing only Itself wherever It looks.
All is fully accepted As It Is,
As an expression of The One.

There is only sincerity,
Honoring and respecting the Truth
Of who we really are.

Everything that comes and goes
Is the Play of Self, reflected upon Itself.
All are delighting in this dance of Emptiness
Shining Brightly ...
Simply Being Awake ...



Teachings of Bhagavan Ramana

Grace is There All Along

From *The Teachings of Ramana Maharshi in His Own Words*, pp. 82-85

Sometimes the question of apparent conflict came up, not between effort and destiny but between effort and grace; for there were those who asked what use is effort, if Realization is dependent on the grace of God or Guru. As the following quotations show, there is no conflict between the two.

Questioner: *It is said that only those who are chosen for Self-realization obtain it. That is rather discouraging.*

Bhagavan: That only means that we cannot attain realization of the Self by our own mind, unaided by God's grace.

Questioner: *Grace is necessary for the removal of ignorance.*

Bhagavan: Certainly. But Grace is there all along. Grace is the Self. It is not something to be acquired. All that is necessary is to know its existence. In the same way, the sun is pure brightness; it does not know darkness, although others speak of darkness fleeing away on its approach. Like darkness, ignorance is a phantom, not real. Because of its unreality, it is said to be removed when its unreality is discovered.

The sun is there and shines and you are surrounded by sunlight; still, if you would know the sun you must turn your eyes in its direction and look at it. Similarly, Grace is only to be found by effort, although it is here and now.

Questioner: *By the desire to surrender, increasing grace is experienced, I hope.*

Bhagavan: Surrender once and for all and be done with the desire. So long as the sense of being the doer remains, desire does also. Therefore the ego remains. But once this goes, the Self shines forth in its purity. The sense of being the doer is the bondage, not the actions themselves. "Be still and know that I am God." Here, stillness is total surrender without a vestige of individuality. Stillness will prevail and there will be no agitation of the mind. Agitation of mind is the cause of desire, of the sense of being the doer, of personality. If that is stopped, there is quiet. In this sense, "knowing" means "being." It is not relative knowledge involving the triads of knower, knowledge and known.

Questioner: *But one may not be quite sure of God's grace.*

Bhagavan: If the unripe mind does not feel God's grace, it does not mean that this is absent, for that would imply that God is at times not gracious, that is to say ceases to be God.

Questioner: *Is that the same as the saying of Christ, "According to thy faith be it done unto thee?"*

Bhagavan: Quite so.

Questioner: *The Upanishads say, I am told, that he alone knows the Atman (the Self) whom the Atman chooses. Why should the Atman choose at all? If it chooses, why some particular person?*

Bhagavan: When the sun rises, some buds blossom, not all. Do you blame the sun for that? Nor can the bud blossom of itself; it requires the sunlight to enable it to do so.

Questioner: *May we not say that the help of the Atman is needed because it is the Atman that drew over itself the veil of Maya?*

Bhagavan: You may say so.

Questioner: *If the Atman has drawn the veil over itself, should it not itself remove the veil?*

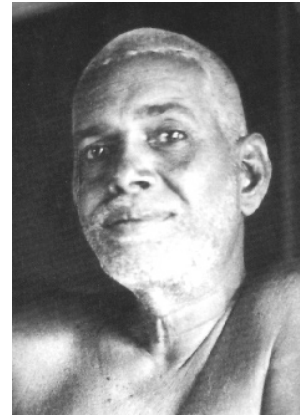
Bhagavan: It will. But who complains of being veiled? Ask yourself that.

Questioner: *Why should I? Let the Atman itself remove the veil.*

Bhagavan: If the Atman complains about the veil, then the Atman will remove it.

Questioner: *If the Supreme Being is omnipresent, as He is said to be, His realization ought to be an easy thing. The scriptures, however, declare that without His grace the Lord cannot even be worshipped, much less realized. So then, how can the individual by his own effort realize the Self, or the Supreme Being, except through His grace?*

Bhagavan: There was never a time when the Supreme Being was unknown or unrealized, because He is one and identical with the Self. His grace is the same as the conscious immediacy of His Divine Presence; in other words, Enlightenment or Revelation. One's ignorance of this self-revealing immediacy of Divine Grace is no proof to the contrary. If the owl does not see the sun that illumines the whole world, is that the fault of the sun? Is it not due to the defectiveness of the bird's sight? Similarly, if the ignorant man is unaware of the ever-luminous Atman or Self, can that be attributed to the nature of the Atman itself? Is it not the result of his own ignorance? The Supreme Lord is eternal grace. Therefore, there is really no such individual act as bestowing Grace; and, being ever present, the manifestation of Grace is not confined to any particular period or occasion. Turning to God and desiring His grace is itself Grace. ♥



Understanding the "I AM"

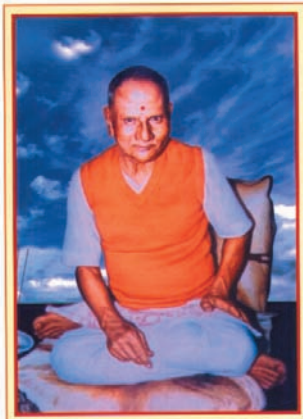
By Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

The "I am" came first, it's ever present, ever available; refuse all thoughts except "I AM," and stay there.

Understanding the "I AM," your sense of "being," or just "Presence," is extremely important; for, on it, rests the entire outcome of this teaching. Firstly, are you at all aware of your "being," or of the fact that "You Are?" YOU have "to be" before anything else can be, your sense of "presence," or the feeling "I AM" is very fundamental to anything that has to follow. Secondly, this sense of "being," or the feeling "I AM", was it not the very first event or happening before any of your living experiences could begin? Apply your mind, go back in time to the moment when it dawned on you that "you are," or "I AM." This "I AM" is still there with you, ever present, ever available, it was and still is the first thought; refuse all other thoughts and come back here and stay here. So try to understand and grasp this "beingness" or "I AMness" that is inherent in you. The more precisely and clearly you do it, the more rapid will be your progress.

Just "stay put" firmly; and establish yourself in the "I AM"; reject all that does not go with "I AM."

Having understood the "I AM" in every way, the next thing is to stay there. Establish yourself in your sense of "being," and not deviate from it at all. The very moment you start thinking about anything else, you can be assured there have been "add-ons" on the basic "I am" and it has lost its purity. Reject anything that is, "I am plus ..." and so forth, because all the rest are contaminants and do not go with it. ♥



"In that body the 'I am' is ticking – that is the Guru. You worship that 'I am' principle and surrender to that Guru and that Guru will give all the grace. What you call 'I am' and birth, you are not that, it is material. The Ultimate knowledge does not have any knowledge. This knowledge 'I am' has appeared spontaneously, as a result of the body. See it as it is, understand it as it is." – Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

Connecting Heart to Heart



♥ to ♥

Sampling of 2009 Programs



Intensive Self-Inquiry Training (ISIT)



**Association in
Consciousness (AIC) Retreat**



Spring Fling



Buddy Training



Awaken to Awareness Retreat



Living Meditation Training (LMT)



**Neutralizing Your Negative Past
(NNP)**

Heart Note

Heart Notes are stories from AHAM graduates living the teaching of Self-Inquiry in their ordinary lives in the workplace, at home, etc. You are invited to share your experience of how Self-Inquiry has been significant for you. Please email your story to <ahampublications@aham.com> attention HEART to HEART.

Most of us have probably seen the bumper sticker – “Live Simply so others can Simply Live.” But what does it mean to live simply? Recently I have been asking myself this question. And this is what I’m discovering.

A year ago, my husband and I sold the home we had lived in for twenty plus years. The home we bought when we decided to start a family. The home in which we watched our children grow up. Our kids are now both in college and it was beginning to feel like we didn’t need this much house anymore. We both commented on how there were so many rooms we never went into anymore. There were far more rooms than either of us needed. Our life was different now. And it felt like we were ready for a fresh start, a life more simple, easy and practical. A life with fewer things.

So we sold and gave away much of the furniture, dishes and clothing we had accumulated over many years. We sorted through cupboards, drawers and dark spaces in the basement only to uncover things we had long forgotten about and certainly had not used or needed in a long time. We sorted through photographs, kids toys, games, etc. which brought back memories, some happy, some sad. It was a time of releasing and of coming to terms with the fact that life would never be quite the same again.

Now that we’re settled in our new town home life feels lighter. There are large windows that let in lots of natural light. There is more empty space. It seems easier to stay present. And with less to take care of, I now have time to smell the roses. I realized how over the years I had taken this beautiful flower for granted. And now, touching the silky white petals, admiring the strong green stems and soft aroma, I wondered why I’d never really taken in the full beauty of this magnificent flower in its utter simplicity.

Simplicity for me is becoming more of an attitude now, a way of life and a choice. I choose what I will become involved in rather than running here and there scattered and exhausted trying to keep up with it all.

It’s also an open life. One in which situations, events, creative ideas can flow through without getting hooked on all the clutter, whether it be a cluttered room or a cluttered mind or a clutter of activities and busyness that tend to leave room for little else but more of the same.

I’m finding that when I’m able to live simply there is an acute sense of the perfection in everything. And when the foundation of my life rests in this perfection, whether my body is at home alone or in a crowded auditorium, there is a profound peace.

Simplicity is letting go of what I have outgrown or what is no longer useful in my life, so, instead of spending my energy tending to what once was, I can get down to the business of why I’m here and what am I doing with the allotted time I have left on this planet.

What do I want my life to look like? How do I want my exit to be? Do I want it to be filled with so much stuff that it’s impossible to see clearly, or do I want to be empty so that what’s next can easily enter without resistance, without any snags?

In his book *The Tao of Physics*, Fritjof Capra states: “Buddhists call the ultimate reality Sunyata meaning emptiness or the void... In spite of using terms like empty and void, the Eastern sages make it clear that they do not mean ordinary emptiness... on the contrary a void which has an infinite creative potential.”

Being empty is being free of concepts, beliefs, opinions and mind chatter. Now God can enter fully. God cannot enter when we are full of ourselves. And from this emptiness anything and everything feels possible. ♥

Love,

Melinda Bern
Roanoke, VA



Chinese Potatoes with Chili Beans

East meets West. An American style dish with a Chinese flavor – the sauce is particularly tasty. Try it as a quick supper dish when you fancy a meal with a little zing!

4 medium potatoes, cut in thick chunks
3 scallions, sliced
1 large fresh chili, seeded and sliced
2 tbs. sunflower or groundnut oil
2 garlic cloves, crushed
1 14 oz. can red kidney beans, drained
2 tbs. soy sauce
1 tbs. sesame oil

Boil the potatoes until they are just tender. Take care not to over cook them. Drain and reserve. In a large frying pan or wok, stir-fry the scallions and chili in the oil for about one minute, then add the garlic and fry for a few seconds. Add the potatoes, stirring well, then the beans and finally the soy sauce and sesame oil. Season to taste, and cook the vegetables until they are well heated through. Sprinkle with sesame seeds and coriander or parsley. Add salt and pepper to taste.

This recipe serves 4. Enjoy! ♥

Moderation



It is easy to be confused by the information continually appearing in the media about what is “good for you” or “bad for you,” as it is sometimes contradictory. One thing for sure is we are meant to enjoy our food as a great gift, and I don’t see how we can be truly nourished by eating food which we don’t like. While many have heard that fried food is ‘bad for you,’ it is a tasty addition to the diet once in a while. If cooked correctly with clean oil at the right temperature, it is not greasy. Similarly, a rich chocolate cake or dessert is greatly enjoyed as a special treat. An elaborate dessert could be prepared for a weekend treat, while a fruit dessert, fresh fruits, dried fruits and nuts can provide a sweet snack during the week. Avoid “fast food” that has been deepfried or kept hot for a period of time. Salad bars are a good source of prepared food and freshly made pasta that only needs a few minutes of cooking in boiling water.

Grains, such as rice and bread, as well as plenty of fresh vegetables and fruits, can be the basis of the daily diet. Regularly eating raw vegetables and fruits is beneficial. Liberally add fresh herbs as well as spices in moderation. A knowledge of the medicinal qualities of these is helpful. ♥

– From *The Conscious Cookbook* by Kamala Devi

Awaken to Awareness Retreats

Enjoy Any Season of the Year



AHAM's Reflection Lake



Main House Covered in Snow

Give yourself a break, AND Transform Your Life!

Enjoy 3-days in quiet retreat, abiding in the clear consciousness of Pure Awareness! This is simple, effortless introspection or "being in meditation" at AHAM's tranquil, 37-acre Meditation Retreat and Spiritual Training Center. AHAM's "Awaken to Awareness Retreat" is perfect if you want to "get away from it all" and experience deep peace, solitude, and relaxation. Enjoy our quiet Meditation Trails and beautiful Reflection Lake. Receive personal guidance in the transforming process of Self-Inquiry, the simple "the eyes open" meditation you can practice anytime, anywhere! Experience this, and much more of AHAM's life transforming teaching... all in a very "laid back" and relaxed format. For more information, contact the Center, and soon!



Taking a Leisurely Stroll on the
AHAM Campus Path

Photos
by

Jim Dillinger Photography
<www.devotionalimages.com>

A Graduate's Sharing

"Right now I feel more aware of who I am. I am more aware of me."

—Susan Curcio
Williamsburg, VA

Call the AHAM Center at 336-381-3988 or email <ahamcntr@asheboro.com> for more information on 2010 program dates.

Making a Connection

Ramana is now in India. You are invited to our India ashram to join Ramana in *Sat Sanga* (Conscious Company) and Fellowship in the Stillness and Silence of Being.

Sat Sanga (Conscious Company) on Portico of the AHAM India Ashram →→



Heart Watch

Every four hours, during our Heart Times, one of our staff sits in silent meditation in our sanctuary and consciously envisions a successful conclusion of the particular need of each person for whom a request has been made. If you would like to have a request placed in our Heart Watch book, then phone, mail, or e-mail your prayer request to the AHAM Center. <ahamcntr@asheboro.com>; Subject: Heart Watch Request

Daily Messages

AHAM sends out Daily Messages for transforming the mind and realizing the true nature of the Self, or real God, based on the Teaching of Sri Ramana Maharshi. If you wish to receive these FREE daily messages, Monday thru Friday, simply e-mail your request to the AHAM Center at: <ahamcntr@asheboro.com> Subject: Daily Messages

Here's an example: →

Experience Meditation on the Telephone

Learn to bring stillness & peace into your life

Every Sunday

Call (712) 338-8000 + code 2398#
A FREE one-hour phone call
with guided meditation,
sharing, fellowship, and
answers to your questions.

Call begins at 7:30 pm EST
(Call in 5-minutes early)

Try it *This Sunday!*



Presented by:
AHAM Meditation Retreat Center

Only by becoming aware of the truth of the Self – by the forgetting of which this great and endless suffering of relative existence has been incurred – does one get rid of (that) suffering, not by any other means.

AHAM's e-HEART to HEART Publication – published monthly by AHAM

This monthly e-publication is the continuation of AHAM's original paper-printed magazine, also titled HEART to HEART, the existence of which alternated on occasion from monthly to bimonthly to quarterly, etc., for over 20 years beginning shortly after the development of AHAM in 1978. Its main purpose is to spread the pure teaching of AHAM, which is primarily the transforming process of Self-Inquiry, based the Pure Teaching of Sri Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. Self-Inquiry is the core and central basis or theme of AHAM's own teaching.

It is AHAM's ongoing mission to spiritually assist one and all in transcending and ultimately eliminating all forms of suffering; to harmonize all forms of conflict, contradiction, and confusion seen and felt in one's life and in the world, which is actually only caused by identifying with the appearing body-mind and ego as being oneself in the world of time and space. AHAM's purpose is to bring about real and lasting peace, freedom, and happiness for all who are ready and willing to receive it. This is being accomplished, as proven by our many graduates through the years.

AHAM awakens one to the Highest Truth – which is, there is not now, never has been, nor will there ever be a separate, individual being. There is always only One Self, One Truth, or One Reality, appearing as all the apparent "others" and revealing this One Self (called God) to Itself. God is actually playing ALL the seeming roles, of all of us!

The e-HEART to HEART is also a wonderful way for readers to be connected with AHAM and its pure teaching, especially if you cannot come to the AHAM Center in the USA, or to our ashram in India.

This single, simple message has always been what we have shared, whether in the original paper printed version or now in this electric or e-version. The purity of the AHAM teaching has never changed, nor will it ever as far as Ramana, its founding spiritual director, is concerned.

This is a free publication. However, your donations, offerings, gifts, or contributions to its continuation are very welcome; they assist us in the operation of our two centers. Please feel free to pass this publication on to friends, and please send us any questions you may have regarding either AHAM or your spiritual practice (*sadhana*). If you give us permission, we would like to print both your question and our answer in the e-HEART to HEART, or do so anonymously. All comments and suggestions are always welcome.

E-mail us at ahampublications@aham.com. Past issues may also be found on our website: <http://www.aham.com>



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Please contact ahampublications@aham.com with your suggestions or comments. Feel free to share this publication with your friends and family. Past issues starting with January, 2008 can be found on our website: <http://www.aham.com/inspiration/index.html>

In loving service,
AHAM Publications



THE ASSOCIATION OF HAPPINESS FOR ALL MANKIND (AHAM) is a non-profit organization, incorporated in the state of North Carolina. AHAM offers a unique spiritual system and process of meditation called Self-Inquiry, which ultimately leads to the radical experience of Enlightenment or Self-Realization. AHAM has been serving the worldwide spiritual community with its curriculum of conscious-transforming programs since August 1978.

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