

Radiance

Experiencing Divine Presence

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CHAPTER 1

The Divine Is Everywhere

You Are Not Who You Think You Are

Who are you, really? Are you so-and-so with a certain past and a certain body and personality and certain roles talents, weaknesses, dreams, fears, and beliefs? You may define yourself to others in these ways, but this is not who you really are. That can only be discovered through deeper questioning and exploration and through a more subtle experiencing of that which is beyond all ideas about yourself. It can only be discovered when the mind is quiet and no longer telling you who you are. When all of the ideas about yourself are stilled, then what remains is who you really are—Consciousness, Awareness, Stillness, Presence, Peace, Love—the Divine. You are that which is nameless and yet has been given a thousand names.

To those of you who are not so sure about who you really are, you are not alone. Even those who have glimpsed this are not always certain. The realization of who you are comes and goes to some extent depending on what you pay attention to. Those who pay attention to the mind, even once they have realized the truth—that there is only one Being in all of existence—get sidetracked from this truth and temporarily forget who they

really are. The mind is very compelling, and giving your attention to it will bring you back to the experience of yourself as separate from the rest of creation.

Nevertheless, you are not who you *think* you are. Thinking gives you the illusion of being someone, but you are not some-one but rather Oneness itself—the Divine—masquerading as an individual. This masquerade is for the purpose of exploring this physical reality and for having the unique experiences you are having as some-one. The Divine is enjoying the experiences it is having through all of creation, even experiences you would consider unenjoyable. What the Divine enjoys is experience—any experience. It created you just for that, or rather, you created *you* just for that.

You may think you are not enjoying some experience you are having, but if you touch deeply into yourself, you will discover enjoyment in even the most unpleasant experience. The joy from these experiences comes simply from the ability to have them—the ability to be alive and experience them. The Divine is enjoying life and celebrating in every moment through every creation, regardless of what is being experienced. Therefore, it is possible for you to find joy in any experience as well, when you align yourself with the divine Self in you, or *Essence*, rather than with the personal self, or the *you* that you think you are.

This *you* is very difficult to please. It can be having a very nice experience and still not be happy. The *you* is programmed for unhappiness because it is programmed to seek that which can never bring real happiness. It goes after more and better and different from whatever is actually present, and that creates ceaseless searching and dissatisfaction with whatever is

found. This is a very unhappy predicament, and yet this is the human condition.

This is why humans suffer, but you are not actually human, so it is not necessary for you to suffer this way. Once you discover your true nature, it is possible for suffering to end, or at least be greatly diminished. The Divine doesn't suffer in its experience of life, and you don't have to either. You can experience the joy the Divine has in life in any moment if you turn your attention to the moment (where the Divine, as Essence, resides), but you have to want to and you have to make this choice. This is the greatest obstacle to happiness of all. Many experience the Truth that lies in the moment and turn away from it again and again because there is nothing in it for the *egoic mind*, which is the mind that is driven by the ego, or illusory personal self—the *you* that you think you are.

This *you* thinks of itself constantly. It is constantly forming thoughts about itself, which is how it creates itself. It describes itself to itself and to others, and that gives the *you* a sense of actually existing, when in fact, it exists only as a description. This description—this *you*—is made up of a jumble of ideas, which are not even consistent, since they change from moment to moment, day to day. This *you* believes one thing one day and another thing the next. It likes something one day and the opposite the next. It sees itself one way one day and another way the next. And yet it seems so solid, so real, that this *you* is willing to argue with others over what it thinks, what it believes, and how it sees things. Where do all of these ideas come from?

They are just there. Stop a moment and look. The ideas that arise in your mind, which define this *you*, arise from nowhere and disappear into nowhere, only to be replaced by others. They have no more reality or truth in

terms of defining you than the last set of ideas or the next set of ideas. Ideas come and go, and they are as meaningless and random as what happens when you flip from station to station on the radio. It is just that certain ideas come and go more frequently on your particular radio station than on someone else's, but this doesn't make them any more real, true, or capable of defining who you are.

Who You Are

Who you are cannot be defined by words. Who you are lives in the space between words, in the Stillness that is ever-present, and known only when the mental chatter has stopped or is no longer given attention. Who you are cannot be described; it can only be experienced. However, the experience of it is often missed because attention is being given to other things, particularly ideas. These ideas, when you are identified with the mind, seem more real and interesting than who you are because the mind is only interested in things it can understand, describe, and categorize.

Since there are plenty of things and ideas for the mind to get absorbed in, this *you* that is identified with the mind is very busy paying attention to things and to the thoughts that arise in the mind. When you are identified with the mind, you often give thoughts more attention even than things. This *you* that you think you are not only thinks itself into existence but everything else, in the sense that what it thinks affects how it perceives actual things and other aspects of reality. Thus, the mind filters and colors experience and gives it its own spin.

The Divine intends it to be just this way. It created the mind to do exactly what it does. In order to have a unique experience through each of its

creations, it is necessary for each to have a separate sense of self and to forget the Oneness that is each one's true nature. Thus, you have traded in the remembrance of your divinity for experiences. You learn and grow in love as a result of them, and that is also intended by the Divine. It also intends that one day you awaken to the truth of your divinity and begin to express that in this life, and this brings experience of a different kind as well as more evolution.

The goodness, or God or divinity, in you drives you forward in your evolution until you express it more and more in your actions and speech. The ego, which does not seek goodness and love but, rather, pleasure and avoidance of pain, also drives you forward into experience, most of which creates pain but also evolution.

Eventually, you come to see that love and goodness are what bring a lasting happiness, and you find your way to living from the Heart—from Essence—more than from the egoic mind. When your identity shifts from the egoic mind to the Heart, where your divinity lies, you are said to have awakened to your true nature. It is the most significant point in your evolution because you are finally free of the domination of the egoic mind, and life is lived from a very different place.

Being Awake

Being awake does not mean you are never identified with the egoic mind; it means you no longer believe it, even when you do find yourself identified with it. This may seem contradictory because identification with the egoic mind entails believing what it is telling you. When you are awake, however, the experience is more like you know that you are playing the role

of someone who is believing the mind, while you know yourself as that which is observing the entire drama. So, although identification happens after awakening to your true nature, it doesn't last long and you don't take it seriously when it does. You know yourself as other than the self that is momentarily identified, and you spend most of your time in the experience of the moment.

Because you never lose sight of who you really are, even when you are identified with the egoic mind, life feels very different indeed. You can enjoy the play of consciousness as it moves in and out of identification. What does it matter what you are identified with, once you know the truth? Consciousness enjoys playing the part it is playing in this lifetime. Once you awaken, it is really possible to enjoy this life, this character that you are playing, and all that happens to it because you know that it is just a story that is being played out. That is why mystics and sages describe this world as a dream. From the perspective of someone who is awake, life feels very much like a dream in which you are aware that you are dreaming.

This detachment allows you to enjoy life in a way that was not possible when you were attached to the outcome of the story you are living. When you are identified with the egoic mind, you have ideas about how you want the story of your life to go in all the presumably important areas: career, relationships, health, home, and family. You envision your life being a certain way and you try to make it be that way. This is what the egoic mind, posing as the *you* that you think you are, is preoccupied with, and this keeps you very busy.

On the other hand, once you have awakened, you don't require life to be a certain way in order for you to be happy because you are already happy and you know that what you *thought* you needed to be happy is not

necessary for your happiness. You are happy because you are aligned with the divine Self that lives in you—Essence. And, unlike other things of this world, Essence is eternal and eternally available and eternally fulfilling.

To know this happiness, all you have to do is to choose to be aligned with Essence rather than the egoic mind. What the egoic mind chases after is often unattainable, and even when it is attained, it is never enough. Always, the egoic mind wants more, better, or different than whatever is actually present. The egoic mind's prescription for happiness leads only to unhappiness, discontentment, and suffering. Given this, choosing Essence over the ego would seem like such a clear choice. But there is a catch.

The Need to Choose

If it were easy to choose Essence over the ego, everyone would be happy and free from suffering. This choice is difficult because you are programmed to be attracted to thoughts and to the objects of the world. Without this programming, you would be born knowing your divinity, and you would miss out on the experience of feeling that you are an independent entity with a will and on all the experiences, learning, and growth that go with that. This Mystery is designed to veil the truth of your divinity and the existence of only One so that that One can have experience. It is through giving you a mind that is programmed in the ways that it is programmed that this is accomplished. So, the catch is that you are programmed to choose the ego over Essence until a time comes in your evolution for the realization of the truth to surface.

Given that you are reading this now, it is highly likely that the time is approaching for this realization, if it has not already arrived. When the time

comes to awaken, Essence calls to you in a number of ways, and you begin to experience it more often and for longer periods of time. What we will be exploring is some of the many ways the Divine calls to you and makes itself known. Some of these ways are so obvious that they are overlooked or discounted. Other ways require diligent choosing to look before you see the Divine's face.

This desire to experience the Divine and the choice to look for it come, of course, from the Divine itself, because there is no other. At a certain point in a person's evolution, the Divine seeks itself. It calls to itself and awakens itself so that it can live and breathe more fully through that body, mind, and personality. It beckons itself Home. In the coming chapters, we are going to take a look at some of the ways it does this. But first, it is important to realize that the Divine is everywhere and in everything, including within every experience.

Everywhere You Look

There is nowhere that the Divine is not. Stop a moment and really take this truth in, because the mind has a very different perception. If really grasped, this truth will change your life. Everything you see, everything and everyone that exists, and everything that happens is a manifestation of the Divine. The Divine is not only behind every good act but every evil one, which is what happens when the Divine is lost in fear and the illusion of being separate. The Divine is both the perpetrator and the victim, the lover and the hater. It plays every role that has ever been played because there is no other. There is only the illusion of other.

Imagine that—there is no other! The mind is so good at imagining, but it has difficulty imagining this because it goes against its programming. So when Oneness is experienced, as it is momentarily many times even in one day, it is not acknowledged. It goes unnoticed, unappreciated by the mind. Worse than that—Oneness is rejected by the egoic mind because acknowledging it would threaten its existence. The ego doesn't exist in Oneness; it can only exist in separateness. It is created by and perpetuates separation. That is the very definition of the ego. The ego and Oneness are at odds, or so it seems. However, Oneness designed it that way, so Oneness has no problem with the ego, although the ego has a problem with Oneness.

Everywhere it looks, the ego sees separation. It translates all the differences it sees as separation: The ego sees a tree, and because the tree is different from the ego's image of itself, it sees itself as separate from the tree. But is that true? Where did this definition of self come from, which sees anything that is different as separate from itself?

It is the ego's own definition that creates the idea of separation: Different equals separation. The ego sees boundaries between things and people. It even creates boundaries conceptually in terms of time and by holding particular beliefs. This is just how the egoic mind digests life. All of these differences are seen by the ego as potentially dangerous and problematic. It is constantly on the defense, trying to protect itself from everything out there that is different from itself. Its world is full of fear, anxiety, jealousy, hatred, anger, and pain. Hence, this viewpoint and the sense of being separate is at the base of all suffering.

But reality is not as the ego supposes. There are no boundaries. There is no separate self in opposition to the world. There is only the Self—the Divine—creating each moment fresh from itself. Everything is the Divine

expressing itself as tree, as dog, as person, as thought, as emotion, as light, as sound. No boundaries. No one. Only One. Only the Divine creating and expressing itself through life.

CHAPTER 2

The Windows to the Soul

Seeing Radiance

If the Divine had a face, it would be a radiant one. How do we know? Because its reflection on the physical plane is light and radiance and because that is what you see when the Divine, as Essence, looks out from your eyes. The world looks different when you are awake and aligned with Essence. It shines, it glows, it shimmers, it sparkles. People, plants, animals, and objects radiate the light of Being. They always have, but not everyone sees it. The egoic mind doesn't. It is too busy comparing, judging, labeling, and evaluating what it sees to notice the radiance. When Essence looks out of your eyes, however, everything shimmers and shines.

This seeing is not like the usual seeing. It is subtler, but it is still experienced as seeing. It is as if the usual seeing becomes infused with light: The radiance of the Divine spills out of everything. It erases all boundaries and reveals that all is light. All is itself as light. All of creation shimmers as One Being.

Just as the objects in a painting belong to the painting rather than to themselves, the distinctions between objects are no longer seen as real, but rather as part of the design within a larger whole, which contains them. The painting would not be the same were anything left out. So it is with life: The differences create the Whole; they do not stand apart from it. Furthermore,

as in a painting, everything in life is made from the same substance. It is all the Divine.

The mind sees boundaries between the objects in a painting. But by stepping back, the picture as a whole can be experienced, and that is what makes art powerful. Those who love art do not pick it apart and analyze it but respond to it emotionally and spiritually. So it is with life: The mind picks it apart, and the Heart responds to it spiritually and emotionally (with love).

To see this radiance requires the lenses of perception to be purified, that is, cleansed of the conditioning that perceives boundaries between objects and, moreover, cleansed of the mind's tendency to evaluate what it sees according to its conditioning. Eyes that are directed by the egoic mind look for validation of the ego's viewpoint and threats to its safety and identity. The ego views the world and its contents (including people) from the standpoint of how they will affect it according to its values and goals: Will it advance my goals or not? The ego doesn't see purely and misses so much as a result. It is busy with its own inner mental world, not the real world. When it does see the real world, it is through the lens of desire: Will it get me what I want?

The process of spiritual evolution is a gradual cleansing of the lenses of perception. People gradually come to see more radiance and less according to the ego's desires and goals. This coincides with greater happiness, peace, and contentment with life. The quieter the egoic mind becomes and the less dominant its presence, the happier you become. This evolution takes place over your many lifetimes. The endpoint of this evolution is radiance itself, that is, not only do you see radiance everywhere but you become radiant.

Being Radiant

As the lenses of perception become purified, the gateway to your soul—the Divine—is opened, and the Divine begins to shine forth. It does this through the eyes. Once what comes into the eyes is no longer being filtered and distorted by the egoic mind, the eyes become the means by which the Divine receives the world and, in turn, touches it.

The Divine receives the world and everything about it with acceptance and without judgment. It loves the world. After all, it is itself, and it has no reason to reject it. It loves creation for the possibilities it provides for experience. Through creation, the Divine has the opportunity to interact with itself, which as Oneness was not possible. What a great adventure and experiment! Not even Oneness knows what its creations, who have lost touch with Oneness to some extent, will do.

This love for the world can be seen in the eyes of those who are in touch with Essence, and it is seen as radiance, love, peace, and joy. Those who see this in someone's eyes are attracted to it because love, peace, and joy are all anyone really wants. All of the seeking and striving on the part of the ego is an attempt to acquire love, peace, and joy—in short, happiness. The ego just makes the mistake of looking for happiness in the wrong places. In fact, the egoic mind is the only thing in the way of happiness. It is the problem, not the solution. When the egoic mind is quieted, all there is, is love, peace, and joy—happiness.

That truth is apparent in the eyes of those who are in touch with Essence. They convey this truth, which they have discovered, to others through their eyes. In addition, looking into their eyes can cause others to drop into Essence and experience the same love, peace, contentment, and

joy, which is the nature of Essence. Wisdom, kindness, and good acts flow from Essence as well. Once the lenses of perception become clear, you become a conduit and a catalyst for peace, love, and joy in the world.

The biggest clue to the mystery of who you really are is in the eyes. The Divine gives the secret away by appearing in the eyes. Nowhere else is the Divine more apparent than in the eyes of those who have already discovered the secret: There is only one Being here! When you look into another's eyes, you can feel your commonality with them, your Oneness. You do not have to be enlightened to have this experience, and either does the other person. Oneness shines through in the eyes of everyone.

Eyes can bring you Home if you allow them to. If you allow yourself to drop the thoughts that intervene between you and another for just a moment, then there You are—right there in the other's eyes! What a surprise. People experience this most often during sex and with others they love deeply, such as with their children and pets because their defenses and tendency to judge are diminished. Gazing into another's eyes while affirming your Oneness with them can help bring about the experience of Oneness.

Often, all that is needed to experience Essence is the willingness to. Essence is available in every moment. You just have to notice it and not turn away. People are much more willing to do this with those they already love, but it is possible to experience Essence and Essence's love with anyone if you choose to see the truth about them.

Even just one person who is doing this in a room full of people can change the atmosphere because Essence is contagious: Essence brings out Essence in others. If you align with Essence, you will become a catalyst for peace, love, and joy in the world. Have you noticed how contagious anger

and negativity are? Fortunately, love is equally contagious and a much more rewarding experience.

Practice cultivating loving interactions with others by choosing to see their divine nature, no matter what they are doing or saying or how they look, and you will not only live in peace and joy but you will bring others to peace and joy. Just by noticing the Divine in their eyes, this transformation in you and in others can take place.

It really is this simple, but the egoic mind doubts this. It will come up with all sorts of reasons to discount this and avoid doing this. It doesn't believe the Divine exists. Where is the proof? it asks. It is afraid of what it sees in the eyes of others. It doesn't know what to think of this. It has no words or explanations for this because it doesn't fit into its paradigm or even into most religious belief systems. The ego doesn't believe there is a Mystery here because the Mystery is not something that can be quantified. All it knows is what it wants, and that becomes the reason for doing and saying what it does.

Moving from the Ego to Essence

Everyone experiences Essence several times a day, but the experience is often so brief that it doesn't affect the egoic state of consciousness most people live their lives in. When Essence is experienced for longer periods of time, this can shift you from ego-identification to identification with Essence, which is the natural state. The more you experience Essence, the easier it is to choose it, so you naturally move (over the course of your many lifetimes) from ego-identification to identification with Essence because Essence is a much more pleasant state. To live more constantly in alignment

with Essence, the habit of ego-identification needs to be broken, which is not so easy.

You are programmed very strongly to pay attention to the egoic mind and believe what it tells you about yourself, others, and life. Most people's lives unfold according to the egoic mind's ideas, desires, and demands—their conditioning. You are programmed to believe the ideas that run through your mind. These ideas are a mix of useful, factual information and outdated, prejudiced, and incorrect information and beliefs. Most people accept everything that runs through their mind as true, without questioning it. This brings a great deal of suffering because happiness cannot be found in following the false beliefs and values of the ego. Unhappiness is the certain result of allowing the egoic mind to run your life.

Essence sees life more truly. When you are identified with Essence, you see life more as it really is, without the filter of your conditioning. From Essence, life is interesting, challenging, fun, beautiful, touching, and rich. Experiences are not categorized, judged, or labeled as good or bad. They just are, in all of their richness and complexity, because in truth, a thousand stories could be told about any experience and these would still not contain the whole experience. The egoic mind attempts to define experience in words (according to its conditioning), which divorces you from the complexity and reality of the experience. It turns experiences into ideas, which sap the life out of experience. Living from the mind is like eating a picture of food instead of the real thing. No wonder so many feel so empty and unfulfilled. Only reality truly satisfies.

Seeing from Essence's Eyes

Seeing from Essence's eyes is a lot like how very young children see. They do not yet have the degree of conditioning, facts, and concepts that older children and adults have, which filter and color experience. The interchange between them and their environment is much purer. When you are aligned with Essence rather than with the ego, the egoic mind's conditioning still exists, but it doesn't interfere with experience as it used to. It is recognized for what it is—conditioning that is mostly untrue and not helpful.

For the most part, this conditioning takes you down the path to unhappiness, not happiness. So, unhappiness and the desire to be truly happy ultimately drive the choice to become aligned with Essence. What stands between you and happiness is essentially just a choice—the choice to be aligned with Essence rather than the ego by saying yes to its perceptions rather than the ego's.

Essence perceives life as a whole and as essentially good. It accepts and loves everything simply because it *is*—because it exists. It doesn't demand life to be any way other than it is. When you are accepting and loving toward life and your experience, you are experiencing Essence and its qualities: love, peace, contentment, joy, and acceptance.

If you stay in this place of acceptance long enough, you will begin to notice the radiance that accompanies the love, peace, and joy you are experiencing. There is a visual accompaniment to being aligned with Essence, which gives the objects of this world a shimmery glow and subtle fluidity. Objects are experienced more as flowing into each other rather than having distinct boundaries. The more you pay attention to this subtle visual

experience, the longer it lasts and the deeper it becomes. Usually, it is only noticed briefly, but it actually never disappears. Anytime you turn your attention to it, there it is. You can train yourself to see this way constantly, and once your identity shifts more permanently to Essence, that is the experience.

Seeing in this way produces a softness in your eyes and in your demeanor because Essence's stance toward life is nonviolent and peaceful. It takes action when action is called for, but it doesn't try to force or manipulate life to conform to ideas, as the ego does, because Essence is free of conditioned ideas about the way things should be. To Essence, the way things are is exactly how they should be.

Essence may have intentions for the next moment, but it doesn't try to change the current moment. Essence does influence and shape life, but during it and not after the fact. It flows with life and shapes it while life is moving where it is moving. This is very different from the ego, which opposes and tries to change nearly everything that is arising and passing in every moment.

Those who are identified with the ego often have a hardness and a dullness in their eyes, which reflects this determination of will and a lack of contact with reality. Nevertheless, Essence shines in these eyes too, behind this hardness and dullness. It flickers in and out, depending on how intensely they are involved with ideas about how things should be. When they are more quiet mentally and relaxed physically, there Essence is in their eyes. Essence is behind everyone's eyes, but it is covered over when mental activity is very strong. You can actually see people thinking.

When you are aligned with Essence, it becomes very apparent that Essence is behind your eyes, not only to others but to yourself because you

feel it there. Essence is felt as Consciousness, or Awareness, looking through your eyes. It feels as if this Awareness is who you are and your body is just a vehicle for moving in the world. Although this Awareness is not limited to the area of the eyes and head, it is often strongly felt there because it does tend to become localized there.

When you are aligned with Essence, you know yourself as that localized point of Consciousness that is connected to your particular body, mind, and personality. It is clear that the body, mind, and personality are not who you are but just something that makes it possible for Essence to function in the world. This detachment from the body, mind, and personality makes it possible for you to see the connectedness and perfection of all of life. It makes it possible for you to truly love.

When someone is aligned with Essence, his or her eyes have a look to them that is very recognizable but difficult to describe. They have a depth, intensity, and fire about them and a piercing, yet gentle, and infinite quality. An actual energy is transmitted from this gaze, or rather from Essence through the eyes, which can bring others into alignment with Essence to the extent that they are willing to have this experience. This is well known in spiritual circles headed by spiritual masters or gurus. Photos also have this capacity for transmission, even ones of deceased spiritual masters.

In part, this transmission is made possible by the desire and openness of the recipient, who has put himself or herself in a position of receiving by being in the presence of a spiritual master or guru. Doing this is an affirmation of the willingness to experience Essence and align with it, and this prayer is always answered, at least to some extent.

The eyes are one of the ways the Divine brings itself Home. They are the calling cards. They indicate the existence of the Divine as well as

transmit a frequency that causes those who are ready and open to resonate with their divine nature. So, the eyes not only provide a visual experience of the Divine, but also have the ability to shift people's consciousness.

Those who have experienced this from the eyes know the truth on a deep level and need no more convincing; while those who have not, have difficulty believing what they have not experienced, and understandably so. And yet, the Divine is not only experienced this way but in many other ways in this world, as we will see, if only the egoic mind would notice and open to those revelations. One way or another, the Divine will make the truth known to everyone, whether it is in this lifetime or some other.

CHAPTER 3

Love Is Everywhere

Love Is Your Nature

You can tell that love is your nature because love is what you experience when you are still and your mind is quiet. Then, the Heart naturally opens, and it expresses itself as love. This love is not the same as romantic love; it is more like acceptance, joy, gratitude, and contentment with life. It is subtler, softer, gentler, and less personal than romantic love, which has a giddiness and an excitement about it. With romantic love, you expect the world; with this love, you know yourself as the world. With romantic love, your focus is on the other; with this love, you know yourself as the other. With romantic love, there are two; with this love, there is only One.

Your natural state is this state of love, acceptance, peace, contentment, and quietude. Gone is the need to get and keep and improve and think. In this Stillness, there is little desire for thought or anything else. This is what it is like to be aligned with Essence because these qualities—love, acceptance, peace, and contentment—are qualities of Essence. When you experience them, it means you have dropped into Essence and are no longer identified with the egoic mind, which can be recognized by the opposite—a lack of love, acceptance, peacefulness, and contentment.

So, at your core, you are these qualities, which are sometimes summed up in the word Love. You can also discover this by observing others, who have these same qualities at their core. Love is at everyone's core, although it is often covered over by identification with the egoic mind. This is the usual state of consciousness, but by no means the true or natural state of consciousness. The natural state of consciousness is Love, and you are here to discover this. Your programming, which gives you the impression that you are the ego and the mind, conceals this truth.

Love is the glue that holds the universe together. This is an esoteric statement, which cannot entirely be understood by your mind at this level in your evolution. You will have to take this on faith. Once you do, you begin to see it everywhere. Your beliefs have a powerful impact on your experience of life. They filter your perceptions. For example, if you believe that love is everywhere, which it is, then you will begin to experience this. If, on the other hand, you believe that evil is everywhere, then that is what you will see, no matter how much love is before your eyes.

To help you take in the truth that love is everywhere, we will point it out to you. It is important to acknowledge this truth because this counteracts the ego's assumption that it is not everywhere and that life is not safe. The importance of counteracting the ego's negative beliefs is that, unless you do, you are likely to remain identified with it. To wake up to your divine nature and live in alignment with that instead of the ego, you need to train yourself to see life as Essence sees it rather than as the ego sees it. The more you do this, the more Essence will begin to live through you, and you will express that in the world instead of the ego. The reward for this is true happiness and peace and the capacity to bring others to true happiness and peace.

Every Act Is an Act of Love

Mother Theresa is remembered and revered for her great service to humanity and her ability to see the Divine in everyone. When people think of love and the service that naturally flows from love, she often comes to mind. However, love has many other faces. It is visible in the simplest gestures and acts performed by very ordinary people living very ordinary lives: Love pushes the child on a swing, love drives safely, love shops for food, love listens, love talks, love waves, love touches, love smiles, love laughs, love kisses, love sings, love plays, and loves creates.

In fact, everything that people do is an act of love. Even those who choose to harm or steal from others are doing so out of love for themselves because they believe they need to do this to be safe or happy. Not all acts appear loving, but at their core, those who do them have the intention to do good at least for themselves, although possibly at the expense of others.

Harmful acts are attempts, although misguided ones, on the part of those who do them to preserve their own life or to get something they feel they need to be happy. As people evolve, they become more concerned about preserving the lives of those close to them as well as themselves. This circle eventually widens to include all of humanity, perhaps even at the expense of their own life.

If you were able to see love in every action, there would be no cause for judgment, which only leads to more separation, hatred, retribution, and suffering in the world. Dropping all judgments doesn't mean you would allow evil and not stand up for justice. Rather, it means you would not be contributing to the separation and hatred that supports and feeds the sense the ego has that it must oppose others to keep itself safe.

When egos receive love and compassion, they resonate with it and express love, perhaps not immediately if there is a great deal of wounding, but eventually. Love heals and it helps people evolve out of the fear involved in ego-identification into the peace of Essence. On the other hand, judgment, hatred, and retribution separate people and confirm the ego's suspicion that it needs to do everything in its power to protect itself and get what it wants from a hostile world. This attitude is contagious, and it creates a very unpleasant world. You can do your part to turn this around by seeing love in every act and by remembering that every human being is inherently good.

Doing this allows you to feel compassion for the suffering that person is creating for himself or herself and everyone else involved because of ignorance of the truth. As a result, you become more interested in dispelling the ignorance and healing those involved than judging or punishing the wrongdoer. The human condition is such that people are not able to choose well because they do not understand who they really are and what is needed to find true happiness. They make choices that bring suffering to themselves and others. But this is all part of spiritual evolution. No one ever became enlightened who wasn't first lost in the illusion of separation and hurting himself or herself and others. Everyone passes through this stage in evolution, and the responsibility falls on those who have already accomplished this to help those who lack understanding.

Love Is All Around

As difficult as it may be to see love in certain acts and to see the goodness in certain people, it is not difficult to find loving acts and loving

people in this world. Love shines through in everyone to one degree or another because it cannot be hidden or suppressed. Some have discovered the joy of loving acts and practice love consciously. Although most people may not be operating at this level, most do try to be loving to others, especially those close to them. In nearly every interaction, you see people making the effort to be loving. Politeness, smiles, consideration, helpfulness, receptivity, and attention are all ways people show their love and good will. Just because these expressions are not always pure doesn't diminish the fact that love is driving them.

Although the ego is motivated to get its needs met and most people are identified with it, the Divine is alive and well within everyone and inspiring every person to express love. What interferes with this is the tendency for people to pay attention to the egoic mind instead, which is generally judging or thinking about itself rather than thinking about how it can express love.

The mind can be trained to counteract the ego's tendencies. This is what happens in those who dedicate themselves to expressing love: They decide to do this, and they choose again and again to express love rather than follow the egoic mind's suggestions. Very few are this committed to love, but that is where spiritual evolution leads. It leads to an ongoing expressing of love once a person wakes up to his or her true nature and becomes more aligned with Essence.

Attention

Giving attention is a very basic form of love, which can be seen everywhere, and a way that love can be expressed very simply in the world.

What you give your attention to is what you love. If you are giving your attention to the egoic mind, then you are loving that and joining with that. If you are giving your attention to others, then you are loving them and joining with them. Asking, What am I giving my attention to? can be an excellent spiritual practice, and it will help you train yourself away from the habit of identifying with the egoic mind.

Giving your attention to others is often at odds with giving your attention to your mind because the mind is not interested in others. It is only interested in itself, its thoughts, its opinions, and its perceptions. To give your attention to others is a gift of love because to do this, you must override the ego's tendency to give attention to itself and its needs. It takes some effort to overcome the programming to be self-focused and to become more other-focused. When people do this, they are choosing love and expressing love in a most basic and simple way.

Giving attention to someone can be a powerful force for good. When you give attention to someone, you are channeling love energy to them, regardless of how you might feel about them from the level of your personality. The choice to give attention to others is a loving choice. It connects them with the love energy that is their nature and yours, and that is a gift. This all happens on very subtle levels, but it is still felt by people, who welcome attention and are often deeply touched by someone paying attention to them. Giving people attention is a way of acknowledging your Oneness with them, and it helps catalyze the experience of Oneness, however subtle it might be.

Giving others attention causes them to experience love, and that comes back to you and goes out to others as well, so giving your attention to others is ultimately much more rewarding than giving your attention to the

mind. Everyone wants love more than anything else because being in touch with your true nature is satisfying, unlike the other things the ego tries to attain, which bring only fleeting satisfaction. That is why giving attention to others becomes easier the more it is practiced.

Giving attention is equally rewarding when you give it to whatever you are doing. The egoic mind draws you into its unreal world of thought. It entices you to pay attention to it with juicy thoughts about the past and fantasies about the future and thoughts that build up the ego and sense of being special (which often involve tearing others down). Giving your attention, instead, to whatever is going on in the moment is an act of loving life rather than rejecting it by escaping into the mental world created by the ego.

Whenever you give your attention to what is actually going on in the present moment, you are rewarded by the experience of love, peace, and contentment. Giving your attention to real life rather than to the mind aligns you with love, which is what everyone longs. However, you are programmed to move away from the moment. To counteract this, you have to choose to give your attention to what is Real. When you do that, you become free of the suffering caused by the egoic mind and its ceaseless discontent, negativity, and judgment. All you have ever had to do to be free of this suffering is to turn your attention away from the mind and onto the present moment.

The present moment is where your true nature and all of the qualities of your true nature can be experienced. It is the only place where it is possible to experience real love, acceptance, contentment, peace, and joy. And all you have to do is put your attention on what is happening *now* instead of on the mind.

Acceptance

One of the reasons people turn away from the moment and the peace and joy that reside there is that they are programmed to reject life as it is. They want life on their own terms, but it can never be that way. Even if the ego could have life on its own terms, which it does briefly and occasionally, it would soon want more or different or better than that. The ego doesn't accept life, which is one reason it doesn't want to give it attention.

The ego would rather give attention to its fantasies, dreams, memories, and even fears than to the actual reality of any moment, which in addition to being imperfect (from the ego's point of view), is impossible to control or predict. This lack of control and unpredictability is deeply disturbing to the ego. Touching the Real makes the ego very uncomfortable because it is faced with the truth—that it is not the one making life happen. As long as the ego remains in its made-up reality, it can play at being king. It pretends that it can make life go its way. It denies the obvious reality and chooses to believe what it wants to about reality.

Accepting whatever is happening—whatever it is—brings you into alignment with Essence and into a state of real happiness, peace, and contentment. This is immediately uncomfortable for the ego, so this doesn't usually last long. The egoic mind finds fault with even peace, declaring it boring, and drums up a problem to think about and solve. If you agree with its assessment of the moment, then you are back in identification with it instead of with Essence. Fortunately, acceptance can bring you right back into the moment. Once you are aware of this, acceptance can be used as a pathway to Essence.

Acceptance is synonymous with love. Love accepts. You could say that that is the definition of love. So when you accept what is happening, you land in Love's territory. However, to stay there, you have to keep accepting what is happening, and that is challenging because the mind comes into nearly every moment with a reason to leave it. You must say no to the mind again and again before its hold is loosened. The more you say no to it, the weaker it gets; while the more you say yes to it, the stronger it gets.

This takes diligence, commitment, and choice, and you are the only one who can make this commitment and this choice. For this reason, your spiritual evolution is in your hands to some extent. Other factors determine how and when you will unfold spiritually, but how fast you advance is largely up to you and your choices.

Accepting what is happening is not as difficult as you may think. You only have to accept what is happening in *this* moment, not in every moment throughout time. The ego has difficulty accepting what is happening in the moment because it spins a negative story about what this means for future moments. For instance, if you are feeling sick, it causes you to suffer over this by telling you how awful this will be and what a negative impact it will have on your life. The stories it spins are all lies. It never predicts the future accurately.

Accepting what is happening in the moment is also not as difficult as you may think because accepting it does not mean you have to like it. All you have to do is accept that you don't like what is happening, if that is the case. Accepting this moment just means that you are willing to let it be the way it is. After all, what other choice do you have, since it is the way it is?

The only other choice is to argue with it, complain about it, try to ignore it, or try to change it, which is what the ego does in nearly every

moment. This is a recipe for suffering, and it doesn't change what is happening; it only makes it unpleasant. By allowing whatever is happening to be happening, you align yourself with life rather than oppose it, and that makes every moment, regardless of what is happening, peaceful.

When the moment is okay just the way it is and your energy is not taken up in opposing it, you can really be present to it. What you discover is that every moment has much more to it than what you like or don't like about it. It is rich with complexity, dimension, and beauty. The egoic mind paints the moment as black or white, good or bad. It has a simplistic view of what is happening according to its likes and dislikes, but the moment is not simple in the least. It is interestingly changeable, unpredictable, and intelligent. Who knows what will happen next? You never know. From the perspective of Essence, life's unpredictability is delicious, exciting, and fascinating. This is what you feel too when you are in acceptance.

Essence accepts. So when you are accepting, you are expressing Essence; and when you experience acceptance from others, you are experiencing Essence. Think of all the times in one day you are either accepting or experiencing acceptance from others. Every time this happens, Essence—the Divine—is showing up in your life. Love is everywhere in the form of acceptance. You accept the sky, you accept gravity, you accept your breathing, you accept the color of the trees, you accept the silence between sounds, you accept the space between objects—you accept the majority of what is. This is you loving life and allowing it to be the way that it is.

The mind interrupts this peace, this love, by telling you something is not right, not good, not desirable: That dog should not be barking, that sun should not be so hot, that air should not be so windy. If you agree with the

mind, you suffer. If you don't, you stay in Essence, in allowing whatever is to be the way that it is.

The egoic mind will tell you that accepting life means you won't ever do anything. It tries to scare you out of acceptance by making it equal to passivity, laziness, and a lack of discrimination, which it deems dangerous to survival. Acceptance is dangerous to the ego's survival, but it is not dangerous to survival. It is a more effective strategy for survival than anything the ego can offer.

Acceptance is love, and love connects you with everything because it connects you with who you really are, which is everything. What could be more beneficial to survival than being connected to everything and knowing that you are everything? Is there any reason that You, as the Divine, would not take care of yourself, as the creation? You are being taken care of and so is everyone else. The ego not only cannot take credit for your survival, it has interfered more than it has helped.

Something else besides the ego is living your life, and the more you allow it to, the more it will take over. Essence has been living through you and expressing itself through you as much as you have allowed it to. Every person is an expression of Essence to a greater or lesser extent. The Divine is moving, speaking, doing, creating, laughing, playing, and working through each of you to the extent that you allow it to, but it is there *in everyone*. If you want to have an experience of the Divine, you are having it! And so is everyone else.

You are not separate from the Divine. The ego is the sense that you are a separate person and the Divine is something apart from that, but that is just an idea. The ego is just the idea "I exist as a separate entity." It is not true. You are the Divine in disguise as a human being. The more you come

to see that you are not who you *think* you are, the more you will experience who you really are and who everyone else really is. The Divine is everywhere.

CHAPTER 4

The Divine in Action

The Divine Lives Through You

The ego is not the only thing moving this body of yours. Many times in one day, the Divine moves you to take action and speak, while you are under the impression that *you* are doing these things. You are programmed to feel that you are separate, and part of this programming is the sense that *you* are doing what you are doing rather than being moved by an Intelligence greater than this *you*.

Many of you do have a sense that you are being moved through life, which being aligned with Essence feels like. The more you are aligned with Essence, the more you feel this. However, most people are identified with the ego most of the time, and for them, the sense of being moved by something beyond them is more rare and fleeting. Nevertheless, they feel this too, if only occasionally. When this is felt, it is very rewarding. Moving through life with so little resistance feels good. It is a relief from the usual struggle that accompanies ego-identification.

When action or speech is inspired by Essence, it flows spontaneously and easily. You feel compelled to do or say something, without thinking about it ahead of time. You don't question it; you just do it. This action or speech feels effortless, natural, and authentic—without ego. It feels like it

isn't *you* doing or speaking, but more like it is coming through you, and you are just the vehicle for it. The result feels good, clean, and right.

Everyone has had this experience, but not everyone acknowledges this as the Divine, or Essence, moving through them. The more this is recognized, the more this will happen. The Divine expresses itself through you only as much as you allow it. Those who recognize divine Presence are more likely to express it. Those who do not, tend to find this experience unsettling and disturbing. Because they have experienced something they do not understand, they distrust it and are more likely to interfere with it in the future. Gradually, the Divine makes itself known in every life, and it patiently waits for you to be ready for this experience.

Meanwhile, it does whatever it can to influence your choices. Since the egoic mind is the prominent voice for most people, it has to find a way to circumvent it or work with it. So, that is what it does: It works within the life the ego is trying to create. Mostly, Essence speaks to you through your intuition and by nudging you toward action. Your choices are based on either listening to the egoic mind or to your intuition and these nudges. These two different voices, or impetuses toward action and speech, coexist. You get to choose which one you will respond to.

Most people are used to listening to thoughts rather than intuition, so the ego ends up shaping decisions more than Essence. As you evolve, this shifts, and the egoic mind becomes less prominent, while Essence becomes more prominent. This happens, in part, because you discover that following the egoic mind does not bring real happiness and fulfillment, while following the intuition (when it is accurately followed) does.

As you evolve, you become better at interpreting intuition, since it is developed through experience. Through trial and error, you learn how to

decipher Essence's communication. Eventually, you will become so good at it that you will only depend on the mind for practical things, which the mind was designed for, such as reading maps or following directions.

Seeing the Divine in Your Actions

What moves your hands? What breathes your body? What laughs? What wakes up? What jumps out of bed in the morning? These kinds of actions are mostly spontaneous. For the most part, you do not decide to do these things; they just happen. A lot just happens. Think about it. Notice how many of the things you do just happen without giving them a thought. Many of the things you do without thinking are inspired by Essence, as it lives through you. Some of your automatic reactions and responses are conditioning, but just notice all the times they are not. Where do these spontaneous actions come from? Why do you get out of bed one moment and not another? Why do you pick up the phone to call someone one moment and not another? What determines when you do these things?

The Divine has more to do with the timing of your actions than you might realize. You know you will get out of bed sometime, because that is what people do in the morning, but why in that second? Maybe it was a decision and you complied with that, but if it just happened without making a decision, who chose to get up then? The mind chooses much of the time, but begin to notice all of the times the mind does not choose, but action is still taken and words are spoken. When you do this, you will see that there is a very great mystery here, and that mystery points to who you really are.

There is something else living this life, which has been masquerading as the *you* that you think you are. This *you* is just a thought, while this

something else is real, but it is not a being or a thing, and it is not separate from anything else. It cannot be touched, seen, or defined because any definition could not contain the whole truth. It is too vast and mysterious to comprehend, and you are not meant to. Your mind cannot comprehend this Mystery, and that is what keeps it a mystery.

However, as with any great mystery, there are clues that point to it. One of these clues lies in this mystery of who chooses to act or speak. It is clear enough when the mind chooses to act or speak because thoughts precede this choice, but what about all the times when you act or speak without thought or conditioning driving those actions or speech? If you pay close attention, you will discover that you act or speak spontaneously more often than as a result of some thought you had.

These spontaneous actions and speech can tell you a lot about your true nature and what this Mystery intends for this life. You will notice that these spontaneous actions and speech never harm anyone but, rather, support and enhance life. You will notice that love, kindness, gentleness, joy, and truth are expressed by this Mystery that is the real you. You will notice that it loves life and doesn't resist jumping into it and taking action when that is needed. It speaks when speaking is called for, and it speaks with wisdom. When words are not necessary, it is silent. When action is not necessary, it rests. The Divine expresses itself even in the absence of action and speech. Sometimes it just rests in whatever else is happening without intervening. It moves in and out of interaction with life: Sometimes it acts and sometimes it is still, but it is always present.

This Presence can be felt, whether it is actually moving through you, moving through someone else, or just resting quietly. It is felt as energy, consciousness, or awareness, as if someone is present and looking on, either

out through your eyes or someone else's or presiding over life from a distance. For many, this Presence is subtle; for others, it is felt strongly. As you become more aware of it and acknowledge it, the experience of Presence strengthens. Eventually, your sense of self becomes identified with it rather than with the ego. You come to know yourself as that Presence (Essence) rather than the *you* that you think of yourself as.

Until you come to see yourself as Presence and identify with that, you experience it as something outside yourself, as if God is watching over you. This stage naturally precedes the discovery of yourself as that Presence. This stage acts as a bridge between identification with the ego and identification with Essence. During this stage, the goodness of Essence is attributed to something outside yourself—God—rather than to yourself. The ego is more comfortable with this attribution because it still gets to remain intact. You still get to be someone with problems that need to be solved by the ego. Once the identity shifts from the ego to Essence, the ego loses its sense of reality and its power. It doesn't disappear, but it is no longer the center of consciousness, as that center shifts to Essence.

Seeing the Divine in the Actions of Others

The Divine is equally apparent in the actions of others, especially when that person is strongly aligned with Essence. When that happens, that person acts as a conduit for Essence, bringing those around him or her into alignment as well. Actions from Essence are not only satisfying and fulfilling, they are powerful. They have the power to draw others into the experience of the divine Self, and for those who are not used to experiencing this, this is profound indeed.

You can recognize Essence in action in others by how you feel around them. You feel uplifted, positive, happy, and strong. Life feels good and right, and what they are doing or saying feels good and right. You may feel moved or touched by something they said. You may even feel chills or tingles, which seem to confirm your feelings about what they said. These kinds of actions and communications happen more frequently than you may realize, but once you become more aware of them, you see that they are happening all around you.

The Divine works through you and through others to make the world go around. Through others, it brings you information, insight, comfort, help, truth, wisdom, healing, support, and whatever else you need to evolve as you are meant to. You do the same for others. The Divine uses you to express and accomplish what it intends to, and it uses others the same way. You don't have to be enlightened to be used this way; you only have to be alive.

You have always been a vehicle for the Divine to some degree, mostly without being aware of it. Once you become aware of this phenomenon, you can ask to serve more this way, and this will happen more consciously. There is no limit to what can be accomplished when the ego is set aside and you are aligned with that which moves all of creation.

Through each of you, the Divine works uniquely and distinctly. Everyone has certain talents and strengths that are being developed and expressed in this lifetime. The Divine, through Essence, has a plan for you for this lifetime, and it is unique to you. The Divine works through every person differently, depending on his or her skills and talents. It will use you in the ways it intends for this lifetime, and this experience is what will most fulfill you.

Some plans have very simple goals, such as learning to be a better mother or developing musical talent, while others have more grand goals, such as helping to solve the population problem or discovering a cure for a disease. Whatever your plan is, it will be conveyed to you by Essence through your intuition and through urges to take certain actions. Essence guides you to fulfill its plan by causing you to be attracted to certain activities and not to others. You will feel drawn to learning or doing whatever you need to fulfill your plan.

The ego can interfere with this either by sidetracking you with other goals or through judgments or other disparaging remarks, which block you from moving in the direction that would be most fulfilling. Other people play this role as well. Those who are strongly identified with the ego, will try to tell you what you should and should not do, as if they know, because that is how the ego interacts with others.

The ego assumes a position of rightness, and it tries to impose its views on others. It doesn't experience or trust any other force in the universe but itself. It believes in relying on the mind for answers to not only simple, practical questions but to the question of how to live your life. Although the egoic mind is ill-equipped to give advice about life, it assumes that it is and that it must. Believing the mind leads many astray for a time, until Essence is once again able to bring its influence to bear. Essence nearly always prevails, at least to some extent. Very few are totally lost to the dictates of the egoic mind—fortunately.

The way you can tell whether your actions are aligned with the ego or with Essence is how you feel. Do you feel happy, hopeful, excited, and enlivened when you think about or pursue a certain direction? That is Essence saying yes to that. If you feel confused, unsure, negative, fearful,

and unexcited about a direction, then that direction is probably not right for you. Is your ego or someone else's telling you that you should do that? Following *shoulds* will never bring you happiness, while following the deeper drives of Essence will.

The ego creates desires, while Essence creates drives. These are very different. They are experienced differently, and they bring different results. When you follow the ego's desires, you learn, grow, and evolve as a result of the circumstances you create. You won't find any lasting happiness in fulfilling those desires, but some fulfillment and satisfaction may result from the growth and learning you gained. The Divine seeks experience, learning, and growth through you. It intends this, so it allows you to follow the ego's desires. The ego leads you to believe, however, that this is the route to happiness, which it is not.

Essence, on the other hand, produces drives to pursue certain goals and do certain things. Following these drives and accomplishing these goals brings deep fulfillment. Happiness is a byproduct because, in aligning yourself with Essence's goals, you also align yourself with Essence's qualities, and happiness is one of these. If you want a happy and fulfilled life, align your actions with Essence's intentions for you. This is not as hard as it might sound. Just listen to your intuition and Essence's nudges instead of the ego's *shoulds* and *should nots*.

Aligning Your Actions with Essence

Thinking is what most stands in the way of knowing what actions Essence would have you take. This is true for two reasons: You believe that thinking has the answers to how to live your life, so you look there for them;

and when you are busy thinking, you don't notice the intuition and nudges that come from Essence. Furthermore, once you become invested in a certain direction, the mind often makes it difficult to change course. The ego doesn't like to be wrong, and it doesn't change its ideas easily. It tends to stay true to its ideas, even when there is evidence to the contrary. The mind can be stubborn. Its determination to pursue a certain direction comes in part from the desire to prove that its choice was a good one. Changing course is too much like an admission of defeat.

Determination that comes from Essence, on the other hand, is fueled more by inspiration than willfulness. It comes from a deep sense of dedication, regardless of how things might turn out, and marked by a willingness to live in the unknown, take risks, and make sacrifices. It is driven more by passion, and action is taken for the joy of it and less for the possible reward. There is a sense of needing to do something, which at times can seem irrational. The ego, on the other hand, is very rational about what it pursues, often pursuing things solely for the dream of a particular reward.

There is also a difference in how Essence and the ego pursue things. While Essence moves with the flow of life, taking advantage of opportunities that present themselves, the ego pushes and tries to make things happen on a particular timetable and according to its ideas. It makes a plan and tries to implement it. When you are aligned with Essence, on the other hand, you uncover Essence's plan and follow it as it naturally unfolds. *You* don't make the plan but, rather, tune into the plan that already exists. These are two very different ways of living life, and they bring very different experiences. Living in alignment with Essence brings much more happiness—and ease.

When you are aligned with Essence, action comes about naturally, organically (out of the moment and circumstances), easily, and clearly. When action comes from Essence, it is clear, positive, and usually carried out with ease. Things fall into place. When action comes from the ego, on the other hand, it is often confused and uncertain, although willful. It may run into unforeseen problems and roadblocks. The ego tends to disregard the current reality and focus on the desired outcome, sometimes to the exclusion of important facts. The ego sees what it wants to see and makes choices based on that, so its choices are often not wise or well timed.

To discover Essence's plan, you have to pay attention to what is coming out of the moment because the plan is unfolding in each moment. You can't go to a book and read about it. You can't figure it out by thinking about it. You can only discover it by paying attention to now—to this moment. What is happening? What drives are coming out of this moment? What do you feel moved to do now? What *are* you doing now?

You are never done asking these questions because each moment is new and different. To find out what to do next, you have to keep looking into *now*. However, it is best not to look into it with your mind. Don't think about it or tell a story about it. Rather, just notice what the *experience* is. What is moving? What are you experiencing? What thoughts or ideas give you joy when they arise? Those are the ones to follow. Where is your energy going? Where does it want to flow? Do that and then see what comes next. Then do that and see what comes next.

You can't know the plan ahead of time. It is revealed step by step in the moment. You have to trust it and keep following it. The egoic mind doesn't like this, so it will try to bring you back to its plan, but just keep

paying attention to the moment instead of the mind. You know you are on the right track when you feel joy. Let that be your guide.

The ego is guided by ideas, but what are ideas and where do they come from? How reliable can they be, really? You are programmed to believe your ideas are true and trustworthy, but are they really? Essence is far more trustworthy. It has brought you all the joy you have ever experienced. What has the mind brought you? Mostly pain. Once you see this, the choice is really clear, but you have to be willing to see this. There is a choice to be made.

CHAPTER 5

The Divine Speaks

Talking to the Divine

It is easy to talk to the Divine because you have a direct line to it. You are never apart from it. No matter how apart you feel, it is right here with you, sharing and participating in this life with you, because it is you and everything else. It doesn't abandon its creations but lives inside them, silently and unobtrusively. It makes itself known in every moment, but it is hidden from plain view by its subtlety and non-demanding nature, which is overshadowed by the prominence of the ego and the mind.

Because it is undetectable by your senses and incomprehensible to your mind, it is not felt to be real; and yet it created all that you consider real. It is the matrix behind all of life. You can't see it or touch it, but you can and do experience it. You are never not experiencing it because you are its hands, eyes, ears, legs, and mouths in the world. It moves you through life, has experience through you, and evolves as a result of these experiences.

It is more real than this *you* that you think you are, which is more like a dream the Divine conjured. The Divine allows the dreamer to manipulate the dream, but ultimately, it creates the dream and determines when this dream will end for the dreamer. It determines the setting, the general plot, and the characters this dreamer will meet, then it allows the dreamer to

respond as the dreamer will. There is free will inside this dream, although outside of it, there is only One will that chooses to have the experience of the dream, whatever that might be.

One characteristic of this dream is that the dreamer can realize it is a dream while still inside it. After that, he or she is freer to co-create with the Dream Maker. The dream goes better at this point because the dreamer makes wiser choices, has access to more resources and helpers, and has more power to influence the dream and its characters. The dreamer becomes more like a superhero in the midst of any trouble that arises because now the dreamer knows his or her true nature and no longer falls prey to fears and false ideas. The problems that arise are easily conquered because they are known to be unreal, created by one's own mind. The challenges brought by the dream are welcome and only serve to strength the dreamer.

One reason the dream goes well once the dreamer has realized that it is a dream is that the lines of communication between the dreamer and the Dream Maker are open: The dreamer talks to the Dream Maker, and the Dream Maker talks back. Before that, when the dreamer was unaware of the Dream Maker, he or she felt alone and did not ask for help. Help was available, but the dreamer didn't know it. The dreamer had to learn to ask for help and then listen for the answer. Once the dreamer did this, it made it possible to wake up out of the dream while still inside it.

The lines of communication between you and the Divine are always open, but until you open them on your end, you cannot receive the full benefit. If you don't know that communication is possible and already happening, then you will miss it because you won't be listening, and you won't be taking advantage of it by asking for help. The Divine communicates to you constantly, but when you are involved with the mind,

you miss it. When your mind is quiet and your body is still, you just might catch it, but if you don't believe it is real and helpful, you may disregard it.

One of the biggest steps in your evolution is accepting that such communication is possible. This is a real breakthrough for the Divine because it gives it an opportunity to make more of an impact on your life. Before this, the mind is expected to guide your life. After this, it is possible to see that something else is guiding your life. Moreover, you can begin to work with it to shape your life for the better. You will still have challenges, but they will be ones designed by the Divine for your growth, not problems your egoic mind has made up or actually created. The latter cause suffering and confusion, while the former are satisfying and rewarding when overcome.

It is more important to listen to the Divine than to talk to it because it is always conveying something to you whether you talk to it or not. Nevertheless, talking to the Divine—in particular, asking questions—sets the stage for listening and can bring you specific insights you might not ordinarily catch. It opens up the channel of communication and makes it more likely that you will receive the insight and understanding you need to move through life more easily. You can ask for guidance on specific issues in your life, and you will receive it.

For instance, if you are trying to make a decision, you can pose questions and wait for responses, which often come energetically, intuitively, and occasionally through actual words. The answers for any question change over time, so it is important to keep checking to see if the guidance you received in the past still holds true. In doing this, you are affirming your willingness to be guided and to set aside your ego's

perceptions and desires on a particular matter. This makes it possible to receive what will be most helpful to you at the time you ask the question.

Prayer is another word for talking to the Divine this way. But rather than pleading to God to deliver what *you* want, you ask the Divine to reveal what *it* wants. Those are two very different approaches to the Divine. One assumes that getting what you want is the goal, regardless of what is best for the Whole; the other asks the Divine to help you play your part in the Whole. The personal self is recognized as a vehicle, or an instrument, *for* the Whole rather than a separate entity pitted against it. You surrender your will to the Divine's because you recognize that what seems like your will actually belongs to the false self, the ego, and cannot be trusted and is not a worthy guide for your actions.

What makes this kind of prayer powerful is the underlying assumption that you are not the ego or the mind. In affirming your allegiance to the Whole rather than to the ego, you are affirming your desire to be aligned with Essence over the ego. When you pray for this, Essence responds and becomes more obviously present and active in your life. Eventually you will come to know yourself as That. Acknowledging that you wish to align yourself with Essence over the ego is a very important step in bringing this about.

If you pray for nothing else, pray for this, and the rest will be easy. This prayer, alone, has the power to bring you into alignment, where all the answers to your questions will be revealed.

Listening to the Divine

The Divine speaks in a number of ways. To hear it requires listening in some unusual ways because it rarely speaks in actual words. It speaks primarily through the intuition, which comes through the body and the mind.

When it comes through the body, some truth is just known. You don't know how you know it; you just know it. This kind of knowing is accompanied by an energetic experience, somewhat like a solidness or heaviness, usually in the chest area. No thoughts preceded it and none follow it, just a solid sense of certainty about an answer that arose from nowhere.

When the intuition comes through the mind, there is a similar knowing that was neither preceded nor followed by thoughts. Rather than occurring in the body, the intuition comes to you more like an idea, although one that is not fully put into words. It is as if information was downloaded into your brain, and you just know something. The intuition stands on its own, apart from the mind.

Usually, then, you try to put this knowing into words. Intuition that comes through the mind is similar to symbols or pictures, which contain a lot of information and then must be interpreted, which is where some distortion might occur. The same is true of intuition that comes through the body: The information is as if it is condensed, and when it is "reconstituted" and put into words, it may be distorted.

Whether intuition comes through the body or the mind, there is a rightness, clarity and solidity about it that rings true. It makes sense. You trust it. You just know that it is the answer. You feel excited, happy, relieved, and at peace. You are no longer struggling to find a solution but

resting from all struggle to know because now you do know. It feels like a big “Ah-ha!”

The experience of knowing something with the mind is just the opposite. The mind is rarely sure of a decision, and it is easily swayed and confused by various viewpoints. This is because it bases decisions on conflicting and sometimes contradictory information, and it wants contradictory things—it wants it all. With nearly every decision, it struggles. It causes you to feel confused, unhappy, uncomfortable, and ill at ease. The mind wants a solution, but it can’t find one, and that causes a lot of suffering.

Part of the problem is that there is a right time for every solution or answer, and the mind doesn’t want to wait for the solution or answer to arise naturally. When the solution does arise, it arises through the intuition. Finally there is relief from the mind’s struggle to find an answer. Unfortunately, sometimes the solution or answer comes too late because the mind has already made a decision just to ease its discomfort. In this way, the mind can lead you down a path that is not the best one for you.

When this happens, Essence does its best to work with that choice and continues to steer you toward creating a situation that will be more fitting and fulfilling. It continues to deliver messages intuitively, and it uses other means to communicate its plan. The Divine, through Essence, fortunately has many other voices besides the voice of intuition. One of those is the voice of others.

Essence, within you, collaborates with Essence, within others, to help bring about your plan and everyone else’s. Essence, within you, inspires Essence, within others, to give you the messages, help, information, advice, support, comfort, love, and encouragement you need to unfold your plan. If

you are not accepting the guidance Essence is giving you intuitively, it will have others voice it. Getting advice and information this way is generally more acceptable, credible, and trustworthy to the mind.

When you are not in touch with your intuition or not listening to it for whatever reason (usually the mind or someone else is telling you not to), Essence tries to get your attention by using other people to voice its guidance. It inspires others to say what you need to hear. You have had this happen countless times, and you have been a mouthpiece for Essence countless times. This happens more than you probably imagine. You not only pass on and receive life-altering information, but lots of little pieces of information that can make life better too.

The most meaningful and fulfilling interchanges between people are ones that involve Essence. One sign this is happening is that you feel good afterward and often inspired to take some kind of action. Interchanges between egos, on the other hand, leave you confused, defensive, feeling bad or, at best, unchanged.

Essence changes lives for the better because it moves people in directions that are meaningful and fulfilling. The ego cannot do this because it doesn't know what would be meaningful and fulfilling for someone, and what it assumes would be, probably would not be. It is not in a position to be able to guide life, and yet it is what most people turn to for answers.

The Divine, through Essence, also speaks through events. It creates events that cause you to question or change your direction. When things are not going well, it may be that they are not aligned with Essence. Essence may try to convince you to surrender to its plan by not allowing you to have what you want. People suffer greatly in such situations, but once the new

direction becomes established, their lives will be changed for the better, although this is difficult to see at the time.

If this seems to be happening to you, it is good to consciously surrender, that is, make a statement of surrender and ask what is wanted of you. Putting yourself in a receptive mode rather than feeling like a victim will shift your consciousness and allow you to receive the insight you need to move things in a different direction. You may have to do this repeatedly over a period of time before clarity arises.

Essence often needs time to bring you the information, people, and opportunities that will help you be open to the new direction. Without these, intuitive suggestions are likely to be rejected because they may seem too abstract and implausible. Life often has to make you aware of and get you thinking about some possibility before you will trust your intuition enough to act on it. Intuitions concerning major life changes nearly always go hand in hand with events and opportunities that also point to it.

So, Essence speaks to you not only by blocking certain directions, but also by making it possible to move gracefully in certain directions. You can recognize the direction Essence intends because you will experience the following:

- 1) Numerous pointers to it (e.g., you are told about it by several people, someone gives you a book about it, you see a TV program on it, your close friend is doing it, you have a dream about it, you get excited when you think about it),
- 2) Support and opportunities to move in that direction (e.g., someone offers you a job or offers to pay your schooling or train you, family

members or close friends are doing it or encouraging you to do it), and

- 3) Ease in moving in that direction (e.g., you already have the skills for it, no other opportunities are presenting themselves, no one is discouraging you, nothing is in the way, there is no reason not to).

If the direction you are moving in is short on obvious pointers, opportunities, support, and ease, it may not be right for you at this time. This doesn't mean you should change directions whenever something is difficult. Life is difficult at times, and sometimes persistence is required to achieve Essence's goals. However, if your direction is aligned with Essence, you will have the strength, courage, inspiration, and assistance to overcome the challenges. If it is not, you will feel dispirited and not have the inspiration and courage to continue or the assistance you need to succeed.

So, whether your direction is the right one for you or not is revealed by your feelings about it: The right direction feels right no matter what difficulties are encountered. The wrong one feels unfulfilling no matter what degree of success is encountered.

Expressions of the Divine

The Divine expresses itself in the world in ways other than just by guiding and shaping your destinies. It expresses itself, like you do, for the pure joy of it. It created this world not only to grow, learn, and evolve, but to experience the joy of creativity and for the opportunities it affords for that. The Divine evolves not only through work and overcoming challenges, but

through play and creativity. Creating is one of the ways the Divine grows, learns, evolves—and enjoys life.

The Divine creates primarily through you because, of all its creations on earth, humans have the most potential to be creators. Unlike other creatures, which are far more limited in their expression, you have a capacity for very diverse and complex experiences. You hold far more potential for exploration than any other creature on earth. For one thing, you have the ability to create such things as the automobile, airplane, and computer, which expand your experiences beyond what the body alone is capable of. And you have adapted to live nearly everywhere on the globe.

Each of you is a unique instrument for the Divine. No one else has ever been or will ever be exactly like you, nor will the times and circumstances you live in ever be the same. This allows for a completely unique experience through every one of you. This diversity and uniqueness is evidence for a purposefulness behind creation and, consequently, for the existence of an Intelligence behind creation—one that is not only behind it but participating in it and enjoying it.

There is no way of proving this, of course, but those of us who have evolved beyond the physical plane know this to be true. It is part of our work and service to you to explain this. Hopefully, this understanding will help you cope with the difficulties and challenges that are part of this marvelous plan.

The difficulties and challenges spur creativity on. Without them, you might not use the talents, gifts, and intellect you have been given. A Garden of Eden is really not ideal—for you or for the Divine. A world based on duality, one that has both good and evil (ignorance), offers a richer and much more interesting experience. The Divine loves a heroic story, one in

which the hero is pitted against ignorance or difficult circumstances and must use his or her ingenuity, strength, and love to overcome them.

This life is all about such stories, which are also evidence for an Intelligence guiding life. The Divine guides life in a specific direction—toward greater goodness, strength, courage, compassion, tolerance, kindness, patience, wisdom, and love. Humanity is evolving in this direction, not the opposite, and that is no coincidence or accident. Love is what life is all about. Life is intended to bring you back to Love.

CONCLUSION

The Return to Love

Humanity is evolving, and it is evolving toward love. This evolution toward love is evidence of the Divine in the world. This evolution is being accomplished through challenges, which teach love. It may be difficult to see how this is possible; challenges so often result in suffering and defeat. But when they don't, they reap the opposite: love, strength, compassion, wisdom, understanding, patience, and tolerance.

During your evolution, over your many lifetimes, you learn to turn challenges into strengths. Every challenge has a positive potential—every one. Equally, every challenge has a negative potential: It can result in fear, hatred, anger, blame, hopelessness, vengeance, ruthlessness, cruelty, or abuse. Even mildly challenging circumstances can result in terrible experiences of pain and suffering.

What makes the difference is what aspect of yourself responds to the challenges—the ego or Essence. In any one moment, one or the other steps up and reacts. What most determines what reacts is your level of evolution, but many other factors are also involved. Even older, more advanced souls might react negatively to trying situations under certain circumstances, especially initially. The ego is often the first thing to kick in whenever you or someone you love is threatened. For example, even very gentle people can get very angry at drivers they perceive as threatening to them.

However, during stressful and difficult times, particularly in emergency situations, many also experience a strength and power moving through them that is beyond them. Even those who are very entrenched in the ego get taken over by Essence in extreme situations when that is necessary to save someone's life. The Divine often steps in and saves life. Those who experience this describe it this way too. Most "heroes" don't feel they can take credit for their heroism, and this is why. The ego can't take credit for it. The Divine saves life when that life is meant to be preserved.

This is what is usually thought of as heroism. But if heroism is defined as goodness prevailing over the ego, then it happens countless times every day. Every time goodness (God-ness) prevails, that is Essence taking over life—that is the hero in you overcoming the challenge of the ego, slaying the dragon of untruth.

Notice how often this happens in your life and in others' lives in just one day. Notice all the times you or someone else chooses love, kindness, generosity, helpfulness, and attentiveness over selfishness and self-concern. That is Essence living through you and living through them. The Divine is everywhere in disguise as ordinary human beings of all kinds.

There isn't a human being on this planet who has less access to Essence than another. Essence is an equal opportunity employer—it is equally accessible to everyone. It may seem less accessible to some because it is buried by ego-identification, but it is only less visible. The instant anyone chooses love over selfishness or self-concern, there it is, regardless of how evolved or spiritually oriented that person is. You don't have to be aware of Essence or believe in it for it to be living through you. It lives through all people regardless of their beliefs because *it is who they are*. They cannot *not* express Essence. It is what moves them, and it allows the ego to

step in and move them as well. Every time the ego speaks or acts, Essence is allowing it.

Essence allows you to have the experience you choose to have, for the most part. Sometimes it overrides the ego briefly to steer life in a particular direction, and then it steps back again and allows you to identify with the ego again, if you choose that. This dance between Essence and the ego is ongoing in everyone. Some choose to express the ego more than Essence, and some choose to express Essence more than the ego. But eventually, everyone expresses Essence more than the ego because that is the direction of evolution.

Love is the only satisfying choice, so eventually everyone chooses it over the ego. Everyone overcomes the programming that causes ego-identification. Without exception, that is where everyone is headed. No matter how heinous a crime someone has committed, he or she will end up a saint in some other lifetime. The story has a happy ending. The hero slays the dragon once and for all.

The programming is overcome because the suffering caused by it becomes unacceptable. Solutions to this suffering are sought, and the truth becomes known: The ego is an imposter *and* the source of all of the suffering. The lie that it could keep you from suffering is uncovered. It was, in fact, the reason for your suffering. Seeing this truth frees you only somewhat from your programming because the program is still running. It can still draw you back into ego-identification and suffering—and it does, even once you become strongly aligned with Essence. Evolution continues for quite a while before Essence becomes established as the state you do most of your living from.

Choosing Essence over the ego is a heroic act because it is not the easy choice. The easy choice is to follow programming. It turns out that this choice is not so easy, really, because it is so unsatisfying and ultimately leads to unhappiness. Still, this has to be seen and a choice made to forego the temptations of the ego and “settle” for peace, love, and contentment, which are not nearly as glamorous as what the ego promises.

The ego promises riches, beauty, acclaim, success, and adoration. These are its ultimate goals, which it believes it needs to be happy. It reaches for unattainable goals that will never deliver the happiness that is promised even if they are attained, which is what people do discover. It tells you that you can never be happy with simply being, loving, giving, and accepting. It tells you the opposite of the truth.

To discover the truth, you have to go against that programming and the programming of others, who reinforce these lies, and that is a heroic act. Heroes are not afraid to stand up for the truth, to buck the crowd to do what feels right and good. They have the courage to make the difficult choice, which ends up being the easiest choice in the world. It is the choice that has been filling the world with love ever since it existed. At a certain point in your evolution, it is the only choice left to you. Once you know the truth, you can't go back to living the lie. You can't go on believing that *you* exist apart from everything else. There is only one choice left, and that choice is Love.

The only trick is that that choice has to be made again and again in each new moment. Essence happily makes this choice. Only when you are identified with the ego does this choice seem difficult, and that is when it is most important to choose love—when it is hard to. By choosing love over selfishness and self-concern even when it is hard to, you affirm your divinity

and the truth that is all around you: The Divine exists here, now, in everyone, in everything. You are That.

About Gina Lake: After having a spiritual awakening in 1999, Gina Lake has dedicated herself to helping others discover their true nature and uncover and heal whatever interferes with doing that through counseling, intensives, and writing. Gina has a Masters degree in Counseling Psychology and over twenty years experience as an astrologer and a channel, with a focus on helping people find and fulfill their life purpose. She is the author of eight books about awakening.

ABOUT CONSULTATIONS

Gina Lake offers two types of consultations: an astrological consultation or a channeled session. Their goal is to help you understand yourself and whatever programming interferes with awakening to your true nature and living the life you were meant to live.

Astrology for Awakening

You are the Self (the Divine) in disguise! And what a great disguise it is! Discover the personality structure, strengths, and weaknesses of this character you are playing and how it is serving (or not serving) you and the Self that is living through you. The Self has a reason for creating you just this way. Every desire and drive is there for a reason. Find out what its intentions are for you and how you (the ego and conditioning) might be interfering with these goals. Waking up means allowing the Self to live through you as this character, which is what it came here to do. An understanding of your chart can help you express the joy of the Self rather than the suffering of the ego through this character you call you. The chart also gives you a glimpse of the bigger picture, which will help you understand whatever you are going through and embrace it for the gift that it is.

Channeled Guidance for Awakening

Gina has been channeling Theodore, a collective consciousness on the mid-causal plane, since 1989. Theo will help you awaken to your true nature by exploring any personal or psychological issues, misunderstandings, and beliefs that keep you tied to the egoic state of consciousness. These sessions are an opportunity to receive healing and support for awakening on an ongoing basis. You may ask questions about the nature of life and about personal issues, particularly related to your personal and spiritual growth. Predictions, past-life readings, health readings, financial advice, or information about others without their permission are not part of this exploration. These sessions may include a clearing of negative energies and assistance in healing longstanding issues.

For more information: www.radicalhappiness.com

Books by Gina Lake

Radical Happiness: A Guide to Awakening provides the keys to experiencing the happiness that is ever-present and not dependent on circumstances. This happiness doesn't come from getting what you want but from wanting what already *is*. It comes from realizing that who you think you are is not who you really are. This is a radical perspective! *Radical Happiness* describes the nature of the egoic state of consciousness, the mind's role in maintaining it, how this interferes with happiness, and what awakening and enlightenment are. Exercises are included to help you apply the information and transform your experience of life—and become happier! \$14.95

Embracing the Now: Finding Peace and Happiness in What Is. The now—this moment—is the true source of happiness and peace and the key to living a fulfilled and meaningful life. *Embracing the Now* is a collection of essays whose common thread is the now. Full of clear insight and wisdom, it explains how the mind keeps you from being in the now, how to move into the now and stay there, and what living from there is like. It also explains how to overcome stumbling blocks to being in the now, such as fears, doubts, judgments, misunderstandings, distrust of life, desires, and other conditioned ideas that are behind human suffering. \$15.95

Living in the Now: Reflections from Another Dimension About Being Happy in this One was created from blog posts and offers inspiration, reflections on the human condition, and practical spiritual guidance. The intent of these messages is to help you wake up out of the ego and realize your true nature as Oneness and, therefore, be more present, happy, loving, and fulfilled in your life. These messages were given to Gina Lake by a wise and benevolent consciousness from another dimension, who is dedicated to helping humanity awaken. Each short message stands on its own and can be used for contemplation or as a spiritual reminder. \$15.95

Anatomy of Desire: How to Be Happy Even When You Don't Get What You Want will help you relate to your desires in a way that reduces suffering and increases joy. It is essentially about how to be happy regardless of your desires. It points out many of the myths about desire, which keep you tied to them and the suffering they create. So, it is also about spiritual freedom, or liberation, which comes from letting the Heart guide you instead of the ego. It is ultimately about becoming a lover of life rather than a desirer because these two things—love and desire—are at odds, and you must choose between them. What do you really want? Do you want what you want or do you want love? *—from the Introduction* \$14.95

Return to Essence: How to Be in the Flow and Fulfill Your Life's Purpose describes how to get into the flow and stay there and how to live life from there. Being in the flow and not being in the flow are two very different states. One is dominated by the ego-driven mind, which is the cause of suffering, while the other is the domain of essence, the divine within each of us. You are meant to live in the flow. The flow is the experience of essence—your true self—as it lives life through you and fulfills its purpose for this life. Exercises throughout provide an opportunity for practicing and integrating the understanding. \$15.95

Choosing Love: How to Find True Love and Keep It Alive. Having a truly meaningful relationship requires choosing love over your conditioning, that is, your ideas, fantasies, desires, images, and beliefs. *Choosing Love* describes how to move beyond conditioning, judgment, anger, romantic illusions, and differences to the experience of love and Oneness with another. It explains how to drop into the core of your Being, where Oneness and love exist, and be with others from there. Exercises throughout provide an opportunity for practicing and integrating the understanding. \$15.95

Getting Free: How to Move Beyond Conditioning and Be Happy. To be free from your conditioning requires a new way of thinking or, rather, not thinking. *Getting Free* will help you change your relationship to your mind. Conditioning is healed when we meet our true Self, but to do this we first have to become very familiar with the false self. *Getting Free* will help you determine what is false and true within yourself. It will also help you reprogram your mind; clear negative thoughts and self-images; use meditation, prayer, forgiveness, and gratitude; work with spiritual forces to assist healing and clear negativity; and heal entrenched issues from the past. Exercises throughout provide an opportunity for practicing and integrating the understanding. \$15.95

What About Now? Reminders for Being in the Moment. On each page, you will find a quote from one of Gina Lake's many books that will inspire you and help you remember to be in the moment. These quotes are intended to wake you up out of your ordinary consciousness and bring you in touch with your true nature and help you live from there. Here is a sample: "The more accustomed we become to being present, the more we begin to live as Essence, which is a free and joyful experience. The now isn't just a place of sensory experience, although that is sufficiently rich, but it's also where life comes out of, and if you aren't paying attention to the now, you might miss what life is trying to bring about through you." \$11.95

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page at www.radicalhappiness.com.**