



The Only Dance There Is

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This book is based on talks by Ram Dass at the Menninger Foundation in 1970 and at the Spring Grove Hospital in Maryland in 1972. The text grew out of the interaction between Ram Dass and the spiritual seekers in attendance at these talks. The result of this unique exchange is a useful guide for understanding the nature of consciousness--useful both to other spiritual seekers and to formally trained psychologists. It is also a celebration of the Dance of Life--which, in the words of Ram Dass, is the "only dance there is."

The Only Dance There Is Details

Date : Published March 5th 1974 by Anchor (first published January 1st 1974)

ISBN : 9780385084130

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Format : Paperback 192 pages

Genre : Spirituality, Religion, Philosophy, Nonfiction, Psychology

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Richard says

This is a tremendous book that takes matters of spirituality out of the musty, dead religious institutions and into the light of truth, beauty, and reason.

Michael Cunningham says

The Only Dance There Is is a compiled transcription of two lectures Ram Dass gave to a room of psychotherapists in the early 1970s. The first lecture was at the Menninger Foundation in 1970, and the second at the Spring Grove Hospital in 1972. Seeing as Ram Dass was a trained Harvard professor and psychiatrist before he transformed into a yogi, he was in the fortunate position of having two perceptual vantage points to overlook the whole thing. His clear insight into the Western approach to solving man's spiritual problems through psychology, and his new understanding into the Eastern approach through yoga and meditation, allowed him the opportunity to act as a solid concrete bridge between the worlds of East and West. Prior to Ram Dass bridges existed, but they were of the old and fragile, made of rope variety, which were rarely crossed out of fear of the bridge collapsing and you falling into the abyss below. Because of this the game at this point in time was very polarised - us vs them, hippies vs police, East vs West, and so on.

In these lectures Ram Dass attempted to share the Indian's non-dualistic outlook on life, called Advaita Vedanta, to an audience very much attached to the separation of all living things. Ram Dass eloquently shared what he had learnt in India, and what he had given up in Harvard, by comparing the comparatively new Western psychology to the 10,000 year old Eastern method of yoga and meditation. For example, he discusses in detail the Hindu chakra system, and how it closely resembles psychological systems for understanding human motivation - an area that Ram Dass happened to specialise in when he was a psychiatrist by the name of Dr. Richard Alpert.

The 1970 Menninger lecture occurred at the same time that 'Be Here Now' was being written, and a year before it was released to the public - it displays a Ram Dass in the flush of discovery of a method infinitely times more fulfilling than anything he had encountered or studied in the West, including psychology and psychedelics. And here he was, delivering this news from a far away land to his old colleagues and suit wearing brothers of psychotherapy - the result is this book, which is a bottomless pot of honey. The transcript for the Menninger lecture not only made it into this book, but was also published into the Journal of Transpersonal Psychology. The second lecture, from 1972, exhibits a different approach as Ram Dass had some time to let his spiritual discovery sit and rest; it is just as if not more fascinating than the previous lecture. In 'The Only Dance There Is' the two lectures are woven together seamlessly in order to retain their magic and substance, but within a new framework that allows the two lectures to complement each other and also to flow more naturally. The lectures are split up and grouped categorically so that a heading, such as 'Karma and Reincarnation', will appear above lecture excerpts that relate to that particular subject. No words have been altered, only the order has been modified, and yet it flows so well that as you read it you will never guess that one page is from an entirely different lecture than the next.

This book is perfect for anyone living in Western society who is not finding answers to the many questions that the soul seeks. It is a spiritual reservoir overflowing with perennial wisdom that anyone on the path may drink from. This book is also perfect for those who really want to know what the hell 'it' is all about, but can't

get a straight answer from anyone who practices a spiritual lifestyle: eg 'I can't tell you because you wouldn't understand'. While Ram Dass acknowledges that there is a big difference between knowing something intellectually and knowing something through experience, he still takes down the veil for a moment and allows anyone who is curious enough to take a peek at the dance that is occurring behind the otherwise closed curtains. He tells it as it is, and invites you to scoff with disbelief or marvel with wonder. As he repeats time and time again he has no vested interest in whether or not you believe him, as the ego that thrives on such trivial matters has been replaced by a free floating consciousness, no longer bound by thoughts and expectations. I'm not going to tell you to go out of your way and buy this book, because if you have read this far you will no doubt be able to make that decision for yourself. And only you can make the decision of wanting to read a book such as this. I will warn you: the contents of this book are really far out and may not be for everyone, but then again, it might be just what you've been looking for all this time.

Christine says

This book is a combination of two lectures given by Ram Das to professionals in the field of psychology. He shares his beliefs about God, reincarnation, evolving consciousness, and many personal experiences, including his experimental use of LSD. He also talks in depth about his guru and his time in India. To use Ram Das' own words, the subject matter for this book is really "far out stuff." I will admit, I struggled to wrap my mind around a lot of the topics. I did appreciate the laid back style he has for explaining such complicated concepts. Whether or not you subscribe to his belief system, this is an interesting read that will give you lots to ponder.

Kirti says

An attempt to introduce and explain Indian/ Eastern mysticism and how spirituality is radically different than the West, but fairly basic information for those who've grown up as Hindus in India. This book comprises lectures, which often meander to include examples that have messages not fully explored. Divided in 4 chapters, each with multiple sections, it's still too ambitious of the author to cover so much ground in such a small volume

Capó-Hernandez Family says

Blown Away

Ram Dass is definitely someone who has "been there" and it is through sharing his experience that many others have qualified their own experiences as all part of the singular presence of us all in this Universe.

Daryl says

You have to love an upper-middleclass Jewish intellectual who attended Harvard, became a psychoanalyst, started hanging around with Timothy Leary, took LSD, forsook his previous life, packed up and went to India where he met 'his' guru, etc. I love this guy's self-awareness (he was a psychoanalyst after all) and his

honesty and sense of humor. Short book, somewhat dated, but in the end about a 'seeker' who might be familiar to some of you that look in the mirror on occasion.

Benjamin Hager says

A life changing experience. Echoes through my day-to-day life constantly. I re-read it every Winter and read an entirely different book.

Couldn't recommend more to anyone.

Debra Robillard says

It's been awhile since I've read this, and I don't know about how I would feel about the book in light of my current theology, but I remember being thrilled by the ideas included in it. I especially liked the concept he puts forth: "If it's the only dance there is you can dance it from Ugh or you can dance it from Ah!" The book reminded me of the temporary nature and ephemeral quality of earthly life. Why waste it on being angry, gloomy, resentful, unforgiving? That really makes no sense. I understood from this book that the way I feel and present is a choice. Any book that establishes those concepts in a person is a good book, indeed, in my humble opinion.

Erik Graff says

See the review of his Be Here Now.

Paul Panamarenko says

I read this when I was 19. I think it sort of changed my life. Great "figuring out who you are" book.

R.K. Cowles says

3 1/2 stars

Antonia says

Beautiful. This book spoke to my longing to connect to other people. It gave me hope.

Dominic Lenzo says

Ram Dass seems to me to be the closest thing to a Western guru that I have found. His words albeit not totally based in human and earthly logic have a profound effect. This book shows his growth and evolution from his other books "Be Here Now" and "Grist for the Mill". He touches on so many points of yogi life with great fluidity while simultaneously talking only on tangents.

The book is 2 different transcripts of lectures given to psychologists. Like he says, he speaks to them differently than another room of different consciousness. This allows the reader to be on the level of the psychologists which are on a plane more rooted in accepted reality which makes the content on a whole easier to grasp. I highly recommend any and all Ram Dass one can get their hands on.

Daria Zheglo says

I may say a lot about this book, but I don't feel strong enough to rephrase Ram Dass, because whatever I may say is rephrasing.

You may try to lose the boundaries between normal and magic, shift your point of dimension to the point where ego is not longer dominant.

It teaches you without teaching, and leaves you with a profound feeling that all the experiences you live through are so relevant.

So far, the best book of Ram Dass I have read.

Denise says

What can I say? I love Ram Dass! I can't say I've loved every one of his books I've read but this one in my opinion is right up there with Be Here Now. Took me awhile to read because I read and savored it in small pieces. It is a transcript of 2 lectures he gave to mental health professionals in the early 70's. This makes perfect sense since he is an old psychologist and former Harvard Professor of Psychology. I like this book of lectures and his pod casts because of his easy, humorous and conversational style of teaching. I always enjoy his terminology about "the game", "trips" and things "far out". He is so much easier to understand than the classic yoga and Vedic texts. I cherish him as a teacher.
