

2017 SUMMER PROGRAMME

Lines of Enquiry

The initial step in the Direct Path is self-enquiry. There are many different starting points, pathways, or 'lines of enquiry'. In Sanskrit, these are known as *prakriyas*. The aim of each *prakriya* is to take us beyond the mind to whatever it is that we call 'I'. Then we stay there, and self-enquiry becomes self-abidance. So self-enquiry starts with the mind but ends beyond the mind. The mind has to be fully satisfied before it will allow itself to be transcended. There must not be even the tiniest shred of belief involved: our enquiry must be rigorous and thorough. Each of our minds is different – they have been subject to different conditioning. It follows that true self-enquiry must be an individual undertaking. Help can be given when we reach a block or apparent contradiction, but no-one else can do the enquiry for us or tell us the answers.

This Summer Programme outlines a number of different *prakriyas*. The idea is to take whichever one most interests you and pursue it as far as you can. If none of these appeal to you, you can always create your own – whatever you are drawn to investigate. Self-enquiry must be motivated by interest – it's not a spiritual practice aimed at achieving some new state of mind, or a feeling of peace.

All *prakriyas*, if pursued far enough, take you to the same 'placeless place', so it doesn't matter which one you follow. You may feel that one of them gives you everything you need to understand, or you may want to pursue several or all of them.

Some ideas on how to proceed

The following ideas are based on what has worked for me. They may not be right for everyone. The best advice is to follow your natural interest and love, and see where it leads.

Self-enquiry starts from a relaxed and open mind, rather than an active mind. Just before you go to sleep or just after you wake up in the morning are good times for self-enquiry. Just allow your question to sit there – don't struggle to find an answer. Actually 'go to' the experience that is the subject of the question and allow the mind to rest there.

It's up to you where this enquiry takes you. The key to real self-enquiry is to stick rigorously to your direct experience – whatever you are experiencing right now – and let go of everything that you have been taught, or that is part of your culture, or that is part of a belief system, or that you have been told by a spiritual teacher, or read in a spiritual book.

If your conclusions seem to be different from the Direct Path teaching, or if you get stuck, try to formulate a question. A good starting point is to look on [Rupert's YouTube channel](#) or on his [website](#) – you may find someone has asked a very similar question and that the answer gives you the way forward that you need. [Francis Lucille's YouTube channel](#) can also be useful. Otherwise go to a meeting or webinar to ask your question. Argue your case as strongly as you can, but only from your direct experience. Above all, don't just give up and assume that what the realised sages say must be right. Sometimes it's mainly a matter of clarifying the terminology, but always make sure. Pursue your own enquiry right to the end.

Some Lines of Enquiry

The descriptions that follow each prakriya are based on the path or paths that I took, starting from the initial question. They are mainly provided to illustrate the method. You may prefer just to use the initial question that forms the title of the prakriya, and proceed from there in your own way.

1. What Am I?

See first that the essential nature of what you call 'I' does not change. If this is not apparent to you, look closely at whatever it is that you feel is an essential part of you which you recognise as being changeable. For example, your body is changeable. The cells it is made from are constantly being replaced. Is this really an essential part of you? What would happen if you had a leg or an arm cut off? Would you have lost part of your essential nature? And what about the mind? What is there to the mind other than thoughts, feelings, sensations and perceptions? These change all the time. If any one of these channels of perception is removed, does 'I' get any smaller?

Now ask yourself: 'what cannot be separated from me? What is this feeling of 'I' that has remained the same all my life?' Perhaps you then come to the conclusion that 'I' must be simply that which experiences everything that arises in experience. In other words, 'I' is the witness of all my experience – from when I was a tiny child up to now.

Then you might start to explore the witness of experience and the relationship with that which is witnessed. Is there really any evidence of two things – a witness, and a flow of experience that is witnessed? Going on from there: Is there anything present in experiencing other than the knowing of it? Is it a reasonable description to say that I am pure Consciousness or pure Knowing, and that all that is witnessed is 'made out of' or 'a vibration of' the Consciousness that I am?

2. What is the world?

Based only on our direct experience, what do we actually know of 'a world'? What information do we have about a world or objects in a world that does not come from perception – seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling? Where does perception or perceiving take place? Does it take place inside the mind? And does it arise from within the mind, or does it come into the mind from somewhere outside the mind? If the latter, what do we know, from our direct experience, of this 'somewhere'? Have we ever experienced such a place?

In this enquiry, the mind tends to throw up objections such as 'well that's crazy. Almost everyone agrees there is a world and there are objects in this world made out of matter'. The existence of separate objects outside the mind would certainly fit in with this belief. But what evidence do we have for it in our direct experience? Another possible explanation is that each of our minds is a small window onto an infinitely large universal mind, so some degree of commonality of experience is to be expected, but not necessarily complete commonality.

We might now continue our enquiry by looking at both possibilities and examining the logical consequences of each. There are many directions in which we can choose to go. We can take a scientific perspective and ask what scientists have actually discovered about matter. (If you go in this direction, make sure you are using 21st century science and not the 19th century science many of us learnt at school.) Or we can look at the basis of science and see that it is nothing more than a set of mathematical models which have the ability to structure and predict experience. Or we can look at mind itself and see that it too works by creating models of experience and superimposing those models on what is being experienced. Are these models

really any different from a map which provides information that may be useful for getting around, but is nothing like the territory itself? For example, if you are going for a walk up a mountain you will see there are lots of contour lines on the map. The closeness of these lines gives you a good indication of how tough the climb might feel – the map creates an accurate model – but you won't find any sign of these lines on the ground.

You can use this *prakriya* to discover that there's nothing wrong with science or with the way our minds work. Models are essential for practical life and to share and communicate experience. In fact, they are an integral part of our experience. But if we want to understand the true nature of ourselves and the universe, we should avoid confusing models with reality.

3. What happens to consciousness during deep sleep, dreaming and waking?

Some spiritual, religious or philosophical teachings, including that of Ouspensky, refer to these states as 'states of consciousness' and go on to describe 'higher levels of consciousness'. But does consciousness ever change? Are there really different *levels* of consciousness? Does consciousness disappear in deep sleep?

See that you never actually experience the absence of consciousness. The apparent disappearance of consciousness in deep sleep is a conceptualisation created by the mind. We can certainly say that during deep sleep, the individual mind is absent. But mind is not the same as consciousness. (Our experience of mind is simply a flow of thoughts, sensations and perceptions arising in the field of consciousness – in other words, it is the *activity* of consciousness. Mind is an *object* of experience; we define 'consciousness' to be the *subject* of experience.)

We might go to bed at 11 pm and at some stage thoughts disappear and dreams are not present. We wake up at say 7 am and become aware of a world around us – the bed, the room etc. We don't feel that the 'I' that wakes up is different from the 'I' that went to sleep. So perhaps it's reasonable to conclude that it was the mind that went to sleep, then dreamt and then woke up, while 'I', consciousness, remained the same throughout all these states?

What is it that hears the alarm clock or the smoke alarm when we are in deep sleep? We might feel that for consciousness to be present, it must be continuously conscious of *something*. Is this true? Can consciousness be present without objects of consciousness? If we are able to go into *nirvikalpa samadhi* (an artificial state of mind which is produced by many methods of meditation and which feels like being in deep sleep while remaining awake) we can bring this into our exploration. The main purpose of *nirvikalpa samadhi* is to show us that consciousness can remain present in the absence of any objects of consciousness. It is constant and unchanging.

Sometimes in the morning we become partially awake while still dreaming. The dream world is still present: what we call the 'real world' is not present. Then there is a very gradual transition between the two worlds. What happens in day-dreaming? Does that fit somewhere in between? Does that raise the possibility that there is no sharp dividing line between the dream world and the 'real' world? Could the 'real world' also be a dreamed world? Is all experience a dream?

As we spend more time abiding as consciousness and less time getting entangled with objects, we may start to find that all these states of mind lose their distinctiveness, the dividing lines start to blur. We become more familiar with the constant, undifferentiated, unchanging field of consciousness in which the hologram of our changing experience appears.

4. If there is only one consciousness, why can't I see the thoughts of others?

First, see that that you don't experience any boundary or limit to the consciousness that you are. If there was a limit, there would be something outside that boundary. What evidence do you have from your direct experience of anything outside of consciousness? Be careful not to confuse consciousness with mind. We know that mind is limited. It is limited in time; you can't actually go into the past or the future. It is limited in space; right now, you can't actually go to Mars. Remember that consciousness is the blank screen on which objects appear – it is not the objects themselves. Objects arise in mind; mind is the activity of consciousness. Why shouldn't each of our minds be a tiny slice of an unlimited activity of universal consciousness? Wouldn't that explain how some experience is shared, and some is private? Might it also not explain some of the phenomena that cannot be explained by the materialist perspective of science (e.g. the same, entirely new thought occurring simultaneously in two separate minds)? Could that universal consciousness be even bigger than the sum total of the activity of all human and animal minds? Could it contain in potential every possibility – every possible universe, every possible network of interconnected events? Could that be what William Blake meant when he said: *'Everything possible to be believed is an image of truth'*?

5. What is happiness?

Think back to times of happiness and ask yourself: what made me happy? As a young child, perhaps it was receiving a long-desired object as a birthday present. As an adult, perhaps it was falling in love, or receiving a promotion at work, or being successful in business. Notice that those objects brought temporary happiness, but in time, that happiness disappeared. It was not the unshakeable, lasting happiness we all want. It is not difficult to recognise that no object can ever bring us permanent happiness.

Now look again more deeply. Wasn't the common factor, in all of these cases, the fulfilment of a desire? Why is it that once a desire has been fulfilled, and the happiness associated with its fulfilment has died away, another desire arises quite quickly to take its place? Could this be a symptom of the existential sense of lack, or feeling of incompleteness that the Direct Path teaching describes?

See that we habitually use activities, substances and unnecessary thinking to enable us to avoid experiencing this deep feeling of lack or incompleteness. But there's a far more insidious avoidance mechanism to which those on a spiritual path are prone: that is the use of spiritual practices, reading spiritual books or watching spiritual YouTube videos as a means of escape from those uncomfortable feelings. It's not that there's anything inherently wrong with any of these. But first ask yourself 'am I feeling perfectly happy and complete in this moment?'. If not: stop, establish yourself as awareness, and, as Rupert suggests, allow the feeling of lack or incompleteness to come to the surface and 'soak in the warm bath of awareness'.

As we progress on the spiritual path, it is common for glimpses of our true nature to arise. They may last hours, days or months, but eventually they fade. These bring with them feelings of well-being, relaxation and a kind of effervescent joy which are often mistaken for the happiness of our true nature. But real happiness lies underneath all these feelings. The culmination of this enquiry is to see and feel that real happiness is always present and has always been present. It's not something we create through effort or uncover through purification practices. It is an inherent attribute of the consciousness that we are and is therefore present throughout all circumstances and conditions of life. We just need to notice that this is so.

Useful Resources

When we come to the end of a line of enquiry and gain an intellectual understanding of some aspect of the teaching, it takes a while for our body/minds to adjust to the new way of viewing our experience. We can encourage this to happen by spending as much time as we can allowing our attention to sink back into its source of awareness, rather than getting entangled with the objects of mind, body and world. However, for most of us, it seems to be inevitable that our old conditioning, including our old beliefs and ways of thinking, keeps coming back to the surface, bringing fresh doubts and uncertainties. When this happens, the remedy is to go back to your enquiry over and over again, investigating carefully all the new questions and doubts that arise.

Sometimes a different perspective or a different form of expression can be useful. Here are some resources that can help:

1. *The Direct Path – a User Guide* by Greg Goode, ISBN 978-1908664020. This consists almost entirely of a set of practical experiments to investigate all the above *prakriyas* and many others in a rigorous and detailed way. I recommend that instead of going through all the experiments in the book sequentially, you look at the contents list and just pick out the ones that are relevant to your current line of enquiry. Both body and mind are engaged in many of the experiments.
2. *The Nature of Consciousness: Essays on the Unity of Mind and Matter* by Rupert Spira, ISBN 978-1684030002. This too covers all the above *prakriyas* and many more. But it is written as a series of essays demonstrating the lines of reasoning, rather than as a set of experiments. It is particularly well-suited to anyone with a scientific disposition, an interest in science or a naturally enquiring, logical mind.
3. *Transparent Body, Luminous World: The Tantric Yoga of Sensation and Perception* by Rupert Spira, ISBN 978-0992972622 - a box set of audio yoga meditations with a book of transcripts. This is ideal for those who have reached a clear understanding of non-duality at an intellectual level, but want to really *feel* that understanding throughout all the activities of life. Instead of using 'higher reasoning' as in the resources listed above, these meditations take the enquiry into the body and feelings. Some of the meditations are particularly helpful for exploring the last *prakriya*, 'what is happiness?'.

Contemplation

We should be very honest about our motivation. The enquiry that I am talking about is an enquiry that is conducted out of a love for, and fascination with, consciousness itself. Ours is not an enquiry motivated by a desire for relief or personal self-improvement. This would be an attempt to use presence. Presence cannot be used—we can only surrender to presence.

[Francis Lucille: *Truth, Love, Beauty*]

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