

The Pathless Path. Part 2: The Tantric Path

As discussed in the last paper, our spiritual journey starts on the vedantic path which leads us to the recognition of our true nature as empty, infinite, indivisible awareness. But as Rupert explains, that is not the end of the journey, and for the next stage we follow the tantric path, using techniques from Kashmiri Shaivism:

In the vedantic path, the first step of the journey is to make this investigation into our essential nature of being aware. So we turn away, initially, from objective experience. In the tantric path, we don't turn away initially from objective experience. We start with objective experience – seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling, thinking, imagining and feeling. And instead of turning away from all of these and asking 'who is the one that knows them?', we instead notice that the experience of being aware pervades all these experiences. So in this approach, we don't have to move away from objective experience: rather, we see *into* objective experience. It's the difference between turning the movie off in order to see the screen – that's the vedantic approach – or, we leave the movie playing and we look through the movie and see its reality, the screen, without turning it off.

[Youtube clip: [11/9/2016 Enlightenment in the Vedantic and Tantric Approaches](#)]

At the Buckland Hall retreat last April, someone asked Rupert how his tantric teaching relates to the various traditional tantric paths. This was his reply:

In the tantric tradition, it is recognised that there is a very wide variety of different types of people with different levels of understanding and different experience. So a very wide variety of practices are elaborated in order to cater to all the different individual levels of interest and understanding. For instance, the preliminary practices in the Tibetan Buddhist tantric tradition – people engage in these preliminary practices often for many years in order to refine or purify the body/mind, to prepare it for the ultimate teaching about our true nature. And then at some point when the student is considered mature enough, the teacher then gives them the direct teachings.

In this approach [*the direct path*], we take a slightly different approach. We just offer the highest direct teaching straight away. And the rationale behind this is that everyone is aware, irrespective of the content of their experience, irrespective of how refined their mind or their body may be. So just the very fact that everyone is aware, everyone knows the experience 'I am', is considered sufficient in this tradition to give them the direct teaching. However, the danger of this approach is that people often don't realise that after the recognition of our true nature, there is still a clearing out process that needs to take place in the body and the mind. In the more traditional approaches, the progressive approaches, this cleaning up of the body/mind has taken place to a large extent before the direct teachings are given. In this approach, that's not the case. So hence this – what Francis once called post-enlightenment sadhana, or what I call yoga meditations – these contemplations of objective experience, particularly the body.

Feeling the sensation in the way we did [*in the yoga meditation*] this morning and breathing loving emptiness into it was an attempt to both flush out all the old resistances – the separate 'me' feelings – to expose them, to flush them out of their hiding places in the body, and to gradually dissolve them. So that is the tantric aspect of this approach. But here, we engage the tantric approach *after* exploring our true nature, and *after* recognising it, at least to a certain extent.

So that is why this approach is sometimes called the 'direct path', as opposed to the progressive path. The danger or pitfall on the direct path is that we recognise the nature of ourself and then

we think: 'OK that's it – there's nobody here, there's nothing to do.' And this accounts for behaviour that we see both in ourselves and in other people, that in spite of our recognition of our true nature, is *not* in line with that recognition. So there can be this big discrepancy between what people understand and what they say, and how they live and behave. The reason there is this discrepancy is because our recognition – to the extent to which we have recognised our true nature – has not been fully taken in to our experience of the body and the world.

There is also a corresponding possible pitfall in the tantric approach in that people who start with the tantric approach can become infatuated with these energetic experiences and get waylaid by them, and never go as far as actually taking the inward-facing path and recognising their true nature, so fascinated are they by the exotic and pleasurable states that can take place when they explore the body and sexuality and perception. That's why in this approach, we try to have a balanced approach. Particularly on a week like this, for the first two or three days of the retreat we are focusing more on the inward-facing path, to *really* establish in our experience, what we are. So that there is this ground of understanding: 'what I am is this open, empty, unlimited space of awareness'. And once that is clear, at least to an extent, not just as an idea but as an actual experience, then we begin to incorporate this exploration of the body and the world. ...

These yoga meditations that we do in the morning are all about feeling the body and perceiving the world in a way that is consistent with our understanding. Our understanding is that all experience appears *in*, is known *by* and is made *of* infinite consciousness. It's one thing to understand that: it's another thing to feel that, and yet another thing to act and relate in a way that is consistent with that feeling-understanding. So in this approach, we don't use the tantric path as a means of recognising our true nature – we use the direct path. In my opinion and experience, this direct approach is by far the most efficient approach and it doesn't need any preparation, in all but a few cases.

But there is still a case for this tantric approach after the recognition of our true nature. And in our meditations, I give suggestions as to ways to explore – particularly the body, because the feeling of 'me' is rooted most in the body, more than just in our beliefs. And with perception as well – with hearing and seeing. But once you have begun to understand this approach – these yoga meditations – you can then take them out into your life and tailor them to your own circumstances in life. To intimate sexual relationship, to the way you perceive the world, the way you act in the world, the way you move in the world. You can take the explorations we undertake 'in the lab' so to speak, you can take them out in the field, out into life and explore them in all kinds of different circumstances and relationships.

[Buckland Hall, 28th April 2016: *The Vedantic and Tantric Approaches to Our True Nature*]

Francis Lucille gives some examples of the tantric methods he uses to help people escape from the feeling of being localised within the body:

A tantric trick which I use is to take a part of the body which is a very common localisation of the 'I'. There are two main localisations. There is one which is in the forehead – behind the eyes and behind the forehead. That's where we localise the 'seer' and the 'thinker'. And there's another localisation which is in the chest, the solar plexus. For example, we say 'Who? Are you talking about me?', pointing to our chest. We localise 'I' more or less in the area of the chest and solar plexus. Nevertheless, this area is the area we identify with the 'feeler' – the lover, the one who's afraid etc. – the centre of feeling is there. That is a strong place for the 'I'.

So there are two ways, two tantric tricks we can do. One is to say: the real 'I' is not here in the chest area, because this is a bodily sensation, or set of bodily sensations, that appears in awareness, in Consciousness, which is the real 'I'. So as we realise that, we detach ourselves from the feeling in the chest with which we were identifying, and the energy that was invested here goes back where it belongs – to this invisible Presence which we are. That is the intellectual way most teachers describe, but also through pure contemplation, if we allow for the sensation in this area to freely expand. If we are not stuck to it, but if we are the space in which it appears, rather than the localised sensation which appears. So that's one way to do it.

The other tantric trick is the opposite approach. It is to take this sensation (in the chest), which carries with it, which is loaded with the 'I' feeling, and paint the entire space with it. In this way, the 'I' feeling is carried by the sensation in the same way that paint is carried by the brush. By moving the sensation everywhere and painting the space with it, the same result is achieved through delocalising or disinvesting the Consciousness that was invested in this sensation and to liberate it and allow it to be everywhere and nowhere, which is its real place.

[Youtube clip: [Meditation 21 of 25 – Tantric Tricks](#)]

Rupert does not recommend adopting a disciplined daily practice of tantric yoga. As we discussed at the last meeting, it is perhaps more a case of responding to loving invitations:

This exploration of our feelings (and indeed our beliefs) comes from interest, love and enthusiasm. It is enjoyable and joyful. It is not a discipline or a routine practice. These feelings can be explored whenever they are present, that is, at any moment in the waking state. I would suggest exploring them only when the interest, love and enthusiasm to do so, arises, for instance, while waiting for a bus, sitting on a train, taking the dog for a walk, eating breakfast...and also, if interested, while the attention is completely free of all other engagements, such as sitting silently in one's bedroom or sitting room.

[http://non-duality.rupertspira.com/read/embodying_the_understanding_3]

So can one start with the tantric path rather than the vedantic path? Here is Rupert's advice:

This approach combines both approaches. We start on the inward-facing path and we then take the outward-facing path. That is, I feel, the most efficient and thorough approach, but it's not the only approach. If you want to start on the outward-facing path, that's fine. ...

If that's your way, go that way. See that all you ever experience is thinking, feeling, imagining, sensing, seeing, hearing, etc., but there is no separate self that does any of that. There is just – let's call it thinking, sensing and perceiving – but the thinking, sensing and perceiving are themselves only one single, infinite, intimate, indivisible knowing. And as long as you experience all of life in that context, you're safe, because there's never any reason to withdraw or resist because there is only this knowing. It cannot be threatened, it cannot be harmed.

[Youtube clip: [11/9/2016 Enlightenment in the Vedantic and Tantric Approaches](#)]

Contemplation

Experience is like a piece of cloth, woven with strands of coloured yarn. Thoughts, feelings, sensations and perceptions are like the strands – separate and distinct when we look at the colours but one indivisible whole when we look at the cloth.