

Exploring the Body from the Inside

Careful and thorough enquiry into the nature of our self, and spending time abiding as the presence of awareness that we have come to recognise as 'I', leads us to an understanding of our true nature. This understanding is not just intellectual but also intuitively felt. Our previous materialistic model of 'me inside mind, which is inside brain, which is inside body, which is inside world' no longer feels 'right' or plausible. We see that there are gaps in its logic. It doesn't fully explain what we are or how we got here. It doesn't correspond with our deepest intuition. So as a result of our investigation and contemplation, we come to see ourselves, our minds, our bodies and the world in an entirely different light – beyond words, beyond any description.

But having reached this unshakeable realisation, much of the time we still *feel* ourselves to be located inside a solid, physical body which seems to move around in a solid, material world that is separate from itself. So a further step is needed to enable us to *feel* the body as it truly is:

It is true that self-enquiry often starts with a question in the mind as to what 'I' really is. However, if this investigation is to be complete, it has to penetrate into the deepest layers of our sense of 'self' and 'not self', that is, it has to infiltrate the 'me' feeling at the level of the body and the 'not me' feeling at the level of the world.

[Rupert Spira: *Presence Vol 1*. Our World is Made out of Perceiving]

The 'me-ness' in the body could be likened to a box full of old family photos dating back to our earliest childhood. On the top the images are quite distinct and easy to make out. However, as we progress down through the photos they become more faded. They begin to lose their sharpness and clarity.

The 'me' feelings are like this. The most obvious ones may be enshrined as a general feeling that pervades the head and chest but as these are clearly seen, the subtler layers of 'me' feelings in the body are revealed. The only thing that these feelings cannot stand is to be seen clearly, for in seeing them clearly they are understood and felt to be simply neutral bodily sensations with no separate self at their centre.

[Rupert Spira: *Presence Vol 1*. Happiness is the Highest Spiritual Practice]

As described in our earlier paper *The Pathless Path Part 2 – The Tantric Path*, the methods of investigation that we use to explore the body and the world come from the tradition of Kashmir Shaivism. They are taught in the form of 'yoga meditations'. These meditations work by allowing tensions and contractions in the body to be seen clearly and to dissolve in the light of that clear seeing. It is those tensions and contractions that are the residues of a 'no longer believed in' separate self. Here is Rupert's description of how the process works:

These are tensions that are laid down all through life, but particularly very early on in life. For instance, let's say that there was suddenly a very loud bang in the room, let's say a very sharp clap of thunder. We would jump. There would be an instant contraction in the body, and it would take some time, possibly some minutes after the sound had disappeared, for the echo of this contraction to dissipate out of the body. So that's what I call a 'residue' – the residue that is left in the body after the initial shock. In this case, the initial shock was a clap of thunder. It had no emotional content to it, so it would wash itself out of the body in a matter of seconds or a few minutes.

But if as a child, we are repeatedly subjected to unloving behaviour or circumstances in which we feel we have to protect ourselves, or shrink – this is like a repeated shock and those residues

don't get washed out of the body – they begin to build up in the body. And this is what I mean when I say they are laid down like layers in the body. And they last long after the relationship has been healed or not, or whatever the situation is, they last into adulthood and they can continue being laid down in adulthood in response to circumstances. So most of our bodies are a network of these layers of tension and contraction. And these survive the recognition of our true nature. So it is precisely this aspect of our experience that our yoga meditations deal with. They are that part of our experience that lies below the thinking mind. The thinking mind doesn't touch them. Even a clear non-dual understanding doesn't touch these residues. ...

It's an exploration in which we explore very deeply the actual experience of the body. We drop the label 'body'. We start with our eyes closed. We start by experiencing the body just as a sensation, then we drop the label 'sensation' and realise our experience of the body is just sensing. ... Then we allow sensing to expand into the field of awareness in which it appears. We notice, for instance, that the experience of sensing has no edges.

Now it may seem in these contemplations that we are not doing anything to the body, and indeed we are *not* doing anything to the body. However, in exploring the body in this way we are realising in a non-conceptual, experiential way, the inherently transparent, open, borderless nature of the body. That experiential understanding has a profound impact on these residues. It feels like we're doing nothing, and indeed we are doing nothing to the body. But feeling it in this way, feeling that the body is just a borderless field of sensation rather than an object with a clearly defined border – to feel the body in this way, begins to liberate the body from the tensions that accompany the belief: 'I am a solid, separate entity'. ...

There are lots of examples on my website of these yoga meditations [*now also the box set 'Transparent Body, Luminous World'*] and they are all based on this new way of feeling the body in a way that is consistent with our understanding. And they are tremendously powerful exercises. I sometimes call it 'homeopathic yoga' in the sense that it seems to be almost nothing but it has a profound effect. It rewires the body, or re-orchestrates the body, and we feel the body more and more to be open and sensitive and empty and transparent. In this process, layer upon layer of these residues of feeling – these ancient feelings – bubble up to the surface. They're sensations, they're layers of tensions that bubble up to the surface and they are simply felt as sensations that are just allowed to soak in this warm bath of awareness and gradually percolate out into the surrounding space. And the surrounding space, in turn, percolates into them, transforming and dissolving these knots with the lovingness and the emptiness of the surrounding space.

So that's a description, but it's a very experiential thing. It's not a one-off thing. It's something that in my experience, we need to come back to again and again and again, and allow this soaking of the sensations in the space of awareness. In time, slowly, the body gives up its solidity, its density, its tension, its 'me-ness'. ...

That's a description of the general approach, and then there are specific contemplations that we do sometimes with specific areas of the body. For instance, the face is where a lot of 'me-feelings' are stored: 'I the seer, I the hearer and the taster and the thinker'. The face and the head is a place where there is a very rich mixture of 'me-feelings', so sometimes in a meditation, we'll spend the whole meditation just exploring that area. So I've given you a broad outline. On my website, there are lots of specific explorations of the breath, of the chest and so on.

[1st March 2015: [The Gradual Rewiring of the Body](#)]

As Rupert explains, the effects of these meditations take some time to become apparent:

These yoga meditations are a little bit like the scales and arpeggios and studies that a musician practises: the benefits of them are not always immediately discernible. The benefits appear later on when we are playing music. In the same way, we may find that when we are talking with friends during a meal, or walking in the countryside, that we suddenly find ourselves relieved of the feeling of being located in and as this dense, solid body; that we are this vast openness in which the entire landscape is appearing and out of which the landscape is made. That is the experience of beauty. Everything appears in me. Everything is made of myself. When talking with a friend during a meal, the same experience is felt as love.

[18th May 2015, Yoga meditation: *Pouring Emptiness into the Body*]

Rupert's yoga meditation audios provide us with techniques that we can use whenever we feel like it, such as when out walking, preparing a meal, catching a bus or train, going shopping, going to sleep at night, lying in bed during a sleepless night, or waking up in the morning. But this shouldn't be regarded as 'a practice' aimed at a specific objective. It's a gentle, enjoyable and playful exploration of the body that we can undertake whenever we feel drawn to do so.

Little by little, we begin to feel the body as it truly is:

Our true body *is* Consciousness. It is Consciousness that houses all the sensations that we normally refer to as 'the body'.

Our true body is open, transparent, weightless and limitless. It is inherently empty and yet contains all things within itself. That is why such an empty body is also inherently loving.

It is the welcoming embrace of all things.

[Rupert Spira: *The Transparency of Things*. Our True Body]

Contemplation

Enlightenment is the end of one process – thinking and feeling oneself to be a separate, limited self – but the beginning of another – the realignment of the body, mind and world with this new, experiential understanding.

[Rupert Spira]