

## Resistance

Resistance to the current situation and the desire for something different are the two main forms in which the separate self, or ego, manifests. The feelings 'I don't like what is going on' and 'I want something other than what is going on', to a greater or lesser extent govern our lives.

But that doesn't mean that all preferences arise from ego. We need to discriminate between those preferences which are a natural conditioning of the body-mind and those which revolve around a feeling of separation:

RS: Some preferences are part of the natural conditioning of the body. For instance, the body operates well within certain temperatures. If we are exposed to a temperature that is either below the norm or above the norm, there is a natural resistance of the body. The body of a polar bear has a different conditioning and therefore doesn't feel 'I don't like it', when it's -25°C. But we *do* feel 'I don't like it'. And that's a conditioning that belongs to the body. It's a natural feeling. And there are also psychological conditionings, for instance our minds have been trained – whether we know it or not – to appreciate Western harmony, but not the harmony that is used in Chinese music or Indian music. So Chinese music, for a Westerner, is sometimes hard to listen to – we have a preference for Western harmony. That's a conditioning that's equivalent to the temperature conditioning at the level of the mind. That conditioning doesn't come from the belief and feeling of being separate. It does come from being a separate mind, but it doesn't come from a sense of separation. ...

It's just a question of seeing what aspect of our resistance comes from a feeling of being separate. For instance, we walk into the dining-room and we feel contracted because we are afraid of having to sit next to a stranger and talk to them. That is not a natural conditioning of the body. It's not a natural conditioning of being Western, or English or French. It's a conditioning that comes from feeling separate and afraid. That's the resistance that causes suffering. And that always comes from the feeling of separation – the feeling that I am temporary, finite. I either need to protect myself from objects and others, or I need to complete myself through the acquisition of objects or others. A certain segment of our seeking and resistance comes from the sense of separation. That's the important thing to find out when you feel resistance. Is this a natural resistance of the body, is it a natural resistance of my Western conditioning, or is it a conditioning that comes specifically from a feeling of separation? That's the only resistance that needs to be investigated. You don't need to investigate the fact that your body likes certain temperatures, you don't need to investigate that your mind prefers Western harmony to Chinese harmony, if indeed it does. The resistance that needs investigating is the resistance that comes from the sense of separation. And what is to be investigated then: the separate self that you imagine yourself to be.

*Q: So if I get to know someone and I feel 'I don't like this person', what would be the appropriate approach then? ...*

RS: Stop seeing them and go onto another ... But if you find yourself in a situation, for instance, where you have to spend time with that person every day – say they work in the same studio or office as you – then it is necessary to explore the sense of separation. But if you don't need to, no, just move away. In other words, allow the natural conditioning of the body and the mind to draw you towards certain people, certain places, certain activities, ...

So this understanding doesn't prevent us from discriminating between behaviour that is intelligent and loving, and behaviour that is not. On the contrary, behaviour that once appeared

to be loving and intelligent, we now see that underneath it, it is informed by a desire for approval, a desire to be loved etc. We become very sensitive, both to that behaviour in ourselves – most importantly in ourselves – but also we notice it in other people. And we don't have any agenda with it in other people, but we don't respond to it. In other words, we don't get busy trying to point out to the other person, what they are doing. It's not our business. But we don't want to relate to an ego. We don't relate to that kind of behaviour, unless we are in a situation that demands it. There may be situations between a parent and a child, between two friends, between two neighbours where there's something that needs to be explored. But unless they are in direct relationship to you, it's not our business.

[24/11/2016 Separation is an illusion]

Here is some practical advice on how to deal with the sort of egoic resistance that most of us experience from time to time – if not with our partners, as in this case, then perhaps with close friends or family members:

*Q: I've been on a spiritual path like this for 45 years at least, and I do understand the principles that you are talking about. But every now and again, somebody, my wife, might say something that irritates me, and I'm totally astonished at that happening. ... I find myself in reaction, and that seems like 'wow, why is that happening to me now after 45 years, surely I've gone past this?'*

RS: Well a wife has a very special role in a man's life, and of course vice versa. Amongst other things, it is to weed out any remnants of feelings that arise on behalf of a separate self. So when your wife irritates you in this way, the first thing you should feel is gratitude towards her, for exposing a little remnant of the ego which without her, you might not have been aware of. And having thanked her in your heart, if not in the moment – you can thank her later, but it's difficult in the moment sometimes to – then instead of expressing your irritation or justifying your irritation, just ask yourself: On whose behalf is this irritation rising? Does this irritation speak on behalf of the presence of awareness that I know myself to be? Or does it speak on behalf of a separate self that feels separate from the other, who is in some ways offended or diminished by what she has said, or hasn't said. Investigate, and trace that sense of self back, and as you well know, if you trace the sense of self, the sense of I back to its essence, we don't find a temporary, finite, irritated self. We find the open, empty space of awareness. And stay there for as long as it takes for the irritation to dissolve, rather than entering into a battle with your wife. Then when it has dissolved, you can go back to your wife, and you either apologise for your unreasonable reactivity, or there may have been something in her behaviour that you felt didn't come from her knowledge of herself as the presence of awareness, and then you can say so. Because of the loving connection you have, you can say it without irritation, not blame or judgement. I'm presuming you have the kind of relationship where these things can be explored and shared.

But don't blame and judge yourself for these little outbursts of irritation or reactivity. As long as they are diminishing both in intensity and in frequency, you know that the residues of the separate self are gradually dissolving. And the separate self, as we all know, is tenacious. It outlives the recognition of our true nature. So these habits continue, and it is possible to cooperate with the dissolution of these residues – your question is an example of cooperating with this dissolution of the residues of the ego. But don't judge yourself, or blame yourself, or feel guilty, because that is a way in which the separate self comes back in through the back door. First of all you feel irritated, and then you feel guilty that you feel irritated, because you expect these feelings to have ceased appearing. And that feeling of guilt is another form of the separate self reasserting itself. So you just acknowledge it, you notice the irritation, you explore the self on whose behalf it arises, you either apologise to your wife or you discuss it with her, and then you

forget it. Move on, learn from the situation, don't let it leave a trace of guilt in you.

[20<sup>th</sup> August 2017, Retreat in Tuscany: *I Am That I Am Is the Highest Truth*]

The Direct Path teaching, when really taken into the heart, is a threat to the illusory separate self. So we shouldn't feel surprised if resistance to the teaching arises from time to time. This can take several different forms. For some, it manages to remain undercover through a subtle rejection of those parts of the teaching that are seen as the main threat. We may simply ignore those parts, or we may justify our rejection of them by saying 'my previous, traditional path says something quite different which I feel more comfortable with. So I'll stick to that.' Others succumb to feelings of frustration, failure or despair: 'I'm no good at this, I keep forgetting, I keep falling into the same trap etc.' This was Rupert's advice to someone who has had the understanding 'I am awareness' on a number of occasions, but sometimes feels a strong resistance to this, accompanied by a tightness in the throat. She felt she was looking in the teaching for safety which is not there.

RS: You are seeking safety, certainty, confirmation. The resistance that you feel is already appearing in that. This resistance is like a tension, like a current in the ocean. That resistance is seeking resolution, but the resolution is the water that it is appearing in. The current in the ocean is already made out of the stuff for which it is in search. Your resistance is already bathed in this safe, loving, presence of awareness. It's not necessary to get rid of the resistance. The resistance will, in time, gradually relax. This resistance is just a tension of sensing and feeling. But what is that tension appearing in?

Q: *In awareness?*

RS: Yes, but don't just put a cold word on it. It's in this safe, warm, loving bath of awareness. Just leave it soaking there. What *is* the resistance? A few thoughts and feelings. So what? At any one moment, what is your resistance? A tension in your throat and a few commentating thoughts. It's not so bad. It's not like a migraine or a toothache. It's much milder than that. It is already appearing in this safety, in this openness. It doesn't have to go away.

[26/4/2016 Buckland Hall retreat: *The true safety of awareness.*]

Sometimes feelings of resistance or tension arise which have no obvious cause or story attached to them. They are more like uncomfortable sensations in the body. This seems to be quite common as we spend more time abiding as the presence of awareness. Part of the aim of Rupert's yoga meditations is to bring these feelings to the surface. So the occurrence of such resistances or tensions is a sign that the teaching is working. This is Rupert's explanation and advice:

Q: *There is still a remaining feeling of resistance in me – not to something. It hangs around, comes and goes, but it's not resistance to something. ...*

RS: This resistance that you describe, the resistance that isn't a resistance to any particular object, event or person, it's like a deep, residual sense of lack that's right at the core of the sense of separation. You don't feel 'I lack something particular'. You look around at your life, and you're satisfied in your life and there's nothing you're particularly resisting, but there is still at a very deep level, it's like an existential sense of lack, which is right at the core of the separate self. When you look at your life and think 'what am I lacking?', you think 'no, I have everything I want', but it's still the last remnant of lack, that's buried very deep in the body.

Q: *I feel it's going to last forever because I look at it, I welcome it, and I do the exercises in awareness and go inside ...*

RS: Just be patient. If you are truly welcoming or allowing this sense of lack, it's not a problem. In other words, if it did last forever, it wouldn't deprive you of your peace. And your question betrays a slight desire still to get rid of it, otherwise you wouldn't be asking the question. ...

*Q: I'm trying.*

RS: But if you're trying, it means you are fighting a resistance. You have to see that what you already are is totally open, totally allowing, totally resistance-less awareness. Awareness doesn't have to try to welcome anything. So if you are trying, you are standing as a separate self, trying to welcome something that is unpleasant. That separate self will never be able to do it. The separate self cannot welcome this resistance or lack. You have to stand as the space of awareness. You have to know yourself as that. Then there'll be no effort.

[22/8/2017 Retreat in Tuscany: *Consciousness is love*]

## Contemplation

*Our Self, Awareness, is like an open, empty, allowing space. As such, we resist nothing, hold nothing, seek nothing. Thus, happiness is our essential nature.*