

Devotion

Is there any role for devotion in the direct path? In Rupert's expression of the non-dual teaching, the answer is a definite 'yes':

I consider this path to be a path of devotion or a path of love. A path of devotion to the absolute truth of our experience. This unwavering devotion to that which is real in our experience. In fact, I consider it to be a path that is very finely balanced between love and knowledge. Because we are not afraid to use the mind in this very clean, clinical way. But it's not a dry, intellectual path, because what we are exploring is experience. Our ideas are only ideas that come from our own deepest experience. It is our love, it is our greatest happiness to stick close to what is true and real in our experience. So it is simultaneously a path of knowledge and love.

[1st March 2015 [Devotion to the Absolute Truth of Our Experience](#)]

Rupert suggests that if we are going by the path of devotion, it must be total devotion to what we love the most. Half-hearted devotion or devotion to something that is not what we really love the most, is not going to bring us what we really want:

RS: You may find that as the name for what you love the most changes, always be devoted to what you love the most, whatever name you give it. If at one moment it seems to be called consciousness, be totally devoted to that. But if at another moment it is love, be totally devoted to that; if astonishment, to that. And to be devoted, means to give yourself to it – your heart, your mind, your body, your being. Give everything.

Q: I agree with what you are saying. I like the idea of devotion without a devoted one. That's what I feel right now. Just devotion. Pure devotion.

RS: You're right. To be totally devoted, means to give oneself absolutely. So it's not possible to retain oneself as a separate self, if one is going to be devoted. So devotion is the surrender of that one. We can't be utterly devoted and maintain a position of the separate self. They're mutually exclusive. But don't worry about the separate self. Just be totally devoted to what you love the most at every moment. That will take care of the separate self.

Q: So this works, of course, with adoration and surrender?

RS: It's the same. Adore that which you love the most. Only that which we love the most is worthy of our adoration. Why would we adore something which is less than the thing we love the most? It wouldn't be adoration. There would always be something we loved more than what we adored. So allow yourself to be devoted, to adore. But always check that what you are adoring, what you are devoted to, is truly what you love the most. Just *that* would be enough. Just that. No self-enquiry, just that would be enough.

And then if at times you are in doubt about what you truly love the most, then you can use the kind of explorations that we've been doing here to help you reconnect again with what you truly want in life, and then surrender to that totally. Give yourself to that totally – your heart, your mind, your body, your activities, everything.

[20th August 2011: [Devotion to what you Truly Love](#)]

But wouldn't that approach trap us in duality? An inside devotee and an outside object of devotion? That is certainly the case with the traditional, progressive paths of devotion. But the direct path works differently. It requires the dissolution either of the devoted one, or of the object of devotion.

When one of these dissolves, then the other, in time, will automatically follow. Here is Rupert's explanation of how this happens:

RS: I used to have a very strong habit as a child, to thank God – to thank God in a childish way. And I would go to bed and I would thank God for all sorts of things that I had liked, that had been nice that day, or for my mother and my father, in that very childish way. It was a very strong habit, and I notice sometimes it comes back now and I say out loud like I did when I was a seven-year-old boy "Thank you, God". Literally, it just comes up, out loud, like that. So it's a very strong child-like habit, which is not a problem.

But as we move from a bhakti-oriented path where there was always an inside self that was expressing gratitude or devotion towards an outside object or a person or God – and these two arise together, the inside self and the outside other, they arise together. If the sense of there being nobody or nothing out there to thank, if that one, the object, dissolves, this one [*the subject*] must dissolve with it, because they are two sides of the same coin. You can't have an inside self without an outside other, you can't have an outside God without an inside self. So it doesn't really matter which one we explore. It doesn't matter whether the so-called outside 'God' dissolves first, because when it does dissolve, this one [*the inside self*] will dissolve behind the scenes. Or we explore the inside self and we see that that is non-existent, and then this one [*the outside God*] will dissolve behind the scenes.

If in your case, it seems that the one to whom you are devoted dissolves and yet there seems still to be a residue of an inside self, that is going outwards towards nothing, it's an old habit in you. The inside part of this duo has yet to be dissolved. But I wouldn't worry about that because gratitude itself is the expression of the dissolution of the inside self and the outside other. That is already the dissolution of the self which you are now seeking. So it seems that there is still, due to your past conditioning, an old residue of thinking 'I am devoting myself to ...', but the devotion itself is already an expression that this dissolution is already well on its way.

So don't worry about whether there's an inside self or not. Stay with the gratitude. Let it take up an old form of subject-object if that's the way it takes its shape, but just stay with the gratitude and allow that gratitude, in its own time, just to purify itself, from all subjectivity and objectivity, until there's just this objectless and subjectless gratitude. And when gratitude is relieved of this polarity, of this direction, what is it revealed as? Just pure, objectless love. That's what gratitude is – it's love with a direction. So as the direction just naturally melts, it's just this love that remains.

[25th October 2011 [What is Devotion?](#)]

How can we discover what it is that we love the most and avoid attachment to something lesser? This is where we can use the method of self-enquiry. In *Presence Volume II*, Rupert gives this possible line of investigation:

To be truly devoted means to give our whole self to the object of our devotion at all times. The only object worthy of or even available for such devotion or love must be something that is always present, for we cannot give ourselves completely to something that is intermittent.

There is no true object of devotion, because all objects are intermittent. Only Awareness is ever-present, and therefore only Awareness merits true devotion. And what could give Awareness this devotion? Obviously an intermittent object such as a body or a mind cannot render devotion to something that is present when it itself is not. Therefore, only Awareness is able to impart this devotion to itself.

It is only Awareness that can be truly loved and it is only Awareness that can truly love. However, Awareness does not love and is not loved. It *is* love. So the highest form of love or devotion is simply to abide as Awareness, knowingly. Any other sort of devotion would be the devotion of an imagined entity for an imagined object.

However, the imagined entity that looks for a direction in which to turn and for something to turn towards does not realise that the attention it is apparently using for this purpose is already the Awareness that it seeks. It is like a current of water searching the ocean for water.

‘Lord, Thou art the love with which I love Thee.’

Every object or direction which appears as a possible recipient of the mind’s devotion is an object it has created within itself and cannot therefore be the true object of its devotion. Any object is simply more mind.

As the mind searches for a direction in which to turn, it is, without knowing it to begin with, tracing itself back to its source. Finally, having explored all directions, it reaches a dead end. It comes to the knowledge that there is no known direction in which it can turn, nor is there an object worthy of true devotion. In short, the mind cannot know what devotion is.

With this understanding the mind falls silent, which means it dissolves. What is revealed *is* devotion. Devotion is what we *are*, not something we *do*.

[*Presence Vol II: The Intimacy of All Experience, Devotion*]

There is a well-established tradition in India of devotion to the Guru, and many of the progressive paths of *bhakti* are based on this. Then after some years, when the disciple is ready, the Guru helps the disciple to dissolve the distinction between devotee and object of devotion. This was the process Dr Francis Roles went through with the Shankaracharya. After several decades, once Dr Roles had recognised his true nature, their relationship became one of friendship rather than Guru and disciple.

But in the 21st century, where hierarchy is much less strong within society, the idea of guru-worship is anathema to many of us. In the West we have been educated to question everything we are told, so it feels wrong to simply believe what a teacher tells us. However, many contemporary non-dual teachers have encouraged this traditional form of devotion. This is Rupert’s comment on that approach to teaching:

The purpose of a teacher is to liberate us from the dependence on objects or people for peace and happiness. So a teacher that more or less subtly, encourages us either through his or her words or usually through his or her behaviour to become devoted to and thus dependent on himself or herself is sending us a mixed message. ... A true teacher will take your devotion and gently, but swiftly and efficiently, turn it round and redirect it to its source.

[12th October 2016 [The Responsibility of a Teacher](#)]

Unfortunately, the prevalence of this kind of student-teacher relationship deters some people from approaching a teacher. Instead, they read books and watch YouTube clips from many different teachers, and perhaps attend a few meetings. From each teacher or teaching, they choose what appeals to them and reject, or more usually subconsciously skip over what doesn’t appeal. In this way, however hard they work in their studying and spiritual practice, they always retain a tiny fragment of a separate self that says ‘I am something’. ‘I’m an intelligent person, I’ll listen to lots of ideas and make up my own mind. Anyway, since there’s only one truth, so it doesn’t matter where I get it from.’ It can take many decades to realise that this approach is very unlikely to work.

Words are nothing more than pointers. It is through our relationship with a teacher that we learn to go from these pointers to what they are pointing to, in our own experience. A good teacher will tailor the teaching individually to the situation, needs and conditioning of each student. It goes without saying, that dead teachers can't help in that way! It's certainly important to look around, explore, and find a teacher with whom you resonate. But having found one, the most efficient approach is to stick with that teacher, setting aside all others, until you find there is nothing more you can learn from him or her. Then start looking around again.

Sometimes people feel that the imperturbable happiness they seek requires some time following a progressive path, before coming to the direct path. They may feel a need to follow an established tradition, involving not just advice from a teacher, but also specific practices such as one of the various forms of objective meditation. In a discussion at Mercy Center, a questioner likened this preparatory activity to the on-ramp or slip road that you use to join a freeway. Here is a short extract from Rupert's response:

How much time do you want to spend on the slip road going to the freeway? The bare minimum. But in most cases, the slip road becomes the freeway and people spend the rest of their life on the slip road. They never make the freeway. And in fact their identity becomes invested in staying on the slip road. Their whole identity becomes wrapped up in their teacher, their tradition. They approach this tradition or this teacher in the first place to be liberated from their attachments, and yet they end up attached to the tradition or the teacher ...

I feel that the teacher should be willing to receive this projection, but should be skilful and should turn that projection around and deliver it back to the place for which it truly seeks which is the essential being or the seeking person. And in my opinion, if the teacher is a good teacher, that process will not take long. If he or she is skilful, and loving and efficient, there is no need to spend long on the slip road. ...

I don't mean to suggest there isn't great love and respect towards the teacher. But there is equal love and respect towards the so-called student. They are on a level. In fact even the terms teacher and student are not quite appropriate. It is relationship of friendship, of mutual love and respect.

I was talking many years ago with Francis on a retreat about intimate relationships – ordinary, romantic intimate relationships. He said that for there to be true intimacy in a relationship, there can be no hierarchy. We all know that. And he looked at me and said 'and Rupert that is true of the relationship between a student and a teacher'. ... He said to me once, 'a good teacher is like a slippery fish'. A good teacher is never a place where you can invest your identity. A good teacher will always slip out from underneath your grasp if you try to make him or her an object.

[Mercy Center, 26th October 2016 [The Responsibility of a Teacher - Part 2](#)]

Francis Lucille gives this advice:

Your search for the truth should be totally open-minded, free from any beliefs, or from any intellectual attachment to a specific religion or philosophy. It should be based solely on your intimate feeling of harmony, understanding, and devotion. Contemplate your innate beauty, intelligence, and love as you spontaneously respond to a majestic sunset, a scripture that points directly to the truth, a meeting with a friend who is free from the notion of being a personal entity, or more generally, to any situation in your life. In this way, your investigation remains lively, innocent, and effortless. It will lead you inexorably and joyfully to that background which

is the common goal of religion and philosophy.

[Francis Lucille, *Eternity Now: The Direct Path*]

Contemplation

'Lord, Thou art the love with which I love Thee.' Let every direction towards which your longing flows dissolve in this understanding, and the love that is at its heart will remain.

[Rupert Spira]