

## Realigning the Body-Mind

When, for so many years, our way of thinking and acting has been based on the premise of being a separate entity, it can be hard to see how our habitual reactions and interactions with the world could ever change. We want to *do* something to realign the body-mind. An initial glimpse of our true nature is not usually enough to uproot the tree of ignorance. But as Francis explains, it's important not to get diverted into picking up leaves in the hope that this will uproot the tree:

*Q: You were talking about meditation being like picking up the leaves, but if you want to stop picking up leaves, then you need to uproot the tree. So, if my practice of meditation is to just be and let experience be what it is, it's hard to see how that uproots the tree. To uproot the tree, do you have to do it mentally with logic and reason and rub out the belief of being a separate, limited person?*

FL: If we seem to have logical reason to believe that we are a separate person, then it's only fair to use logic and reason to uproot this belief. Most people believe they have logical and rational reason to believe that they are a separate and limited consciousness. If we don't have any such beliefs, then there is nothing to uproot.

So the question boils down to what do I believe to be? If the honest answer to this question is, well, I am whatever it is which is hearing these words right now, and I don't know myself to be anything other than that, then that's fine, there is nothing to uproot. But if I know myself to be a man, a woman, a human being, a mind, then it's a different story.

It is this glimpse of the lie of separation that really puts us on the path. It is this initial glimpse. I think it's Huineng who says in the Platform Sutra that once you have this initial glimpse – sometimes it's translated as samadhi – then it will be followed by many, many more. As many as there are grains of sand on the banks of the Ganga River, he says. So that's really the uprooting of the tree.

The rest is the picking up of the leaves, if you want, because you have a wedding for your daughter, and you're expecting guests next weekend for the wedding, so you pick up the leaves manually. But if you're not in a hurry, or if you're not interested, you can leave the leaves there, and the wind eventually will take care of them. But it's very important to know the distinction between the uprooting of the tree and the picking up of the leaves. Because often on the lower path, there is this misunderstanding that picking up the leaves is going to uproot the tree. Good luck with that.

So, there was this story in the Chan tradition, the original Zen, that there were two candidates for the succession of the fifth patriarch. And one of them wrote a little poem in which he says: we have to constantly polish our Buddha nature, polish our mind, polish our consciousness, whatever you call it, to make sure that it remains pure. That's the picking up of the leaves. But the other monk, who was an obscure monk working in the kitchen but who had a real glimpse, surreptitiously during the night he wrote his own poem in which he says: because our Buddha nature is intrinsically pure, there is no point polishing it. He had uprooted the tree, and the fifth patriarch recognized him and gave him the bowl and the robe, which are the signs of the transmission of the dharma.

So, it's okay to pick up the leaves if you have uprooted the tree. It's useless to do so, hoping that it is going to uproot the tree.

Now, the uprooting of the tree doesn't happen necessarily as a result of a rational thought. But since most of us believe to have good reasons to believe to be separate entities, a simple way to this glimpse is the revisiting of these reasons we believe to have. It's a very simple way.

*Q: I think there's many moments in the day when I don't consciously go around thinking how things are separate. But it becomes most apparent if there's a perceived threat. Fear, for example. I've perceived a threat, even if somebody's just shouting at me, shouting my name, or something non-physical. It's hard to believe that whatever that is that's scared, or the conceptual framework that something's in danger here, it's hard to imagine that that would ever go away.*

FL: Well, the fear in case of a clear and present danger for the body will never go away, it's normal, it's a normal reaction. It's programmed, not programmed, it's wired in our genes. But there is another fear which is more fundamental, which is the fear of absolute disappearance, which, unlike the natural fear which appears in the presence of a clear and present danger, this other fear is constant, it never disappears, it disappears with a glimpse, yes, but other than that it never disappears. Because it is due to the identification of consciousness with the body-mind instrument. As long as there is this identification, because the body-mind instrument is impermanent, we believe that the awareness, or Buddha nature, is equally impermanent, and that's the cause of suffering. And to believe to be a separate self.

There is a Buddhist saying that samsara is the distinction between self and non-self. As long as there is other than self, or more than one's self, there is suffering, there is dukkha. And it doesn't mean there is no self, it means there is no separate, limited self. That's very important to understand, because of course there is a self. The fact in this moment that my words are being heard, is beyond the shadow of a doubt. There is something which is hard to define. You can call it hearing, perceiving, or you can call it awareness. But there is something there, the reality of which is obvious and undeniable. And that's what I call self. Because it's really what we call I. I am the one hearing the words – that's me, that's not somebody else, that's me, that's myself. So there is a self.

The question is, is this self limited or separate, or dependent upon the body for its existence? Most people would say yes, yes, obviously. You're crazy to think otherwise. You're crazy to even have this question. But it is this identification of the cause of suffering which is very important.

*Q: Can we move beyond that in the act of accepting? I can hear myself wanting to be some other way. Not somebody who gets angry, not somebody who has fear. Who would like to get beyond anger, to get beyond fear.*

FL: If you want to become a better, limited self, it turns out in traditions it's through an accumulation of merits, for good karma. But it's a different ballgame because it's like going to the bank and saving money. And then you use up the money, but once you use up all of your savings, you are out of money. So you are not that much advanced.

It's in fact an obstacle because the more we invest in the perfecting of the limited entity we believe to be, the more we have invested, the more attached we are to our investment. We get attached to our beliefs. There is a sad story of this man in France. He was victimized by some con artist in Africa who tells him, I need 2,000 euros to finally get access to this big amount of money that I'm owed. Please give me 2,000 euros. When I get my money, I give you 10,000. So the guy started giving 2,000. He was an old man and a little weak in his mind. So the con artist then said, OK, I need 10,000 more euros. Like that, he ended up giving him all of his money. And then he realized that he had been conned and in fact, he killed himself. It's a very sad story. ...

I'm mentioning this story because of the situation he got himself into. He had given so much money to the con artist, he couldn't admit to himself that it was a mistake. He couldn't face that fact until he was completely out of money, and even then he couldn't face the fact. So it is the same. Often we invest in the perfecting of something, of our spiritual image. But this spiritual image is a limited person. So we invest in a lot of worshipping, doing yoga, meditation, activity, etc. And we invest in being around the wrong type of teacher, or with the wrong type of doctrine, which is based upon ignorance. The more we do so, the more we perpetuate ignorance. So it requires for us to question everything, to question the scriptures, to question whatever the Buddha has said, or Francis said, or whoever says it, and to solely rely on our heart and on our intelligence.

Truth is not a democracy, it's a strange type of territory. And we even have to question ourselves, our belief, from moment to moment. Because there is a great relief in the certainty of our uncertainty. It's a negative approach in a sense, it's a simplification. What can I be absolutely certain of? To go back to basics in a sense. Can I be absolutely certain of reincarnation? Well, beats me. Beliefs are useless unless they are verified experientially.

[Francis Lucille, 16/4/2023 Temecula Satsang]

The yoga meditations that Francis, Rupert and Ellen teach can help us explore the sense of separation and the sense of localisation in the body. But they are just a small part of the realignment process. As discussed in the following dialogue, life itself becomes our teacher:

*Q: There's all this conditioning that needs to be integrated and aligned with the awareness and realization, and aligned with actions and the expression. Is that what the yoga meditations are designed to do, to help with that alignment process?*

FL: They are the beginning, because the most important is living our life. It's daily life that's the most important – our interaction with others and our interaction with events in our life. But it starts with what we think, what we feel, and what we perceive. So the realignment of the way we think, of the way we feel – meaning the body – and the way we perceive the world, with the truth is important. So that that gets divided into two main aspects. One is the way we think, and the transformative element is the understanding of what is said here on what people call an 'intellectual level', which is not intellectual, and which has transformative power. The understanding that you have no evidence whatsoever that awareness is limited and dependent upon the body-mind, and then, as a result, the opening of the possibility that awareness is universal and that it is the reality of all things.

And then there is the way we perceive this body and the world which is the other element here. And through the conditioning of ignorance, we identify with 'this' [*the body*], as being separate from 'that', the rest of the world – the body and the world. If it is true that awareness is universal and not limited by or dependent on the human body-mind. And if awareness is what we are really, then awareness being universal implies that the universe is the real body of awareness, and therefore our real body. Most people would say 'no that's not the way I perceive my body and the world – I perceive them as separate'. So there is also work to be done here to reconcile this universal truth with the way we perceive the body and the world.

The fundamental transformation starts from a glimpse, and the first is like an explosion or an expansion. As this first glimpse expands, then on the one hand it affects the way we think, and on the other, the way we perceive the body and the world. Then as this expansion grows, it affects the way we interact with other people, the way we interact with the world, the way we

react to events. But it's not necessarily in this order, in this progression. That doesn't refer to progression over time, because we can act at every moment depending on the context. We can reflect on the way we interact with that person, the way we react to that event, the way we perceive, the way we think, the way we feel. So experientially, all of that is dealt with not in a specific order, but on a need-to-deal basis as situations come up.

*Q: So life becomes your guru?*

FL: Exactly. The physical guru in a sense only initiates the process and initiates the fire and sometimes helps you blow on the fire to make it burn. ...

*Q: Ramana says that just abiding in the self has that kind of fire or transformational effect – to be in that presence. Do you have a sense of what he might mean?*

FL: Yes. When you're in the presence of a teacher, and a teacher in this case is any human being in which at that moment awareness doesn't choose to play the game of separation, so if you are in the presence of a teacher according to this definition, there is something that takes place, some kind of transmission that Ramana called 'the silent transmission' and some kind of empathy. ... That happens by itself. Then what does it mean in this context to abide in the self? It means simply you are there, enjoying it, don't try to fix it. Stay as you are, just abide as the self, don't try to fix it, you're good. But if you ask me for my definition of abiding in the self, it's very simple: we abide in the self the moment we don't believe to be anything else.

[Francis Lucille, 22/4/2023, Online retreat]

Every time we experience a strong emotion, there is an opportunity for enquiry. In the early stages of the spiritual path, before a liberating glimpse, enquiry is best done in moments of peace and tranquillity. But once we have a clear understanding of our true nature, it's by revisiting our enquiry during difficult times that we deepen our understanding and strengthen our alignment with the truth of our being. This is Francis's description of how to respond to emotions:

FL: What I call emotion is relatively big ticket items, big waves if you will, such as anger, resentment fear, panic, uncontrollable desire – things like that. So that is felt in the body. Emotion means the sensations in motion. There is nothing that we should do about this, or that we can possibly do, because any attempt to do something about them, to control them, is doomed to fail. Once the train has left the station, it has to run its course up until it stops on its own. You cannot stop this train. But by watching the emotion, by watching it and giving it space and time to unfold, not trying to control it, because the source from which it originates is still fresh, it will reveal itself.

For instance, somebody tells you you're stupid and you have this big emotion and you want to punch the guy in the face. So what I'm saying is, don't obey the emotion, don't punch the guy in the face. At the same time, I am saying don't try to control this emotion, don't try to change what you feel in the body. Be completely neutral, observe. Then out of this observation, there is intelligence and you see the source. How did it come about? The guy told me 'you're stupid'. So already I have moved away from the bodily sensations that I try to control, to something else, an event that has occurred and someone telling me something. Now what happened when this person told me 'you're stupid'? The emotion didn't come right away. There was something of a thought because what I heard was conceptual 'you are stupid', and there was a 'me' in it, there was 'me' as a concept. The pronoun 'you' is a concept, and I translate it as 'me'. Then the next thing that comes is frustration, anger, 'how did *he* dare say that or do that to *me*'?

It didn't start at the physical level. This emotion didn't start on the level of the body. It started on an intellectual level in the mind. It aggravated the 'me' concept I have. So that's where it started. In other words as long as I believe to be a separate 'me' who can be stupid, I will experience this frustration and this anger. It's unavoidable. The question is am I such a stupid, potentially stupid, or actually stupid, separate individual consciousness? And that's where we join the investigation. If we investigated enough, and we have distanced ourselves from this belief to be a separate person, we know I am this consciousness, I am this all-knowing intelligence shared by all. So this insult 'you're stupid', instead of hitting me, just flows by because there is no target for it.

Or alternatively if you want to teach a lesson to this person, you can play the game. That's also a possibility. What you do depends on the circumstances. But if you play the game, you are not really involved in it. ... You can choose to play the part. You can choose to pretend you are angry you can choose to do that. It's like when you say to a child 'I have told you so many times to shut the door, *shut the damn door*'. It doesn't mean you hate your child. It means simply that you are trying to be efficient. So sometimes anger doesn't relate to identification with the person. In this case I call it outrage, or practical anger, to get something done, to get a result.

[Francis Lucille, 22/4/2023, Online retreat]

It can sometimes seem that the world is intent on taking us away from our true nature. Ignorance is rewarded, truth is outlawed, fake news and social manipulation abound. People we interact with try to drag us back into misery. But if we see and understand the dynamics of what is going on, it doesn't disturb us. As Francis says, we will find other friends who don't behave that way and they will find us:

*Q: Why do certain people want you to suffer when they're having a difficult moment? My reaction has started to change. Instead of shouting, I might not respond. And then they would be really irritated by me just sitting there and just listening to them.*

FL: Because they want you to understand their suffering, so by inflicting suffering on you, they hope you understand their suffering. So the first attitude would be to understand their suffering, and then to show them that their suffering has no valid reason, that their suffering is based upon a lie, the lie of separation. Basically, they want you to authenticate their false identity. And you are like the website administrator or manager, saying, well, 'show me evidence that that's your true identity'. And it's frustrating to them that you don't condone or confirm or agree with them about their identity, who they are.

Because the way the game is being played in ignorance is, 'I agree about your identity provided you agree on mine'. 'I scratch your back if you scratch mine'. And you see a lot of social interactions are based on this principle, and they are quite boring. It's like, I'm going to listen to your story and agree with you provided you listen to mine and agree with me.

It's interesting to see what happens when you stop doing that, because then they feel you are very threatening. At first you are going to find these types of interaction quite boring, because they are not based on anything true, and they are quite repetitive. And they are going to find you quite boring too, because they don't understand your interest. They don't understand where you are coming from. They will think you are weird, or you are crazy, or you are not able to reason intelligently or cogently, you don't have any critical thinking, or whatever. The good news is you will find other friends, other friends will find you, and it will be with whom you may have more creative and interesting and loving interactions. ...

Of course there are the ones towards whom we have responsibilities. That's a different story. But ultimately our responsibilities are not towards people. They are towards truth, love and beauty. Not towards a person. In other words, we do what we feel is right, given the circumstances.

[Francis Lucille, 16/4/2023 Temecula Satsang]

## **Contemplation**

*When the truth is shared through understanding alone it is a small thing; it is only an intellectual agreement with the essential sweetness missing. But when we share the depth of our experience it is a different matter altogether.*

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