

Pure Love, Tantra and Self-Experience

Ram (James Swartz)

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Ram: Dear Janice, what an eloquent, beautiful letter. By and large your thinking is excellent. There is not much I can argue with; however, I will make a few comments that might add to your understanding.

Janice: Thank you for sending this variety of *satsangs*. Reading them is very reassuring. They help to monitor the mind. I have been in retreat with my teacher lately. Lucky me! In this circle of inspiration, clarity and devotion I could relax and just let knowledge seep into me. Thank you for sending me your answers to Mary's questions. I have a question regarding your text though. You said:

"Why do wise people not fall in love even though they know how wonderful it feels? Because they have knowledge. They know that it feels good on one level and it feels rotten on another level. The joy sits side by side with the anxiety."

Janice: I actually wonder why any wise person should try to stop "falling in love" from happening.

Ram: The love I was referring to is not the love you so eloquently speak of in the following paragraph. The love you speak of is pure love, which, as you say, is the very nature of the self. The love I was referring to is needy love, the desire for completeness, the love that always creates attachment to an object.

A wise person knows that he or she is love. This experience-based knowledge keeps him or her from falling in love. You understand this when you say, "So I think if any wise woman or man would stop falling in love, then it would be only because they are already there, they are already in love, they are love."

Janice: For Janice love appears as one of the easiest ways to experience non-duality. In fact the experience of non-duality seems to me like a very deep experience of love. I know I'm talking experience. But any knowledge I have seems to tell me that I am love... this deep and utter "yes" to any part of me that only appears as something other. A "yes" established in equanimity.

Love, just everyday love, is this deep "yes" occurring in Janice's mind when it is clear enough to see reality. Maybe it sometimes appears to be mixed up with want/wanting/ longing. But it is just obscured by it, yet never affected. It never changes. Love, as I perceive it, is a facet of oneness that also appears as compassion, joy or equanimity. I experience these facets as mere sides of this complete oneness and as inseparable from each other. Or (trying to be more precise) it is one facet of how the fact that this is a non-dual reality appears in my heart-mind.

Also, to try to stop falling in love from fear of unpleasant emotions seems not so wise to me. If I know this reality to be complete and non-dual, why should I be afraid

of anything?

Ram: It is true that if you know that this is a benign non-dual reality fear does not happen. However, if one's knowledge of this fact is a bit shaky, then it is possible, when the desire for love arises in a mind that is not pure (the desire for love does not arise in a pure mind, because it experiences love every minute), for one to allow the mind to fall in love.

Mind you, there is nothing wrong with either a wise person or a fool falling in love if he or she is willing to accept the consequences with a glad heart. But when one's self-knowledge is steady one understands clearly that the pleasure equals the pain in a dual reality, i.e. the mind, wherein love happens; one knows from experience that the joy is always negated by the miseries of attachment. So this person understands that there is nothing to gain by falling in love and will keep the mind resting in the self rather than allow it to follow the cravings that arise in it. Craving for being in love may arise, however, in a mind that knows the self because of residual *vasanas* brought about by previous experiences of passionate love. Love is pleasurable, and the memory of it causes the mind to desire it.

Being in love with someone will not produce a more or better love than love of the self for the self by the self. And it will always have unpleasant elements in it. One may think that the joy of being in love justifies the pain, but when the pain actually comes one always wonders why one made the choice to fall in love. Yes, it doesn't seem like a choice. It seems to just happen, but being in love will dry up quickly if the conscious mind does not go along with it.

Janice: So I think if any wise woman or man would stop falling in love, then it would be only because they are already there, they are already in love, they are love. They see that there is no substantial difference between the apparently different manifestations.

Love is the state of a clear mind. That's what I think.

Wise women "apparently" don't fall in love, because their view does not change. Janice experiences falling in love as falling because her normal view is falling apart leaving her with the insight that what is appearing is as beautiful and precious as her own heart and in fact not anything different. Breathtaking!

I know this is all on the experiential level, but it seems to me that love is a link for knowledge to happen in a clear mind...

Ram: Okay. What you say contains a lot of truth, and it would be hard to argue with it, but this is only true for someone for whom the quest for the self is so well-established that it takes precedence in the person's mind over any other consideration, in this case an ego's desire for a love relationship. The position you are taking here is what is known as *tantra*. *Tantra* is a word for the idea that since the self is in everything it is hidden in every experience and therefore if one is seeking the self one will pay very close attention to one's experience so that one observes the moment when the mind moves off the object of experience, and fixes its attention on the self. For example, a person who is completely dedicated to the spiritual path might find himself or herself desiring sexual/emotional love from a

willing object. And if he or she does not allow the intellect to switch off during this experience but keeps it alert and quiet in the background when the lovemaking is happening, there will come a moment when the mind contacts the self and enters into a state of deep absorption. At this point it is very common for the desire for the object to completely dry up and ruin the lovemaking for the object. The subject, however, floats off into a world of transcendental bliss and light, and may stay in that state for days, assuming that the mind is predominately *sattvic*. So, yes, being in love can be a gateway to the self.

This practice is called *tantra*. But *tantra* is considered a left-handed *sadhana* because it only works for the very few people who have a burning desire for liberation. And it is not a path that one cultivates if one is wise. If one actively pursues experience with the idea of gaining freedom (remember, freedom is freedom from experience) one will just build a *vasana* for experience. *Tantra* is a have-your-cake-and-eat-it-too *sadhana*. It appeals to an experience-hungry ego, one that needs to spiritually justify its cravings. The downside of this path is always attachment.

One wouldn't aggressively pursue *tantra* if one was clear about the nature of enlightenment. However, sometimes even in mature seekers a *vasana* sneaks up and captures the attention, and forces the mind into an experience. In this case the person might wake up to what was happening in the middle of the experience and notice the mind striving to enter the self as I mentioned above. It is an odd fact that even though the mind will pursue an object for happiness, it is unconsciously seeking the bliss of the self. So it is always working on a very deep level to get into the self. And when it gets the self it will ruthlessly throw away the object. If the person is emotionally immature, his or her intellect will remain submerged in the sensations arising from the contact with the object and he or she will assume that the joy is coming from the object or from his or her interaction with the object, i.e. the experience itself.

A mature seeker would, however, notice when the mind enters the self during an intense experience and use the opportunity to keep the mind fixed on the self, allowing the experience to drop out of consciousness without attachment. And he or she would not actively seek another experience but would reflect on the nature of experience and its relationship to the self until self-knowledge arose.

Janice: So, not yet being a very wise person, I fall in love and try to use this opportunity to understand completeness/myself. If I'd be a very wise person probably any experience would help me understand better and better who I am. Being as it is, I am grateful for this easy way.

Ram: You're wiser than you think and probably more committed to self-knowledge than you are to getting an emotionally satisfying relationship in *samsara*, so you can make use of the *tantric* idea in your pursuit of *moksa*. The wisdom you express below about the nature of love allows me to make this statement. But *tantra* is not for everyone. If a weak-minded person gets a hold of this idea, his or her spiritual path will be sabotaged for a long time. Most *tantriks* are pleasure-seekers and romantics, not real seekers.

Janice: Loving the beloved, I cannot make her love me. All that I can do is offer my

love as a gift. Anything that comes “back” is a gift as well. In fact whatever comes back is not even the point. Loving is beyond “being loved back.”

Loving is exactly the one most precious thing one gets from loving.

Ram: This is absolutely true.

Janice: Anyway, I’m pretty certain about this, yet I would appreciate any comment, especially if I am just falling into some known little-ego, non-self, thinking-pattern trap. Thank you so much for your time and generosity, and greetings from Martina too.

~ Janice

Ram: Your certainty is justified. It is as you say. My comments were only meant to add to your clarity on the subject.

~ Love, Ram