



ENDING THE PAIN OF SEPARATION *HOW YOGA CAN HEAL THE HEART*

TEXT: UWE VAMDEV FRANZ © 2002

In my last article I discussed the yogic approach to our emotions. This time I want to look at one of the roots of our limited and painful experiences in life. Yoga is about overcoming pain and reaching a state of happiness which originates in ourselves and not in the circumstances of our lives. If this can be possible, wouldn't you want to find out, how you can get there?

Imagine this: One night you have a dream: Your life is passing by your inner eye with great clarity, and while one event after the other emerges out of your memory, you slowly begin to understand something: You are not fully connected to who you really are. It is like this gradual or maybe sudden aberration from the course you know you wanted to take, like a spaceship veering off just so slightly. You see it and it feels like there is this invisible wall between you and the control instruments. Or maybe you feel that there is a damper on your life choking it more and more.

Where is your glory, where are these tremendous aspirations which carried you forward into this life? What has happened to your unfathomable potential? Some call it the sad fact of life: This separating wall steadily weakens your calling, your gifts.

Even people who are very successful in what they do feel this way: Something separates them from their true power, their true connectedness, their true love.

This lack of connectedness doesn't stop at the threshold of churches, temples or mosques. It haunts religious people as well as atheists. It is not typically western, and people in the ancient cultures must have suffered from it as well, otherwise this issue would not have been addressed so powerfully by the yogic sages and those of all other traditions.

Many of us try to just plow on with an endless stream of chores and commitments, scared that some day we might have a moment of truth in our lives, a breather, where suddenly the pain of separation becomes so evident that we cannot work it away anymore, and no amount of social work, of volunteering, is able to hide this pain.

Then it is time to take a closer look at our lives, not as a series of events but of who we are in them, why we are here and what we are supposed to do. This is probably the most noble and most challenging yogic practice: To take this look at who we are in our lives.

Yoga is very pragmatic about this fundamental question: How can you think clearly and reflect deeply if your mind is all over the place? So we begin by learning methods to focus our mind, to step out of the dense fog, past experiences have left there. It is like turning off the fire under a pressure cooker. It takes a while but eventually the pressure will come down.

You have to find a practice of concentration you like, which works for you. This is important, because the yogic approach is not a purgatory technique. It goes with your tendencies, not against them.

Once you learn to slow down the speeding train of your thoughts, you can start to take a step back. In meditation you can actually learn to watch how thoughts and feelings develop within you. What a fascinating process, more fascinating than the most exciting action movie! And, it's your movie. Not only did you make it, you also pay for it with your life experience

Physical yoga exercises play an important role in this endeavor. They teach you how to focus on what is happening right now with your own body. Yogic balancing postures, using the strength of your muscles and the intensity of your focus, will clearly show you how you can stay wide awake right now, without drifting off into the „good ol' mind fog“.

People experience small amounts of time between the eruptions of their emotions and the triggering events. In this process you will learn something similar: To watch what effect the events of your life have on your mental and emotional state. And you can observe how you trap yourself in your own old stories again and again.

With time and practice, however, you start to have choices in your life, choices you never had, and most people never dream they would have: You can choose your old patterns of experience or you can try out new things. You start to see how your own preconceived opinions make your life and everyone and everything around so terribly predictable. And you might not want this anymore.

That intrinsic pain of separation which seems to color our lives so deeply will guide you to examine all the walls and barriers you built up by fear and misunderstanding. Once you can slow down your thoughts, you can remove these imaginary separators. You can feel your heart healing.

To me this is real freedom, real choice and real power. To be free from the limiting creations of our own minds, to really start owning our own greatness, our own, immense love.



This text is a publication of Uwe Vamdev Franz. He practices and teaches yoga since 1977.
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