

Daniel Odier

Have you read Daniel Odier's books yet? The ones translated into English are *Tantric Quest and Desire*, the Tantric path to awakening, and also the meditation techniques of the Taoist and Buddhist masters. For me, reading both *Tantric Quest and Desire* was an exquisite experience because of the resonance within me of their simple acceptance of both our nature as humans and also the transforming capacity of this nature to lead us, with appropriate guidance to sublime heights of the Spirit. The view that all the 'spiritual' training in the world will not avail if we cannot translate this into our behaviour and presence in the mundane and real world of human affairs also a message for me that speaks a profound truth. The message of Tantra is love, deep love, love beyond our wildest imaginings. It is difficult in English because unlike the Greek and Latin and Sanskrit we only have one word for Love. This word is used to cover the realm of confusion and connection between- like a lot, lust, desire, brotherly/sisterly love, parental love, passion, humanitarian love, divine love and pure unadulterated deep love beyond our knowledge or imagination. Knowing this and seeking for this deep love to be a part of my life in a more and more profound way I emailed Daniel through his site www.danielodier.com thanking him for writing the book which I was so inspired by. To my surprise he replied to me, I am told this is unusual and as he is a very busy teacher I am sure this is the case. However this reply led me to more clearly to come and work with Daniel.

So it is that I find myself in Paris, settling into this simple and basic hotel room in Montparnasse ready to go and work with this teacher. A little nervous and somewhat excited I wonder how it might be that through whatever it is I will do with Daniel I might become more fully who I am or am not?

Two days later and I am once again sitting in this hotel room wondering what I can possibly communicate about what has been an amazing journey. This morning soaking gently in this hot bath water I once again take myself through one of the visualisations Daniel taught us from the Tantric master Matsyendranath.

The heart of the teaching over the weekend has been the essential practice of this Kaula tradition, this absolute path of the heart. This practice is the Tandava. The Tandava is the dance of Shiva, this is practised as a spontaneous dance arising from breath and presence in space. Have you ever tried allowing spontaneity? Our contracted states as we try to protect who we think we are, our patterns of tension as we seek to protect our identity, our subtle reflexive tightening as we attempt to constantly avoid the terror of not-being, these are the components that prevent us from being spontaneous. If we cannot move spontaneously in space how can we move spontaneously in life? How can we be spontaneous and open in love? Of course we cant, our personality is largely the construct of our reflexive contractual patterns. The spontaneous presence of the Tandava, with practice frees us from these patterns. As the final stage of the Tandava we sit and be aware, soft breath and aware of sensation. This tradition recognises the spontaneous recognition of the Self and the inner vibrations perceived in the body after this recognition. Even sitting to a tantrika is dance, there is never not

vibration, there is never not movement, stillness is not a goal, life is known as a dynamic process and even sitting is a part of this. Many traditions seek to get out of this difficult world, to metaphorically head for the spiritual hills. Tantra sees the difficulties as of the creation of our own perceptions and teaches us to become surfers, surfers of our own emotions, surfers of the waves of life. In this way we celebrate the ocean of life instead of trying to constantly get out of it or hide from it. Through the practices of visualisation, through the practice of Tandava, awareness is developed leading to recognition of the non-dual nature of Self and Universe.

Daniel teaches that we don't have to learn how to meditate, our cells already know, they do it as a natural state, in our natural state we remain in meditation no matter what we do! It is our perpetual mental constructions that prevent us from accessing this state.

Daniel was talking also about the simplicity of it all, the simple playfulness of the practice, the simplicity of the philosophy. This is a female centred tradition and has been passed down through a female lineage, as such it celebrates poetry as the richest way to communicate the un-communicable. Many masculine traditions use left-brained philosophies of incredible complexity to classify, describe, delineate and seek to explain the unexplainable. If you really like complexity and endless complexity upon complexity then perhaps this path is not for you. However if you can trust that all the answers are already inside you, that inside your own heart is your direct access to all the mysteries of the universe, and if you can be satisfied with the endless simplicity of this mystery then walk this path. In Tantra there is no impurity, nothing to change, nowhere to go, nothing to purify. If there is nothing to purify, nothing to change and nowhere to go there is left only your own absolute essence, dancing in spontaneous presence.

So here I am, sitting in this small hotel room, through the open window a gentle breeze as the grey cotton clouds cover the sky where earlier the sun playfully shone.

Christopher Gladwell.