

Tantra and Trauma

The word trauma derives from the Greek and means wound or injury. For the following considerations, I rather have the meaning of *injury* in mind, because this can also lie further back in time, whereas a wound is usually more acute, more fresh. And it should be more about injuries to the psyche, the soul, whereby an injury to the body can of course also cause psychological trauma.

Nevertheless, it seems helpful to me to first take a look at the mindful, loving way of dealing with injuries to the body, because this can provide suggestions and pointers for dealing with the soul. And doesn't the psyche ultimately also originate as a consequence of the physical, material? Without specifying more precisely what matter is supposed to represent. Perhaps this would not even be possible. At least without the help of physical concepts.

What would be the way of dealing with a physical injury that takes tantric ideas into account? I have tried to outline my understanding of Tantra in an earlier text, and I would like to take these basic ideas as a guide here as well. Personally, I see Tantra as a tool to grow love in a more general sense, where I like to understand *love* in this broad sense as the feeling of connection. Connection to myself, the *inside*, as well as connection to other people, animals, nature, as well as possibly other things, structures, parts of our universe, the *outside*.

An injury to the body can perhaps be characterised by it being more out of balance, more out of harmony. A cut in the finger, a bruise after a bump or fall, the tearing of a tendon, or the breaking of a bone. Often the injury is also accompanied by the loss, the rupture of connection. How can such an injury be treated as lovingly as possible, in the tantric sense? How to re-establish connection?

First of all, negative feelings such as fear, anger or rage are not really helpful, even though they are a first, natural, automatic reaction of our body. This reminds me of an anecdote from my student days in Heidelberg. Shortly after moving into a shared flat, I wanted to hang a picture above a brown corduroy sofa that acquaintances had given me. While hammering in the nail, I hit my right thumb with quite a bit of force. I am naturally left-handed, and more often hold tools like hammers or saws in my left hand. The sudden, severe pain made me so angry that, out of sheer rage, I hit the innocent sofa I had been standing on to hang the picture with the hammer once, violently. This tore the sofa's corduroy cover and left an unsightly gaping hole. I then patched the sofa with a needle and thread, but otherwise left the tear as it was, as a reminder to myself that anger is not a good advisor.

After the very first, instinctive, negative feelings such as fear or anger, which stem from evolutionary development, it therefore seems to make sense to accept the new situation with awareness, to come into contact with it as lovingly as possible. In order to then initiate the next steps for further dealing with the injury with a balanced mixture of mind and heart. And to do so with as much emotional balance as possible, without trivialising or dramatising the particular situation. This seems to me to be the best way, that is, the most loving way, to deal with the effects of longstanding injuries. In the sense of the second Noble Truth of the Buddha, one may of course wish for a change for the *better*, but one should not demand it. For suffering arises from desire. And consequently it is also conducive to personal development to train the ability to let go of unfulfilled wishes. And to leave future events, to a not inconsiderable extent, to the rest of the universe. The *outside*. That everything may become *one*.

Even for injuries, traumas of the soul, the most balanced, loving approach seems to be the most helpful. Neither to close your eyes nor open them too wide. Neither avoid contact nor cling too much. Entering into a connection that lasts, that can be felt, without wanting to influence, wanting to change. This approach corresponds exactly to the way we deal with thoughts in meditation. Thoughts are allowed to be there, to be perceived, but they should not be given any special attention. Then, at some point, they will dissolve on their own, like a morning mist in the sunshine.

And in Tantra, which not only has an affinity with the mental, spiritual, but also with the physical, which includes it in a completely natural way, touches also have this character. They are simply allowed to be there, in harmony, without pushing away or wanting to hold on. And yet receive and give love. This kind of touch has the capacity to leave traumas behind, to heal the soul. Which does not mean that no scars remain. But as with some of the scars of the body that a fulfilled life almost inevitably brings, one can entirely *be* with pride.

To conclude these reflections, even though I am personally convinced of the healing effect of Tantra, I would nevertheless like to point out that there are many paths of growth, and many paths of healing. Especially in cases of severe trauma, it could therefore be dangerous, possibly life-threatening, to totally limit oneself to a single path. Therefore, it should always be kept in mind to possibly include professional help from doctors and therapists. Anything else would mean disregarding the blessings of modern medicine, the rich findings of psychology, and relying entirely on alternative, more archaic methods. But isn't this precisely what Tantra is all about: looking at everything, possibly accepting it, including it? Here, too, balance appears to be a good guide. To consider as much as possible, and to feel within oneself in which direction the steps of one's own further path should go. As is so often the case, the feelings of the heart can be a good indicator of what enriches me, what does me good, and what allows *love* to grow.