

YOGA IN THE KASHMIR TRADITION:
THE ART OF LISTENING

FOLLOWING THE TEACHINGS OF JEAN KLEIN

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YOGA IN THE KASHMIR TRADITION

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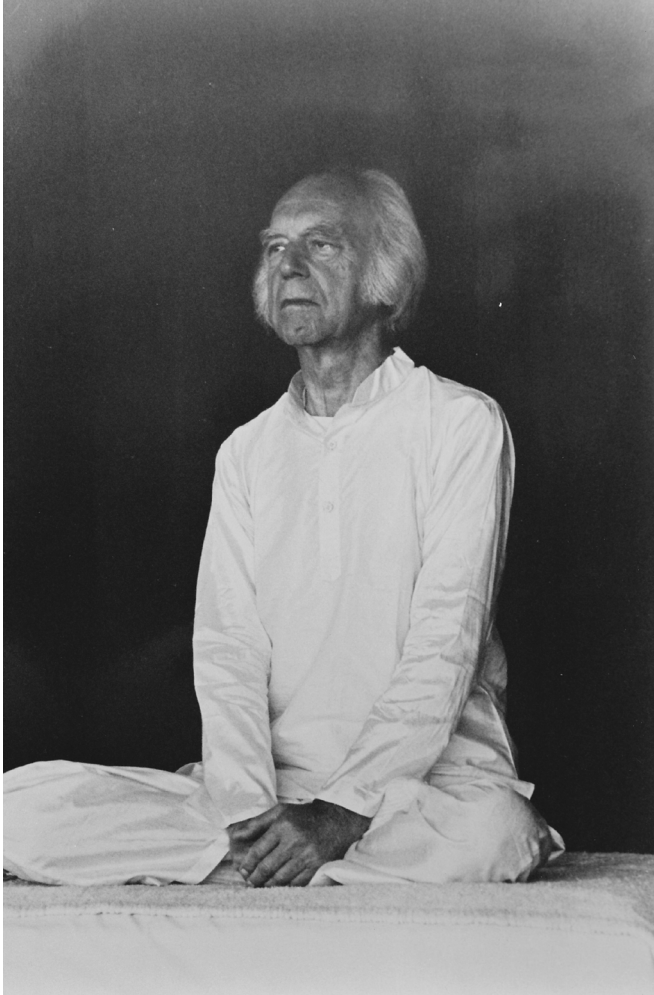
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in gratitude
to Jean Klein,
my teacher



It is important to live this directionlessness, this not-knowing, this waiting without waiting for anything. It acts on your cells, on your psychosomatic body, bringing them to dilation and harmony. All that remains is your directionless awareness. Live in this absolute absence of yourself. It is the threshold. You are in complete openness, open to nothing, free from all ideas, free from all hope. And when you are completely transparent, open to openness, you are taken by Truth, by Grace. That is certain.

Jean Klein, *The Book of Listening*

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INTRODUCTION

Yoga in the Kashmir Tradition presents yoga as I experienced it working with Jean Klein. Jean brought this approach to the West in the 1950s and during subsequent years he further developed and refined the teaching.

Jean Klein was a master of Advaita Vedanta (non-duality) in the tradition of Ramana Maharshi and Shri Atmananda Krishna Menon; however, he had his own distinctive and unique approach.

I first met Jean in 1982 when he was giving a series of discourses in London. I was deeply affected by his talk and afterwards he mentioned that he also taught yoga in his retreats. Being a yoga teacher myself, I was intrigued that he should also teach body work.

He was to become my teacher and for the following fourteen years I attended his retreats and talks in Holland, England, France and the USA as well as receiving private tuition. The retreats consisted of dialogues, question and answers, silent and guided meditation and the practices of yoga. He called this approach to body work, 'Yoga in the Kashmir Tradition'.

Here I will be focusing on his teachings regarding yoga, but as the whole sphere of his approach, be it self-enquiry, meditation or body work, was totally integrated, so these different aspects are intertwined through the book.

Jean had studied medicine and was a musicologist. In 1954 he left France and went to India for three years; it was at Bangalore University where he was studying that Jean met his guru, Pandiji, who was a professor of Sanskrit. His yoga teacher was Krishnamacharya of Madras, but whilst Jean was living in Bangalore he also met a yogi, Dibianandapuri, who had lived a long time in Kashmir. It was Dibianandapuri who introduced Jean to the Kashmir teachings and confirmed his understanding that the real body was the energy body and not the physical body. He showed him how all the yoga postures could be carried out on the subtle level independently of the physical body.

The nature of Jean's teaching when he returned to Europe was focused on the questions: *What is our real nature? Who am I?* Yoga was part of this enquiry. Even before his visit to India, Jean had a particular interest in the relationship between body function and psychology. Most teachers tend either to stress self-enquiry to the exclusion of body work or focus on body work with little regard for self-enquiry, but with Jean there was a marriage of approaches.

Jean explains in the following two paragraphs why the body work is important:

About a year after I returned from India I found it necessary to expand the teaching to the psychosomatic level. It became apparent, through meeting people, that

identification with what we are not is confirmed and reinforced by contraction on the psychosomatic level. The I-concept is only a contraction on the level of the body-mind. It has no more reality than a bad habit. It is a defence against being nobody.

In getting to know the body-mind, one can discover more clearly the nature of identification, and so let it go. The relaxed body is a relaxed mind. In a relaxed body and mind you are open to receiving, available, welcoming, open to the openness. The relaxed, light, energetic, sattvic body-mind is a near expression of our real nature. It is almost impossible for a conditioned body-mind to be receptive to truth, open to grace. It can happen that truth pierces through all conditioning, since the insight into our true nature ultimately has nothing to do with the body or the mind. But it is exceedingly rare. My teaching also on the level of the body was only to make discrimination more likely, to help more of my friends be available to global insight.

Jean Klein, *Transmission of the Flame*

We might say, and understand theoretically, that we are not the body, senses and mind since they are simply objects in awareness. But do we really know what this body is? It is the contraction and defences on the level of the body that reinforce our identification with a particular body-mind. The body is in many ways an intricate defence mechanism which maintains our self-image. It is only by exploring the body that we free it from its habitual patterns and discover the real body. This exploration is the art of listening; of course

this listening is not restricted to the ears—all the senses are involved and receptive. In freeing the body from restriction and coming to the expanded body, we have a fore-feeling of our real nature, our globality. The understanding of our real nature takes place on every level of our being, even the cells of our body are affected in the transformation—otherwise the transformation remains partial.

ADVAITA VEDANTA

At the core of the great religious traditions there is the understanding of the oneness of the whole of life. In the Indian tradition this is known as advaita, which means 'not two'. This truth lies at the heart of the Upanishads, and was later expounded by Sri Shankaracarya in the ninth century. Indeed, this is a current running through the whole of Indian culture.

Advaita asks us to question what is real, to question the common-sense view that we are separate entities, each body-mind being distinct from other body-minds and from the world. It asks: *What is our essential nature?* The body and mind are always changing. Is there not something that is beyond the flux of time? Is there not something beyond the mind? To recognise change there must be something in us that is changeless. What is changeless in me? Is it not the sense of presence, the sense of knowing? I know myself, I know the world, but the real question is: *Who is the knower?*

We don't cease to be when there is no thought; we still know that we are, but we generally only know ourselves in

relation to objects, such as thoughts, images, memory. In other words, I am a woman, I am a doctor, I'm young, a person of worth. We don't know ourselves without the adornment of a string of characteristics.

It is this identification with an I-image, which is no more than a projection of the mind, that veils our true reality. Taking myself to be a limited separate entity in a universe invites fear and desire. In fact, fear and desire are the very essence of this separate personal entity. It is from this state of insecurity that we begin to look for happiness, for security. In the beginning this search is usually directed towards material objects, acquiring knowledge, enhancing our self-image, or towards relationships. Only when we realise from our failures that nothing in the world will completely satisfy our longing, do we begin to ask deeper questions.

This is the beginning of a more conscious spiritual search. We begin to realise what we are not: not a body, not a personality, not a series of images, not any kind of object. Our real nature is prior to any image, any thought. The body is in awareness, the mind is in awareness, the world too exists in awareness. Thus, awareness is prior to all manifestation.

We begin to give precedence to awareness and not to what we're aware of. We begin to feel ourselves as awareness, a witness to the passing show. Like the screen in the film show, the images are always changing, but the screen is unaffected. A feeling of space opens up between what I am and what I'm aware of. I begin to feel my autonomy, that I'm free of all things. I'm no longer locked in space and time, rather space and time are in me.

We come to understand, and actually *feel*, that consciousness is non-localised, that all that is perceived is in consciousness. There is not a separate seer and an object seen. The seen is in the seeing; there is no seen without the seeing. All that is perceived is of the very nature of consciousness. Here we stand in freedom, no longer an inside or outside, a separate me and a separate you. All is an expression of love, all is love. All is God, there is nothing but God.

The separate 'I' of the mind dissolves with this understanding. Life carries on, but without the burden of being somebody there is real functioning, not from a centre, but from love. It is not that I become something other, it is simply the recognition of what I always am, free of the illusion of being some separate entity. It is not that I progress through various spiritual levels, rather there is an ever deepening seeing that this 'me' that I have taken myself to be has no reality. Enlightenment is not of somebody, but freedom from *being* somebody.

When you proceed from the relative to the ultimate in stages your ego remains engaged. There is end-gaining. You are bound to the object. You may undo earlier conditioning but you merely learn a new conditioning, often one that is less flexible and interesting! When even the slightest emphasis is put on attaining, you continue the habit of objectifying your freedom and joy. You still say, 'I have experienced this.' You are still doing something. You remain in fraction. You take yourself for a prisoner with the goal of freedom. But the premise itself is an illusion. There is nothing to gain, and nothing to lose.

Jean Klein, *Who Am I?*

From the beginning, Jean stressed the importance of being open to the possibility that our real nature is timeless, spaceless, and we are not simply a body-mind. Therefore the emphasis is not on attainment, or some spiritual evolution which keeps the ego thriving, but seeing what we are not. When the mind is free of its encumbrances we are open to what is beyond the mind. He would often use Heidegger's phrase 'waiting without waiting'. We are in a place of availability open to light, to grace. But there is not the slightest emphasis on waiting for something or a somebody waiting.

It might be asked: *How does coming to know myself, to know truth, change the world?* But it is only when we know ourselves that there is real intelligence, and hence the clarity to act in the world. Otherwise, we're part of the problem. Free of the 'me', the person, there is love, and action will be for the good of the whole. There is no separation. You are the world.

THE ART OF LISTENING

At the heart of this approach, whether it concerns self knowledge or coming to know the body, is how we observe: the art of listening. Listening here is not confined to hearing with the ears but refers to our total receptivity.

In unconditioned listening, choiceless listening, we are completely open. It is an openness free of purpose or intent. It is an innocent welcoming of all that appears. It is like a scientist without presuppositions, just open to the facts.

However, we rarely listen in this impersonal way. It is the nature of the ego to grasp and look for security in what is observed. Instead of just looking we interpret, analyse, judge, compare or lose ourselves in the feeling or thought. When we are looking for something from the perception, there is end-gaining and we are caught in the becoming process.

Instead of seeing what is, we only see what we want to see, our own projections. The ego is always choosing what brings it pleasure and discarding what brings it pain.

We are too dominated by the conceptual mind (abstraction) and live too little in direct seeing. Instead of staying with the perception we jump too quickly to the concept; instead of really seeing the flower, letting its richness unfold and feeling the sense of wonder, we are too quick to name it and categorise it. Thus the senses become atrophied, we cut ourselves off from the totality and we live in our own isolated conceptual world. We should take note of this tendency as it happens: just seeing it will help to break the pattern. This is not some mental taking note, but a seeing of the situation and feeling how it acts on us, how it feels to be the seer. In taking note we are free from the pattern.

When we maintain this open quality of attention, the perceived increasingly recedes and we are more aware of listening itself. We discover that this unconditioned listening is our real nature.

Jean would often remind us to bring the perceived back to the perceiving; to bring the seen to the seeing, the heard to the hearing, the felt to the feeling, to bring back each object to its homeground. Objects are not outside of us, they have their potential in us, and so when the energy is no longer directed, when the emphasis is no longer on the seen, it naturally and without volition, dissolves back in the seeing. We find ourselves in the seeing; consciousness and perceiving are one, there is nothing outside of us. Listening cannot be localised—it is beyond space and time.

In this observing is the total absence of yourself.

It is your real presence.

Jean Klein, *Living Truth*



TRIKONASANA: TRIANGLE

Standing with your feet about a metre apart, turn to the right, your right foot turning out 90 degrees and your left foot angled inwards. Your chest faces the right leg.

Feel your feet anchored in the ground, feel the ground in your feet.

Jean would on occasion, much to the amusement of all, jump into the air and land with a thud to remind us to really feel the ground.

Feel your whole posture and your chest open, and now go out into the space and cover the right leg (bend the right knee a little if you feel strained).

Place the right hand on the inside of the right leg with the palm open and the left hand on the left hip.

Turn your hips to the front, followed by the chest and

then the head. Then take your left hand to the vertical and look upwards.

Feel your whole body open to the space in front of you.

Feel the expansion of your arms, feel their alignment from fingertips to fingertips—it's one line.

Feel your spine as one line, and the head as a continuation of the spine.

If you feel some tension in the left arm, place your hand again on your hip, and now raise it, but this time really keep the feeling, the lightness.

Heaviness and density may be there because we have still not let the deeper sensation of our body unfold.

How is your neck? If there is some discomfort, turn your head to look downwards and then, with the feeling, turn it again to look up without becoming fixated.

Feel how you breathe; take note that often when there is some tension we inhibit the breathing, thereby accentuating the tension.

Feel your whole body as an expression in space, without borders. Live in this space.

Again cover the right leg and now swivel into the centre, the feet facing forward, and come up in a straight line,

imagining you're a puppet being drawn up from the crown of your head.

Proceed with the posture on the other side.

After the posture return to the standing pose—*tadasana*—and feel the vibration of your body.

The breath, as we have seen earlier, can be used in many ways. Jean would often encourage deep breathing in a posture when it was appropriate, especially in the sitting forward bends. Deep breathing can give more power to the postures. At other times the breathing is allowed to follow its own course, letting the breath breathe you.

There is not one approach to each posture, there are many variations and possibilities to experiment with; this keeps the practice fresh. We might, for example, begin *trikonasana* with the arms out to the horizontal and then proceed into the pose, or combine *trikonasana* with *parivrtta trikonasana* (reverse triangle).

*

Some further suggestions to be used on occasion in *trikonasana*:

Deepen your breathing and with each inhalation expand the posture, feel all directions, give a little with each exhalation.

So work with the in-breath, give a little with the out-breath.

*

Visualise the posture three metres in front of you. Now with your energy body occupy that space, give it all your energy. Come back, take note how the posture feels now.

*

Feel your whole posture, offer it to the space around you.

*

Feel your whole posture as breath, feel it as an inhalation, feel it as an exhalation.

*When you become more sensitive to your body
you have the impression that
the inhalation-exhalation is no longer localised.*

It is all around you.

It is important to see how we live mainly in our heads.

*Think with your whole body,
feel with your whole body.*

*In the whole feeling, the global sensation,
you go into your room and touch your whole room.*

You go outside and touch the clouds, the trees, the water.

You do not live in isolation.

In your radiation you are in communion with all things.

*In this expansion there is no place for the ego
because the ego is a contraction.*

Love is expansion, a feeling of spaciousness.

*Jean Klein, *The Ease of Being**