

PRINCIPLES OF KASHMIR YOGA

The phrase 'Kashmir yoga' used in this text means the yoga approach of Jean Klein. As the name indicates, this yoga-approach is of Kashmir origin.

From 1957-1998 Jean Klein was a spiritual teacher and the yoga he taught (which he called "bodywork") was intertwined with his spiritual teaching.

The spiritual teaching of Jean Klein belongs to the 'direct way'. The direct way addresses our true nature, and in principle can lead us to the realization of the Self, to the realization of our true nature. The direct way, however, requires a rare spiritual maturity. As Jean Klein said: 'It is for a conditioned body-mind almost impossible to be open to the truth, to be open to grace.' Practised in the right way, Kashmir yoga has the power to de-condition and transform body and mind and thus to make the practitioner more receptive to spiritual teaching. In its turn, spiritual teaching develops the right mental attitude to practise yoga effectively. This is expressed in the first principle.

THE FIRST PRINCIPLE:

JEAN KLEIN'S SPIRITUAL TEACHING AND YOGA APPROACH COMPLEMENT AND REINFORCE EACH OTHER

Aphorisms from Jean Klein's spiritual teaching:

1. Man is predestined to know himself
2. In the end you will find yourself behind yourself
3. Liberation is from the person, not of the person.

The first statement means that there is a force in the universe eventually causing every human being to achieve self-knowledge, self-realization. In the spiritual tradition of Kashmir this force is called anugrahashakti (literally: energy seizing the individual soul). A good translation of anugrahashakti is 'grace-energy'. This statement is very important to us, for it means that creation is programmed in such way that, if we just follow the flow of life, we shall reach our destination: the realization of our true nature. Seen in this perspective, natural human development is thus supported by yoga. Other spiritual teachers have also uttered this idea, for instance Swami Sivananda: 'Every moment of your life nature is working to bring you closer to your destination'.

Jean Klein's second statement reminds us of a comparison from the Mundaka Upanishad, in which a human being is represented by two birds in a tree. In this comparison one bird is eating the fruits of the tree (acts in the world), while the other bird is only watching. This means that we exist, so to say, on two levels. Our true nature, the Self, is the observing bird and outside time and space; the Self is never born and cannot die either. The person, the body-mind system, is the bird eating the fruits of the tree. He is an expression within time and space of our true nature. The second aphorism means that, finally, our true nature behind the person will recognize itself.

The third statement means that, if self-realisation takes place, the emphasis will suddenly shift from the person existing in time and space to the timeless axis of our true nature. The identification with the body-mind ends and we can let go of the person. After all he is only a temporary expression of our true being in time and space.

In the spiritual tradition of Kashmir our true being is called Shiva (God). Shiva is always combined with energy (Shakti), even if he manifests himself in a veiled form as a human being. The difference

between a realized person, a buddha, and a person who has not realized his true being yet is an energetic one. A veiling energy (mayashakti) linked up with the spine is active in a non-realized person. This veiling energy is the cause that we do not recognize our true nature; we have forgotten ourselves, so to say. So, seen from the energetic point of view, this veiling energy should be turned off. The most important text of the Kashmir tradition, the Vijñana Bhairava Tantra gives suggestions how to achieve this. This treatise on self-realization is a favourite text of Jean Klein's and says:

“As by the light of a lamp or the rays of the sun we can see the world, so by Shakti we can come to know Shiva, O dear one” (shloka 21).

So, through our own life energy, we should be able to get to know our true self. Life energy in a human being manifests itself as energy body (pranamayakosha). The energy body gives life to the physical, the astral and the causal body. The interaction between the physical, the astral and the causal body also depends on the energy body.

The Vijñana Bhairava leads us to:

THE SECOND PRINCIPLE:

KASHMIR YOGA FAVOURS ACTIVATION OF THE ENERGY BODY

Activation of the energy body is realized as follows:

1. by practising yoga with an open, observing and embracing mind. Jean Klein sometimes called this an “impersonal” attitude, because with this attitude no self-images are called up, while there is also no striving, no plodding and no judging, This impersonal attitude causes the neuro-muscular tensions to decrease. This is the principal condition to enable the awakening of the energy body.
2. by having your attention during yoga practice directed to the tactile sense and work with suggestions involving touch, using your imagination. By simply being attuned to body awareness, you stimulate the energy body.
3. by practising 1 and 2, you practise the classical elements of yoga (exercises, poses, bandhas, mudras, kapalabhati, bhastrika and pranayama).

According to Jean Klein and the ancient texts (Gorakshashatakam, Shiva Samhita, Hatha-Yoga-Pradipika), the pose of the adept (siddhasana) and the lotus pose (padmasana) are the most important “transformers” among the yoga poses. However, these poses are very difficult for many people, having conditioned tensions and inhibitions and hip-joints that are used one-sidedly. By practising regularly, these obstacles can be overcome without violating the body. The most important thing is to practise poses which liberate the spine of its resistances and permit the spine to straighten. This causes a powerful upward flux of energy along the spine. Next are the exercises and poses which open the hip-joints. Once the body is freed to such an extent that you can sit relaxed with a straightened spine in lotus pose, you can also feel that this pose clearly activates the energy body. Then the sensation of the body expands and a new, light, “empty” feeling arises. As long as the body is not yet able to be comfortably seated in lotus pose, one may practise half-lotus (ardha-padmasana) or the pose of the adept (siddhasana), if necessary with a cushion.

If the energy body is awake, if the physical body got rid of tensions and stiffness, and having fully coped with the spiritual teaching, the mind is spontaneously set to meditate. This can be expressed as the following principle:

THIRD PRINCIPLE:

FINALLY A STATE OF WAITING WITHOUT WAITING ARISES

From a biologist's point of view, this state can be compared with a caterpillar that has spun a cocoon and retires to pupate. Once in the cocoon, the caterpillar rests and surrenders itself intuitively to the natural process of transformation, by which, at the end, it is transformed into a butterfly. The same goes for the practitioner of yoga. Having completely absorbed the spiritual teaching and knowing that lasting happiness, the ultimate fulfilment, cannot be found in objects, all searching and striving will come to an end. This results in a quiet meditation, an opening up and a deep susceptibility. At a certain point during this process of maturing, the inherent latent life-energy (kundalini) will awaken. This awakened energy then will open the central channel of energy in the spine (sushumna nadi), and enter and transform the various centres of energy (chakras) on its way upwards. During this process, the veiling energy (mayashakti) is transformed, resulting in self-realization. That means that our true being finds itself without mediation of the mind or the senses. Happiness, always sought for in the world, is suddenly experienced and is permanent.

THE SEEKER IS THE SOUGHT

Jean Klein called this transformation "our true birth". This birth brings permanent bliss. The energy of wanting/desiring (icchashakti) that forms the driving force of human life comes to a standstill.

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