

Listening

Sometimes people have difficulty with instructions such as ‘be aware of being aware’ or ‘abide knowingly as awareness’. It can seem somewhat intellectual, requiring some mental effort or mental process. Discussing this with a friend recently reminded me of a different approach which Jean Klein taught – listening. When Jean Klein spoke about listening, he was referring to much more than just listening to sounds with our ears. For him, listening involves the whole body and the totality of our experience. This real listening takes us to the same placeless place as being aware of being aware – in other words, to meditation – but using a different approach. Here is Jean Klein’s description of this universal listening:

JK: Listening is our basic nature. We are more or less accustomed to listening to an object, to our surroundings and to our nearest environment: body, senses and mind. But I speak today of this listening where there is nothing to listen to.

You can never think this listening, you can never objectify it, you can never fix it; and in listening there's not a listener, there's no place for a listener, for a controller, a doer, for an enjoyer, for a sufferer. Listening is free from all furniture, from all memory. It is a non-state. In a state you go in and come out; listening is a continuum. When you are listening to your body, senses and mind, then your listening is completely open; there's no grasping, no taking. The perceived comes directly to your openness.

One can say that every object heard brings you back to your homeground, to listening. When the perception is sustained so that the concept does not arise, then the perceived brings you back to your listening. Listening in the beginning may be understood as a brain function, but it doesn't belong to a specific organ, an ear. So when the listening is sustained, then it becomes awareness, lucidity. Listening is constant meditation, without a meditator or an object of meditation.

Is it possible to stay in that listening when you are working in a way that demands some concentration?

You must first discover this unconditioned listening before any activity. Then you will see that every activity comes directly out of listening and vanishes in listening, and finally you will become established in this listening even during activity. Listening is behind all perceptions. It is the light which gives reality to all that is perceived. It can never become an object. And, of course, there is no place for an independent entity; in listening you live really your complete absence. You can only feel your presence in your total absence.

But what is happening in the moment when you are no longer in that listening? Are you emotionally bound or involved? Do you identify with objects?

You cannot help it, you *are* listening. See also that you turn away from listening and you identify yourself with your personality; you go into a state of restriction. You must see it in the moment itself. When you see it in the moment itself, there's a stop. It is this stop which brings you back to listening, or rather, this stop *is* the listening. So first see that you objectify yourself constantly, that you think of yourself as a woman, as this personality with this history and that future and so on. It is all a figment of the mind. What is important is to really be aware of how you feel when your brain is free from all representation. You are nowhere, there is no centre, there is no border, there's only space,

you *are* the space. So go with it, live with it, don't leave it an intellectual understanding.

...

I do not exactly understand what I have to listen to.

You already know yourself in listening to your body, your agitation, your fear, your anxiety. But you don't know yourself in objectless listening where there's nothing to listen to, where there's only listening, only openness. Where are you when you are in love? Then the somebody completely disappears and there's only love, objectless love. Then you love for the sake of love. This is listening, it is presence.

[Jean Klein, *Transmission of the Flame*, pp 3-4, 8]

This kind of listening is effortless and devoid of any kind of agenda, intention or expectation. There is no separate entity doing it. It takes us instantly to the feeling-understanding that there is only one being, only one reality:

We cannot precisely say what this listening is, because it is not a function. It is without intention. Being free from intention also means being free from concentration. In both we are looking for a target, looking for a result, but in listening we are simply open, directionless.

In listening there is no grasping, no taking. All that is listened to comes to us. The relaxed brain is in a state of natural non-function, simply attentive without any specific direction. We can never objectify listening, because that would mean to put it in the frame of space and time. It is listening to oneself.

In listening to oneself there is no outside and no inside. It is silence, presence. In this silence-presence there is a total absence of oneself as being somebody.

In listening we are not isolated. We are only isolated when we live in objects, but free from objects we live our essence where there is no separation. In listening there is not a you and not another. Call it love.

[Jean Klein, Dialogue at the Day of Listening, Fairfax, California: May 22, 1991]

In traditional Advaita, the body is given little if any attention. But in this approach, listening to the body is important. But that doesn't mean focusing on bodily sensations – it's an unfocused, effortless listening. Here is Francis's description:

FL: What is important to notice is that we usually are at war with our body, in the sense that we don't allow for the body to speak to us. The way the body speaks to us, the language the body uses, all the bodily sensations. But we don't listen to the body. We listen to our mind, we listen to our surroundings, but this part of the conversation – the bodily sensations – we kind of repress them or suppress them. So the first step is to listen to the body, not by making an effort to focus onto the body, but when the body speaks, to listen. Not to try to make the body speak, no. But when it speaks on its own, to listen. To give the body space and time, so that the bodily sensations can expand, can tell the rest of the story.

And what happens is that it's like if you put a block of ice in lukewarm water, it starts melting away and merging with the water. So it is the same. The body is like this block of ice when it is not really welcomed, when it is ignored. But when we allow the body to

sing its song, then it begins to melt in the space, and to merge with the space. So then, when the body which was like ice becomes more like liquid, and merges with the space, then we call it the body of energy. But it's the same body. It's a body which we have allowed to speak. So that is the yoga. The essence of the yoga is allowing for the body to take its full expansion, to tell the rest of the story.

[Francis Lucille, 18/9/2016: [*Advaita 11 of 13 – When The Body Speaks, Listen*](#)]

Jean Klein expresses this beautifully, using the analogy of tuning a musical instrument:

JK: Our body is a beautiful musical instrument, like a Stradivarius, but it must be tuned. We are the tuner. To tune this instrument that is so sensitive, so secret, calls for a complete metamorphosis of oneself, and this can only happen when we are one with our instrument, with our body. We must be very sensitive to tune our bodies. We must find just the right tone for tuning, because the tone is not only vibration, it is more than vibration.

One tone contains all the tones. One chord attunes all the other chords. We need to have a bipolar listening, listening inside, attuning to the inside and to the outside. We must listen to what happens inside, in our body, and to what also comes from the so-called outside. Strictly speaking, there is no outside and inside.

This beautiful instrument has to be sensed. It is in sensing that we come to the right tuning. It calls for a very high art of listening. All our muscle structure should be maintained in tune in inaction and also in action. It is a bipolar listening. We must become able to listen. Hearing these fine vibrations comes first in meditation. There is a very important moment when you listen inside, when you listen to the listening itself. When you are aware in listening, there is no listener and nothing is listened to. There is only listening.

It is tremendous to discover oneself in listening. But first there is listening to an object, then comes listening to oneself. When listening is Silence, our musical instrument, our body, is completely penetrated by this objectless listening. Then there is something born that is beyond the human being.

You are not body, senses and mind. Really live in the absence of what you are not and this reality will be the background of life. Live in the absence of yourself. In the absence of yourself there is presence. We should take every opportunity to listen to ourselves without directing, without changing, or looking for something new. When we listen to ourselves and sustain the listening, there's transformation, there's a kind of metamorphosis.

[Jean Klein, *The Book of Listening*, Volume 9]

Rupert has sometimes said that in spiritual teaching, the real meaning lies not in the words, but in the space between the words. The words of a teacher are like a tuning mechanism. In our listening we are taken to the source from which the words come. This is how Jean Klein describes the process:

JK: In teaching you use symbols, you use language. You use words built out of clarity. But there is something behind the words. When you are stuck to the words you remain in the mind. That is why listening is important. It is only in listening that you find what is

behind the words. In listening there is no listener; there is no reference to the mind. There is only listening, openness; open to that out of which the words arise.

Words are not the truth. What is important is what is behind the words. Words are only an echo. [Jean Klein, *Transmission of the Flame*, p104]

The recognition of our true nature does not mean that we have to become a teacher of non-duality. However, at some point most of us will be asked questions about it by our friends or our family. Francis's advice on how to answer them illustrates the central role of listening and the importance of openness:

FL: As my teacher used to say 'I listen to the question, I listen to the answer, and then I say the answer'. We are one huge universe speaking and listening to itself.

We can all be teachers of non-duality if we experience non-duality. To the extent that we experience non-duality, we can share this experience, just as we can share what we understand. ...

My recommendation would be to be absolutely honest, and talk only about what you understand and experience in the moment itself. Don't use past experiences unless you use them to illustrate a point. But the teaching is what you understand and what you experience in the moment itself. And don't teach the stones. I mean by that, when you teach, address consciousness. You don't address body-minds. You address the openness. If there is no openness, don't teach.

Teaching when there is no openness, I call 'preaching'. Preaching and teaching are not the same. Don't preach. Teaching is if there is a demand, if there is a question. If there is a question, it means there is an openness because it means that they feel a need and they don't have the answer. ... That's the moment when the teacher appears. The teacher appears with the question. There is no teacher. It is the question that creates the teacher. That's why I don't do speeches. The teacher arrives with the question and leaves with the answer. At the end of the answer, no more teacher.

[Francis Lucille, 27/2/2020 [*The teacher arrives with the question and leaves with the answer*](#)]

Contemplation

Listening implies welcoming our experience as it is, without subsequent thought, comment, judgment, interpretation, or analysis. It implies simply being open to these messages and allowing them to flow through us. The purpose of the message is to take us back to the one who has sent it. It is an invitation to the castle.

[Francis Lucille, *The Perfume of Silence*]