if they’re Brahmins. They figure that
these students can’t understand it any-
way—maybe they will in their next life.
Or maybe if they’re good boys and girls,
they will in this life.

One of the traditional Hindu teachings
is that most people aren’t really interested
in the truth. So you give them some neces-
sious form that will do them good, and
you keep them in their place. Then,
at a certain point, they’ll inquire.

So there’s not the urgency for Indian
yogis to save all beings. Eventually they
want to save all beings. But they figure
they have lots of time.

If you look at what’s happening in
Western yoga, people are pretty much
caught up in the idea of being super-
healthy and full of bliss, grasping at
pleasurable states of consciousness.

Does that disturb you, knowing what you
know?

Oh yeah. So this is the way my contem-
plation usually goes: at least they’re a lit-
tle bit interested in the subject. At least
they’re getting started in it. If their
teachers have some integrity, people will start learning
more.

People come to yoga for all kinds of reasons.
Mostly they want something. But the same could be
said of Buddhism: people want peace of mind or
something. Their desire still tends to be egocentric.
But if they’ve come to a good source, they’ll start to
get more than they asked for, more than they bargained
for. And that’s the hope with this huge wave
of popularity of yoga—that there’ll be a significant
percentage of people who really take to it and really
inquire into its roots. I remain optimistic.

In the Vajrayana, we don’t view the body and mind
as being separate entities the way some hatha yogis
do. Body and mind are the same. In order to intro-
duce this to someone who is practicing hatha yoga,
we need to start by introducing the subtle body. The
mind lives in the body through the energy system—the subtle body—and that affects
the gross body. It is not the other way around. That is a
huge difference in attitude and view.

Can you explain what the gross and subtle bodies are?

The consciousness of the mind is reflected in the
energetic body. Where your mind goes is where your
energy flows. Where your energy is blocked is where
your consciousness does not reside yet. In order to
know where your mind lives or does not live in your
body and how that is manifested, you need to start to
understand your energy. The simplest way to begin to
understand how energy works in the body is to begin
to picture the central channel—the sushumna, in Sanskrit, or the uma, in Tibetan. This is pretty easy to
introduce to hatha yogis: they’re used to feeling some

JILL SATTERFIELD met Tsoknyi Rinpoche, the
son of renowned Dzochen master TULKU URGYEN,
seven years ago. After getting to know Satterfield
as his student, Tsoknyi Rinpoche asked her to be his
yoga teacher. Since then she’s been teaching yoga work-
shops at his North American retreats. She lives and
works in New York City.

How does yoga practice differ from Buddhist prac-
tice, in your experience?
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interesting natural bliss feelings when the practice gets going.

How is the central channel related to bliss?

According to the Tibetans, the central channel is where the bliss runs. Picture a beam of light that begins at the perineum and goes straight up through the body—through the throat, through the skull, to the crown of the head. If you picture it as water, you can feel where it flows and where it is dammed up or blocked. If you picture it as a beam of light, you can picture where it is light and where it is dark. Once you start to understand where it’s flowing and where it isn’t, then you start to understand energetically where there are knots and contractions.

say to people, “Is the place where you feel tight the same place that’s dark or blocked?” And they always say, “Yes!”

All tightness in the gross body, unless it is an injury, emanates from the central channel. You’ll never fix something that’s tight in your outer body or gross body without addressing the central channel of the consciousness within. It’s just like a quick fix, a Band-Aid. So the investigation is, “What is that darkness containing that I need to know about? What does the block mean?” It’s not necessarily that you need to go back to when you were six and say, “Oh, my teacher yelled at me so I tightened up.” It’s more that you’re taking time to look and be there.

Once you can stay there with those dark parts of your body, of your self, and are O.K. with them, then compassion blooms like a flower. Bodhicitta starts to rise. Once you start to feel that, then you can start to give to others because you are accepting who you are.

I think what we’re trying to do both in this kind of yoga practice and in Buddhist practice is to be more natural. That isn’t easy.

More natural?

To be a natural human being, to find our natural state, to uncover and uncover and uncover until we see our pure buddha-nature. That takes practice and time and courage.