

# Design The Pituitary.

by Yogi Mahesvara



Khecari Mudra

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## Beyond the Pituitary

YOGI MAHEŚVARA, PhD (Astrophysics)

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*"To be alive is to owe to the Grace of the Divine Mother<sup>1</sup>"*

*Khecari mudra* is an "essential<sup>2</sup>" *hatha yoga mudra*, very well documented in the traditional texts<sup>3</sup>, and yet currently seldom known in its advanced form.

It consists in turning the tongue backwards, placing its inferior part against the palate, the tip pulling backwards and upwards, as if wanting to enter the nasal fossae. It is possible that this tongue may want at *all costs* to try to go beyond the soft palate, then along the nasal septum until it is right against the sella turcica, all the way up to infiltrate the nasal fossae. The sella turcica is part of the sphenoid, a magnificent cranial bone shaped like a butterfly. The sella turcica houses the pituitary gland. When the tip of the tongue is placed against the sella turcica, we are at stage III of *khecari*, following the nomenclature proposed by Yogani<sup>4</sup>.

The ascension to the pituitary is a whole story in itself; the *Khecarividya*<sup>5</sup> reminds

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<sup>1</sup>B. Bhattacharya, *World of Tantra*, 2000, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers.

<sup>2</sup>Tara Michaël, private communication, 2016.

<sup>3</sup>In my book on *khecari mudra*, I make references to many texts of *hatha yoga* which mention this practice; sometimes succinctly, sometimes in detail. In this article, I will be referring to this book, available on [khecaridevi.com](http://khecaridevi.com) & [academia.edu](http://academia.edu).

<sup>4</sup>Leçon 108: [http://www.aypsie.ch/lecon\\_108](http://www.aypsie.ch/lecon_108).

<sup>5</sup>The *Khecarividya* is a *tantra* from the fourteenth century solely dedicated to the Divine mudra. It has been critically edited and translated into English by James Mallinson (2007, Routledge and Indica editions). I am working on a commented translation in French, available on [khecaridevi.com](http://khecaridevi.com).

us that it is the result of several lives of practice<sup>6</sup> and of *yoginimelaka*, the meeting; the connection with the Yogini; the Goddess; she herself who teaches the yogi how to rise into *khecari*.

I am blessed to observe this process in my body; process which may have begun in a previous incarnation, which continues at the time I am writing these few lines and that I envisage to continue in a future life, *InshAllah...*

I have dedicated a book to this ascension, written in summer 2016 and published in its original version in October 2016 on the occasion of *Navaratri*<sup>7</sup>. In it I share a part of my experience with *khecari mudra*. I encourage the reader to read this story, which will allow him to better understand this article. The book notably includes anatomical sketches to follow the path of the tongue, as well as explanations on the why and how of this *mudra*.

In the beginning I had the intention of modifying and complementing this book as I was progressing. But after all, I have chosen to keep the text "fixed" in its 2016 version and to undertake a new writing when it would be relevant. It is two and a half years later that I begin to write again on the subject of the Divine *mudra*.

Many things have happened in two years and a half; generally, and particularly with *khecari*. The *mudra* has accompanied me all along this period throughout which I have gained ease in stage III, and went beyond it.

Sat down comfortably, I stick the tip of my tongue against the sella turcica; a powerful internal switch sets up: *Śakti* makes itself at home and swirls freely in the inner space; the perception of the nadis accentuates<sup>8</sup>; the "fountain of *sahasrara*"<sup>9</sup> activates; I become more sensitive to the "shower of Grace"; non-breathing eventually settles in, with the impacts it

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<sup>6</sup>*Khecarividya* (I.7): Carrying out the practice, after many lives, the yogi reaps its benefits, O Goddess, sometime in a later life.

<sup>7</sup>Editions LE TRIDENT ROSE. Followed by its translation in English offered by Yamina, published in April 2017 during Navaratri, and more recently illustrated by Stefanía Ólafsdóttir, also available on [khecaridevi.com](http://khecaridevi.com) & [academia.edu](http://academia.edu).

<sup>8</sup>I have a particularly developed sensitivity to *prana*; it is in fact the spontaneous awakening of this feeling in my body that has brought me to yoga. Among the five senses, vision and touch intervene, which means that I *see* (even with eyes closed, I refer to the sense of vision when it is turned inwards) and *touch* (without necessarily using my physical hands) *prana*. I discuss this in my book on *khecari mudra*.

<sup>9</sup>The manifestations of *Kundalini* are varied. Among the most recurrent when the Goddess rises high enough is the fountain of *prana*: the ascending flow of energy exits through the top of the skull and falls back onto the yogi. See "*Hatha Yoga & Kundalini*", Rodolphe Milliat, 2015, India Universalis Editions, for more information on the more common manifestations of "the energy of the depths".

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can have on the associated state of consciousness; in short, I take command of this marvelous vehicle that I have been entrusted with in order to *set up a discipline so as to realize my divinity*<sup>10</sup>. An analogy? In the movie "Avatar"<sup>11</sup>, when the indigenous of this phantasmagoric planet "plug" their braided hair into their mount and can then pilot it. It is more or less what happens: when my tongue is in *khecari*, the piloting of this precious and ephemeral vehicle becomes more fluid, easy, automatic...

Proceeding beyond the pituitary supposes that the tongue infiltrates into the nasal fossae. Two trajectories are then possible: to the right or to the left. Technically, this nasal infiltration prevents the air from coming in through said nostril. This gives a new perspective to the practice of *nadi sodhana*, alternate nostril breathing. This also sheds new light on the functioning of *ida* & *pingala* nadis. We will come back to it in this paper.

The progress in *khecari* that I evoke here concerns the acquisition of this nostril plugging from the inside; being able to play with this functionality; plugging on the right or the left as I wish. In the same way as in spring 2016, during a retreat in Bulgaria, my tongue went abruptly from stage II to stage III, while I was falling into *bhakti*, this new advancement was sudden: at some point, the tongue found the way to rise higher and pursue its path. This happened in 2018, over a period of several days, in Varanasi, during the period of *Śivaratri*.

We organized a family pilgrimage in India in 2017/18, over several months. The program of this trip was quite open, but focused on the South of India, notably the Tamil Nadu<sup>12</sup>.

We had not at all anticipated to go to the North of India; but at some point, I do not really know how, it became obvious to the four of us that we would go to Varanasi. The first motivation was to go play music. My younger son had begun learning *tablas* and was motivated to continue in a more propitious place than the South of India. The eldest was attracted by the flute and the harmonium; my wife, by singing; and me by singing and the harmonium. This was indeed our main activity during this trip of five weeks. Accompanied by an amazing teacher, a very pedagogical musician and great listener, notably with the children; he rapidly became a friend.

We progress slowly slowly, surely, at our rhythm... However, the days pass little by little and I invest myself less and less into music. Similarly, I stop the *Hindi* lessons I was taking with my eldest son, who is as talented with languages as with music. Not because of disinterest; simply because the vibration of this holy place invades me more and more and

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<sup>10</sup>Sri Anandamayi Ma.

<sup>11</sup>2009, James Cameron.

<sup>12</sup>See the paper "Arunachala Śiva", 2019, available on [khecaridevi.com](http://khecaridevi.com) & [academia.edu](http://academia.edu).

invites me (forces me?) to devote myself more to contemplation in order to allow for the integration of a certain number of teachings; initiations; notably some relating to *khecari mudra*.

The proximity of the Ganga river affects me<sup>13</sup> and I readily spend more and more time contemplating the stream. Stream along which the two cremation ghats smoke incessantly. The atmosphere it emits is peculiar, as well as the smell of calcinated flesh. It is common to see body parts come out of the funerary pyre, perhaps get reclaimed by famished stray dogs.

The presence of the *lingams*... Varanasi is *full of lingams!!!* they are *everywhere*, of all sizes, ages, some worshipped for ages... During the first week of our trip, after having savored a suspect *bhang lassi*<sup>14</sup> (which I think was cut with *datura*, another master plant linked with *Śiva*), I become aware of the presence of all these *lingams*; I feel their presence, as if they were greeting me; this vertiginous presence notably manifests in my spine: *Welcome Ommmm YogiJi!* These *lingams*, like mushrooms, are present just about everywhere. A few examples: In a restaurant, on my way to the toilets, I end up in front of a beautiful little temple full of *lingams*. Another time when going to refill a gas canister: the little room adjacent to the workshop happens to be a temple. A gaze at the level of the ground of an alley: a little window reveals a small underground temple (Fig. 1)...

Add to this the dirtiness, sometimes extreme, of the city, the noise, the recurrent belly ache, and all the rest, I must say that this trip to Varanasi was anything but restful! And yet these five weeks went by fast; still, how I would like to still be there... how I would like to return...

Many meetings occurred during this trip to Varanasi, some relevant for the practice of *khecari*.

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<sup>13</sup>It is not the first time that I meet Ganga. Two years before, during a short trip to Rishikesh, I experienced Ganga. Notably, I remember our arrival at Rishikesh, at night. I felt a "pulling" at the top of my skull. A different feeling than the one I already knew and which corresponds to the column of *prana* which starts at *mooladhara*, rises along the axis and exits through the top of the skull in a well determined direction. Intrigued, I looked (at night, I had not yet seen Ganga with my eyes) around me for the reason of this singular activity; I quickly understood; Lord *Śiva* is generally represented with the Ganga river coming out of his hair bun; it is this dynamic which invited itself into my body. I remember intense moments of contemplation on the banks of the sacred stream during this trip.

<sup>14</sup>*Bhang lassi* is yogurt which contains hemp. The consumption of cannabis, the herb of *Śiva*, or *Kali*, is forbidden in India. That being said, it is tolerated for spiritual and celebratory uses. Some *sadhus* and *yogis* consume it (abuse it!?!), especially in the North of India. In Varanasi, there are shops that sell *bhang*. Powerful master plant, it is double-edged, as with everything powerful!



Shortly before our departure to India, I met in France Yogi Matsyendra Nath who gave me the contact of a yogi practicing *khecari mudra* who lives in Varanasi. I got to know Yogiraj, an Indian yogi, family father and director of a small yoga school. He was initiated to *khecari mudra* by his *guru*. He cut the frenum of his tongue little by little. I do not know how much he masters *khecari*; only that he can plug his nostrils from the inside. Apart from his own *guru*, he had never met another *khecara*. For me it was also the first time I physically met someone practicing *khecari* at such an advanced level. His proficiency in English allowed us to exchange on *hatha yoga* in general, and on *khecari* in particular. He approves and encourages my course of action in promoting the Divine *mudra*, all the while reminding me of the highly secret and esoteric nature of this practice.

Yogi Matsyendra Nath also spoke to me about a sanskritist living in Varanasi, Mark Dyczkowski, currently working on the *Tantra Loka* which stipulates that “among all mudras, the most important is *khecari*, since its essence is divine”. I met Mark who taught me that the *mudra* described in the *Tantra Loka* has nothing to do with the practice of *hatha yoga*. I discuss this in the article “*Arunachala Śiva*”, 2019.

A few days later, I met an American yogi, Rishi. Living essentially in India for twenty years, he has a traveling lifestyle, notably imposed by the periodical renewal of his visa. Dressed in orange, Rishi has all the *Śaivite* yogi paraphernalia: endless *jatas*<sup>15</sup>, body covered in ashes, trident, *kamandalu*... Notably, he takes particular care to not to let his shilum cool down. Speaking little; we rapidly become friends.

Beyond his improbable mastery of *asana*, he also practices *khecari mudra*. He regularly stretches his tongue but has not cut his frenum. He is also able to plug his nostrils from the inside. He learned *khecari* intuitively and it is for him the first time he meets another *khecara*<sup>16</sup>.

When I met him, he was spending a lot of time in an *akhara*<sup>17</sup> situated along the Ganga,

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<sup>15</sup>In Sanskrit, *jata* designates the tangled locks of hair, which are sometimes called dreadlocks. *Jatadhara*, the wielder of *jatas* is one of the names of Lord *Śiva*. See “*The Pilous System: a Yogic Tool*”, 2018, available on [khecaridevi.com](http://khecaridevi.com) & [academia.edu](http://academia.edu).

<sup>16</sup>To meet two *khecaras* at the same time, at the same place: jackpot! The fact that these two yogis familiar with the world of Indian traditional yoga do not know other *khecaras* underlines that rarity of this practice, which contrasts with the abundance of bibliographic references. James Mallinson (2007) also evokes the rarity of these *khecaras*. He met barely half a dozen during his long trips spent on fieldwork among Indian ascetics.

<sup>17</sup>An *akhara* is a religious brotherhood, led by a *guru*. Some possess material goods and can support, feed and lodge passing ascetics.

where the *pujas* take place. This *akhara* has a little house of several stories which serves as a lodge and where meals are served. The ground floor is open to the outside; a little room of about 3 by 7 meters, with the *dhuni*, the sacred fire, stoked night and day. Small welcoming room that I baptized "ashtray", because the odor of cold shilum is deeply incrustrated in it...

The pilgrims pass through the *akhara* to receive the benediction of the different *sadhus* who may be present there, especially in the evening during *Ganga Aarti*, the celebration of the Ganga that takes place there and which attracts a lot of people. This celebration is quite kitsch, Indian style staging, saturated music, collect of funds to clean the Ganga. Despite this "Bollywood" aspect which at first repels me a little, I had the leisure to experience mighty rises of energy right at the very moment of *Ganga Aarti*.

Back to *khecari*. Why a progress in *khecari* at this moment? Why not! I already had almost 4 months of pilgrimage in India behind me and had received a certain number of initiations<sup>18</sup>. Quite a few things had cleared up, notably concerning what I have come to do on Earth in this incarnation: to become, on my small scale, the guarantor, the heir of a tradition, and how my entire life, since childhood, had naturally and mysteriously articulated itself around this. The responsibility that comes along with this precious heritage. The impression that my *sadhana* extends over several lives. Taking a decision as well: to dedicate more time to practice, without really knowing how, and to create a space devoted to the celebration of the Divine in France, and to begin to open it to the "public", all the while not letting it become a yoga studio; a deeper engagement, without compromise in the way of yoga...

In short, it is a mix of different elements which brought my tongue to rise higher... in the *left* nostril. Indeed, for a few days, maybe a week, my tongue settled comfortably in the left nostril but not the right... *Pingala nadi*... During this week, I keep my tongue settled in the left nostril; sometimes I try the right side, just to see, trusting that eventually it will end up going through. I cannot remember exactly when, where or how this rise through the left nostril went. I was surely sitting somewhere in Kashi<sup>19</sup>, not far from a *lingam*... On the other hand, I can remember well the moment where the tongue decided to settle in the right nostril. Sitting at the *akhara*, during *Ganga Aarti*, the evening of *Maha Śivaratri*. Inspired by *Kali*'s weed, all of a sudden, the tongue goes up and settles into the right nostril. From then, I no longer need this guidance to rise up there, it is acquired... Gratitude, gratitude, surrender to *Śiva*, to *Ganga*...

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<sup>18</sup>See "*Arunachala Śiva*", 2019, where I describe some teachings I contacted in the beginning of this pilgrimage.

<sup>19</sup>Another name for Varanasi.



To manage to settle into a nostril, the tongue takes on a particular behavior, notably going through contortions that I do not control consciously and that make me think of a mollusk in its shell.

The nostrils correspond to two *nadis* essential to yogic anatomy: *ida* & *pingala*. These link *ajna chakra* (the two-petal lotus, each corresponding to one of the two *nadis*) to *mooladhara*. There are several possible visualizations for these *nadis*. I will not go into the description of these visualizations, which can be found in *hatha yoga* books. Many variations are possible.

*”Visualize (the median channel) possessing these four characteristics and stretching from the opening of Brahma to a point situated four fingers below the navel, its two extremities being flat and united and on each side along the right and left psychic channel (pingala & ida), similar to the intestines of a lean sheep, that pass above the head, go down along the face and end at the two nasal openings.”<sup>20</sup>*

*”On the left and right sides of sushumna are ida & pingala. They rise straight upwards, alternating right to left. When they have pierced all the chakras they arrive at the nostrils.”<sup>21</sup>*

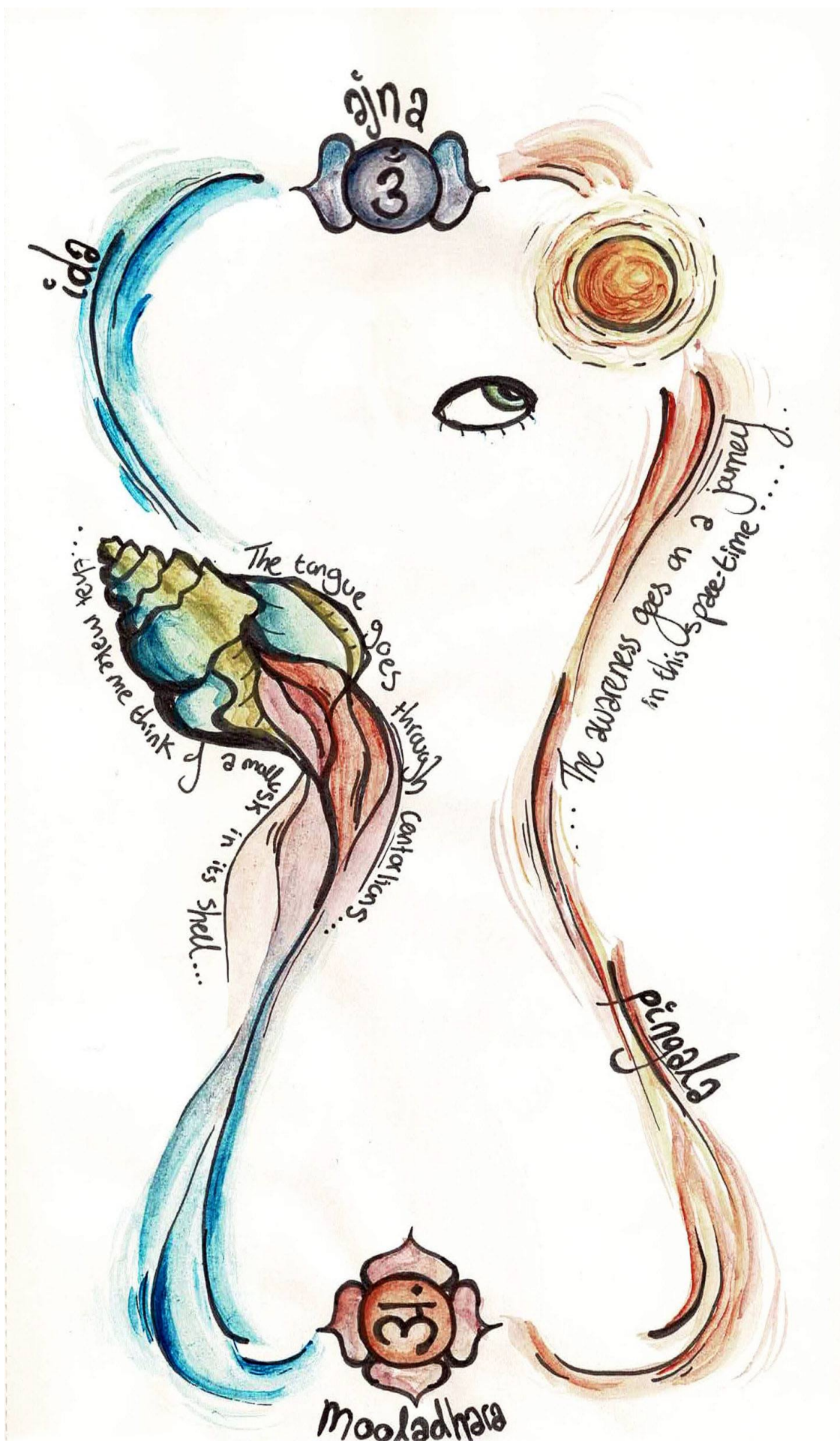
If the tongue settles in the right nostril, the latter becomes plugged from the inside and I directly feel *ida nadi* activating. I see and touch this energetic flux, this column of *prana* which starts at *mooladhara* and arrives at *ajna*, describing, for example, an arc on the left side. This feeling is much stronger and more alive than if I plug my right nostril using my finger. It sets itself up right away, without waiting for breathing to take place. I have since had the leisure to observe a phenomenon of ”alternate non-breathing”. When my body is in ”quasi non-breathing<sup>22</sup>” mode, I place the tip of my tongue in one nostril or the other, which

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<sup>20</sup> *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines or Seven Books of Wisdom of the Great Path, English translation by Lama Kasi Dawa Samdup, edited by Dr. Evans-Wentz, 1934, Oxford, Jesus College, Jesus College.*

<sup>21</sup> *Rudra Yamala Tantra.*

<sup>22</sup> *Pranayama* practices seek to access ”non-breathing”, *nivritti*: breathing stops, as attested by the yogis who are buried for more or less long periods. What I call ”quasi non-breathing” corresponds to holy moments where the quantity of air that comes and exits my nostrils dwindles and becomes more and more feeble; so feeble that this breathing has no more influence on the movements of *prana* in my body. Example: I plug my right nostril with the tip of the tongue and I inhale: this inhale sets in motion a flow of *prana* in *ida nadi*; the breathing and the visualization synchronize and work in concert, facilitating the practice and giving it more range and power. Still with the right nostril plugged, let’s consider that I am in quasi non-breathing:



alternatively activates *ida* and *pingala*; the balance occurs without breathing; the awareness goes on a journey in this space-time...

Sometimes, I no longer know in which nostril the tip of the tongue is; I then take a moment to observe the flow of *prana*, which informs me on which nostril is plugged.

I also observe a movement of the eyes: if the tongue plugs the left nostril, *pingala* activates, the right eye pushes to the top right. Eventually I visualize the sun there; it comes easily, but not completely naturally; a (small) mental intervention is required for the sun to invite itself on the top right of the screen (or equivalently, the moon at the top left).

In short, I have the impression of discovering *ida* & *pingala* for the first time; I go back to *nadi sodhana*, alternate breathing; or rather, I rediscover *nadi sodhana*<sup>23</sup>.

During the first few yoga classes I took in 2010, the teacher briefly proposed this technique to us, which I enjoyed right away: the color purple invited itself during the practice, and I came out of it at peace, calm, balanced. I remember a period, beginning of 2011, when I was just starting to improvise solo sessions: I intuitively went towards this *pranayama*, not for long, but regularly. Later, when I was taking the yoga course in Marseille, *nadi sodhana* was proposed, over longer periods, typically one *ghatika* (24 minutes). A few years went by where I did not practice alternate breathing, perhaps two... The work on *ida* & *pingala* proceeded nonetheless via other techniques of *hatha yoga*.

Entering this new stage of *khecari mudra*, I regain a taste for *nadi sodhana*. The practice takes on a brand new flavor, much more powerful, which goes further than when I had to plug the nostrils with the fingers. Notably, not needing to have the right hand on the face; the practice is more comfortable. Funny moments: one time, at a yoga festival, I get caught by the animator: "you have to put your hand on your face!" – "Humm, it's that I plug my nostrils from the inside with the tip of the tongue..." – "No! Hand on your face!" – "Ok Ok; sorry, I'll put my hand on my face!". Another time, an animator lets me do it during the practice *ghatika*; I then explain to him that I "cheat" with the tongue. "Ok, I thought you

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in this case *prana* travels along *ida nadi* with a dynamic of its own. The quantity of air that comes in and out of my body is so feeble that it does not influence the movement of *prana* any longer. In these moments, there remains the flow of energy I feel through vision and touch; sometimes, after a moment, this pranic activity disappears... what's left?

<sup>23</sup>References to the practice of *nadi sodhana* where the tip of the tongue is used to plug the nostrils from the inside are, to my knowledge, almost non-existent. Yogani, in his lesson 108, briefly evokes it. In the traditional texts that I have consulted, I have found no allusion to it. Neither have experts in the matter (Jason Birch, private communication). This does not mean that there are none: these same experts declare that there are millions of unstudied manuscripts in India that are rotting and decomposing.

hadn't understood the exercise!" We laugh...

Let's raise a technical detail: if the tip of the tongue settles into the left nostril, then the right channel, *pingala*, activates, and reciprocally. Makes sense: When I plug the left nostril with my finger, this favors the work along the solar channel. However, it is *ida*, the lunar channel, that takes its source in the left nostril? We could then think, rightly so, that by putting the tip of the tongue in the left nostril, I would have a tendency to titillate *ida*?

All depends on the *depth* that the tip of the tongue reaches. When this tongue begins to plug one nostril, then, as discussed previously, it is the *nadi* of the opposite side that activates; a flow of energy travels there, generally alternating rising and descending. If the tip of this tongue rises higher, I observe another function: the activity in the opposite *nadi* fades to make space for the activity in the *nadi* corresponding to the plugged nostril. It all happens as if the tip of the tongue went to churn *ajna* from the side; as a little jackhammer, this tongue, armed with its pranic extension<sup>24</sup>, comes to tap, pulse *ajna* (its lateral part), sometimes quite strongly, never violently. The transition between these two modes is progressive: there is a moment during which these two modes cohabit, then the "churning" mode dominates over the over, without erasing it completely.

But why? Sometimes my tongue churns on one side; then on the other side... This quickly balances *ida* & *pingala*, more quickly than if I practice *nadi sodhana*. To what end? Let's not forget that this balancing is necessary for *prana* to engulf in *susumna nadi*...

This "churning" mode invites itself less often than the "soft" mode and I do not really know why this or that mode sets itself up. Generally, for the "churning" mode to set itself up, the quantity of available energy is more important. These are holy moments where it is the Goddess, the *Maha Kundalini Śakti* who leads the dance. As a gentleman, I let Her do and express gratitude and surrender...

From a practical point of view, the possibility of plugging the nostrils without hands allows one to complete certain postures which work on *ida* or *pingala*. For example, in *Janu Śirsasana*, the head on the knee posture, where our two hands are occupied with grabbing the foot, it is possible to plug one nostril in order to breathe on the side of the leg being stretched. In Varanasi, I had the intuition of practicing *nadi sodhana* in *śirsasana*. At the time of writing these lines, I explore this possibility and have no comment to make. However, I mention it as I have never read a reference to this practice.

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<sup>24</sup>See my book on *khecari mudra*, page 40. It all happens as if the physical tongue come to lock itself into a quite large section *nadi* and that finally "I" maneuver a much longer tongue, hybrid, endowed with a physical part and a pranic part which churns *ajna*.





It can be useful to use *jala/sutra neti* in order to unblock the nostrils before practicing *nadi sodhana*. However, I have noticed that *prana* is an efficient nostril unblocker. I sometimes begin *nadi sodhana* with the nostrils partially blocked, and observe that after a little moment, they are unblocked, without having blown my nose. The flow of *prana* simply ends up imposing itself, the boogers bow politely.

*Ida* & *pingala* have an implication which extends well beyond the pranic dimension we just evoked. The concept of *ida* & *pingala* is not restricted to Hinduism; we find it in many traditions, notably ours with the caduceus; or also in the Chinese with yin and yang. We find there the duality inherent to manifestation. Action and non-action; the meditative practice and the work in the world; introversion and extraversion...

*"What is the meaning behind the notion of ida & pingala? It is a great secret of spiritual life: there should be no attachment to the internal phenomena of the mind, or to phenomena of the external world. It is right to walk the middle path where pure consciousness reigns. This consciousness is neither in the internal world or in the external world... It is in the middle and beyond the two. Consequently, try to be detached internally as much as externally. It is in this way that the jump into the domain of pure consciousness will occur... sushumna... the subtle, divine vortex that goes through all the chakras. This centering of ida & pingala and the detachment of the internal and external world is not easy. In fact, you cannot make it happen consciously. It can only occur spontaneously. Simply remember this in your daily life as well as in your yoga practice. It is this centering, this razor edge between the principles of ida & pingala which constitutes the essence of spiritual life."<sup>25</sup>*

*"Is the external life, the activity of each day and each instant not the indispensable complement to hours of meditation and contemplation? Meditation, contemplation, Union, is the obtained result, the flower blossoming; whereas the daily activity is the anvil on which must pass and pass again all the elements so that they can be softened, purified, refined, made mature for the illumination that is granted to them through contemplation."<sup>26</sup>*

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<sup>25</sup>Swami Satyananda Saraswati.

<sup>26</sup>The Mother, Pondicherry, Novembre 1912.

*”Those who only follow the path of avidya (action in the world) enter blind darkness. Conversely, those who are only absorbed in vidya (the internal knowledge of the mind and more precisely the meditative practices) also enter blind darkness. The one who knows both vidya (the internal world) and avidya (the external world) goes through the abyss of death via avidya and attains immortality through vidya.”<sup>27</sup>*

The two polarities of life... the necessity of balancing these two aspects in our life, in order to access *susumna*:

*”During the activity of susumna it is better to meditate or to concentrate upon God; better to not undertake anything other than spiritual practices. It is preferable to avoid any action linked to life or death; profit or loss; victory or defeat.”<sup>28</sup>*

It is likely that once a certain stage is attained, it is possible to free oneself from life in the world, or even to free oneself from meditative and contemplative practices, even both! An example: How many houses has Milarepa, one of the most famous contemporary ascetics, built and destroyed following the instruction of his *guru*, Marpa, before being initiated to the secrets of Tibetan yoga? I do not know; I simply highly recommend reading about the life of Jetsün Milarepa<sup>29</sup>.

Back to *khecari*. The central churning has also gained power and range. When the tip of the tongue is right against the sella turcica and pulses on this point, as a small jackhammer, it is as if the tongue was stronger, or similarly, as if it allowed more energy to pass. Another evening spent at the *akhara*, once again during *Ganga Aarti*, still inspired by *Kali* weed: the tongue installs itself against the sella turcica, does not seek to go right or left but remains at the center and begins to churn as never before: the whole skull vibrates strongly; starting from the sella turcica. This vibration is not uniform: I notice that some areas vibrate differently; they appear to be the areas of junction between different bony parts of the skull. The churning gives me a particular vision of the bones that make up this skull.

This rise in *khecari* also participates in a practice that I would later call the *pranic kite* and constitutes an ”answer” or rather an ”accompaniment” to a strong rise in energy. This

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<sup>27</sup> *Ishavasya Upanishad*, 9-11. Satyananda considers these verses as the most important of the *Upanishads*.

<sup>28</sup> *Śiva Svarodhaya*, 129-130.

<sup>29</sup> Tibet’s Great Yogi Milarepa: A Biography from the Tibetan. Translated from Tibetan by Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup. Edited by Evans-Wentz.



consists in keeping both arms in the air for a more or less long period of time<sup>30</sup>. One evening at the *akhara*, during its rise, the tongue dragged both arms with it... It was not the first time that I experienced the spontaneous installation of this *asana* in my body. Two months beforehand, at the *ashram* of Amritapuri, in Kerala, during *bhajan* sessions, two or three times, my arms remained in the air for a long time, that I voluntarily shortened, being ill at ease with some of the looks of the devotees. This time at the *akhara*, in the "ashtray", I feel safe and let myself go... The same elements participate in an explosive cocktail: *Ganga aarti*, *Kali* weed, *khecari*... the two arms go up and stay up there, as if pulled towards the sky, for a good amount of time; I do not know how long; it takes no conscious effort from my part to keep these skinny arms in the air; the eyes in *śambavi* or open observing the coming and going of the devotees... in doubt, some come to touch my legs and leave me a bill; we never know, in case it brings good luck! A friend brought to my attention that Varanasi is full of kites; indeed, children, but also adults of all ages, play with kites daily in the streets and on roofs, with a surprising dexterity.

This pranic kite invited itself again several months later, in Provence, in a much stronger way, during a YogaStival<sup>31</sup>. My participation in this manifestation consists in offering a *yagna*, a sacred fire, over a period of 24 hours at the *Śivmandir*<sup>32</sup>. From Friday afternoon, I

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<sup>30</sup>Some ascetics embark into rather peculiar *sadhanas* (*tapas*) such as keeping one arm in the air for 12 years or more; or to never place a foot on the earth during such a period. An ethnologist, Danielle Bevilacqua, tells of some of their declarations: "If the *sadhus* do not do *tapas*, the world cannot function"; "For how long will you be doing this *tapas*? Until Lord *Śiva* appears in front of me". In the eighteenth century, Puraṇ Puri kept both his arms in the air during his entire life. He undertook a trip through Asia, Arabia and Russia which took around thirty years (source: Hatha Yoga Project, <https://erccomics.com/comics/hathayoga/4>).

<sup>31</sup>Manifestation without annunciation, not to be confused with a yoga festival. See <http://yogastival.com/dico/> for the definition.

<sup>32</sup>A dozen kilometers away from the *Khecari Devi Ashram*, the *Śivmandir*. In a beautiful forest estate which resists as well as it can to the systematic concreting of Provence; a little discreet recess; a narrow corridor of a few meters inhabited by thorny bushes which leads to a small open room with a low and vaulted roof, of about 3 square meters. At the center of this room, a massive lingam from Varanasi, brought from a Provençal yogi whom I do not know personally. Around one meter high with substantial weight. Placed there by the owner of the place, it barely receives any attention or visits. I know it is there but I am not particularly interested in it. However, in the beginning of 2017, I contacted this place several times: simple visions that invite me to adventure there. One evening, after a ritual shared with friends not far from the *Śivmandir*, I sneak away at the moment of the traditional aperitif, and I go alone to the *lingam*. In my pockets, a candle, Ganga water. I splash the *lingam* with water and improvise a little *puja* which would make an orthodox Brahman go pale. I simply sit and make myself available to what can arise. Quite rapidly, visions invite themselves, the *lingam* "expresses himself": settle down here; stay close to me; take care of this place, make a temple here... I see myself half naked, cleaning this place; sometimes people passing by... an impression of *déjà vu*, it seems familiar to me to take care of a temple, as if I already knew this activity.

prepare the *Śivmandir*; I clean the place, then welcome *Sangha* friends coming from afar to share this friendly event.

In the background, a particularly difficult personal and family situation, notably on the emotional level. Tired, in bed around 11 pm, I had planned to light up the fire around 5 am the next day... I go to sleep: impossible to fall asleep; my eyes are wide open, in *śambavi mudra*; repeating endlessly a *mantra* to *Arunachala Śiva*; my tongue stuck up there. I try several times to bring it back into my mouth; it goes back up mechanically. I let it go... to finally wake up around 3:30 am. Little series of *asanas*, I pursue the installation of the *Śivmandir* and light up the *yagna*, alone, around 5 am. Some early to rise yogis and yoginis join me from 6 am. This fire is to be kept up for more than 24 hours with the help of several devotees. Intense day of practice, I enjoy the teachings of the animators present at this event; notably in the late afternoon, a kundalini yoga session, a style of yoga I had often heard of but never experienced. Repetitive movements with music. After an hour, the alchemy takes place, I crumble into tears: big emotional discharge which makes me contact the ephemeral aspect of life; mine, that of people close to me, and everyone else: "*Everything you know will disappear...*"<sup>33</sup> Contacting and integrating this truth does me good, it has a healing aspect<sup>34</sup>. With a bit of distance, I realize that it allowed me to be more sensitive to what will not disappear, the timeless, the immortal...

A light meal, mostly made up of two slices of hemp cake, laboriously won during a participative and non-serious *asana* demonstration, precedes the ritual, animated by a friend who excels in this kind of celebration. Around fifty participants, *mantras*, drum; the energetic vortex takes place... The ritual barely begins and the vibration is already strong... The ceremony master gives indications to the unfolding; notably a permission "do as you feel": both my arms straighten and rise instantly: the pranic kite sets itself up, the wind is strong!

The palms of my hands are oriented towards the sky, the thumb and index finger stuck to each other. I feel a strong flow of energy that starts at the base of the wrists and goes towards the sky, a bit like the strings that spider-man uses to move around and fight against

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This evening, a subtle connection is made with this place and its resident: the place is activated. Since then, I have been there regularly, essentially alone, rarely accompanied, even though that is changing. This *lingam* has become one of my main teachers; I contact there a number of important things; for example, a demonstration of how *prana* is working; a *pranayama*; an insight; a good shower of grace; an emotion that comes back up and frees itself; answers to questions I have, or do not yet have...

<sup>33</sup>Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer, 2007.

<sup>34</sup>I discuss the link between yoga and cleaning of the emotional body in the article "*Psychotherapy: a powerful Yogic Tool*", 2018. The repetitive movements in this kundalini yoga session remind me of reichian therapy sessions. Wilhelm Reich had indeed proposed an energetic system very close to that of chakras.

super-villains<sup>35</sup>; sometimes this flow begins at the level of the elbows. After a moment, I observe a pulling sensation from the inferior part of the palms of my hands; it is intense without being painful; more powerful than when the flow of energy begins at the base of the wrists. In fact, the surface that "pulls" upwards is more important, which allows more *prana* to circulate.

The tongue plays a key role in the holding of this kite. Naturally in *khecari*, it is over-motivated and plays the role of the switch; it closes the circuit which allows *Śakti* to pass, to rise into the palms of the hands and beyond. Later, after the ritual, I realize that my jaw hurts from holding *khecari*. The eyes are in *śambavi*. Sometimes I open them to observe what goes on around me, then I close them again. Two or three times, I make the effort to come out of *khecari*; naturally, this has the effect to add weight to the arms; the kite loses amplitude; the tongue keeps trying to go back up. I hold this *asana* for more than an hour and a half<sup>36</sup>, until the end of the ritual.

A kite needs wind to be animated. This evening, the wind is provided by the energy produced by the ritual: that of the participants, of the room, the *mantras*, the drum... This kite had a peculiar dynamic which translates as a kind of sensual dance: the torso, the arms move, the head too; this dance is very pleasant. It is clearly associated with the *mantras* and the drum; when, at times, they stop, the arms, the body no longer move and a retention takes place. They start again: the dance starts again.

The end of the ritual arrives, I come out of the *asana*. I apprehend this exit; how will the arms react? I ask for the assistance of my neighbors who help me to slowly lower the arms... I shake these arms, all is well, no numbness. In fact, the next day I had no soreness or pain: the quantity of *prana* that circulated there was such that there was no space for eventual soreness. A friend brings to my attention that my face is red; in fact, I am burning, as if I had a sunburn; it reminds him of the demonstrations of the rises of Kundalini that his master, Sri Sri Sri Satchidananda Yogi did for his disciples in order to illustrate the phenomenon<sup>37</sup>. To do this, he used, it seems, mainly *śambavi mudra*.

During this adventure, an impression of play; a free celebration, with no expectation; like a child flying a kite on the beach, or in Kashi... The following days, I notice that the

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<sup>35</sup>Recurrent references to Marvel super-heroes are fed by childhood memories, and mostly by my two sons.

<sup>36</sup>According to other participants, 1h30 seems to be the lower limit that I am adopting here. It is likely that I remained there longer; but the exact time does not matter. What matters is that holding this *asana* requires no effort on my part. Seeing the girth of my arms (Fig. 1), "forcing" this posture, which means using the musculature, would have been impossible.

<sup>37</sup>See a picture in the book "*Hatha Yoga & Kundalini*".

The panic hite seeks itself up, the wind is strong...

...a particular dynamic which translates as a kind of sensual dance...



Spiderman strings are still in place, without ritual or hemp cake. It is while writing these lines that I remember their presence and I realize that I never use them. However, if I present my arms towards the sky, the flow of energy coming out of the wrists activates and demands to go towards the sky... I decide to take the kite out of the cupboard! Notably, during one of the first re-readings of this article: one evening at home, at the end of a weekend marked by emotional discomfort. Standing in front of the chimney: a few breaths; the tongue rises, rises, taking the arms up with it. The arms are in the air, in a particular configuration, different from those I had experienced, a *mudra* invites itself. These arms literally float, static, freed from gravity, accompanied by a quasi-non-breath... immobility, silence... A powerful emotional discharge that makes me come out of the *asana*: what bothered me during the week-end comes out, expresses itself; it does me good, it cleans me.

In fact, around one year before this experience in Varanasi, my tongue had already risen to a comparable altitude, rarely; two or three times; maybe four, over a period of a few days. A few days where I was alone at home; these periods where, disengaged from the family *sadhana*, I devote myself entirely to solitary internal practice, to the study of texts, as well as diverse tinkering and laying out of the *ashram*. These few pushes had given me a taste of what could happen up there.

The energy necessary for these pushes was provided by the sexual channel.

Once my tongue was freed from its frenum, I naturally had access to the nasal floor, which I call the first level of *khecari*<sup>38</sup>, *lalana chakra*, where the *amrita* comes through when it flows from *bindu*, before arriving at *vishuddhi* then descending to be consumed in the fire of *manipura*...

A subjugating sensation, the tongue coming to touch very sensitive tissues as I have never known in my body. A highly sensual sensation: this softness, this sensitivity, reminds me of the entrance of the vagina, a little lower than the clitoris, where there is a bony area covered by a skin; a part that seems very sensitive. The nasal floor is something different, and mostly, it is in me, not in the other. The *Union* can take place: the nasal floor is similar to the feminine sexual organ, the tongue to the masculine organ. The junction takes place, *Śakti* can pass through, a little extra essential step to the Mystic Union of *Śiva* & *Śakti*...

Subjugating sensation that I had observed at the time, without going any further into it. I had neither explored or used this component.

It is around three years later that the sensuality, the sexuality, invited itself in my practice of *khecari mudra*. Not for long, over maybe a few weeks; the *sadhana*, the initiations,

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<sup>38</sup>See my book on *khecari mudra*, page 22.

invite themselves, they go and sometimes come back, I do not understand their logic, their dynamic: it is secondary.

This source of energy is colossal. The Daoist Chinese, who have given particular attention to this question, name *ching* the *chi* (*prana*) of sexual origin. The latter, in many ways, governs the world. It is indeed thanks to it that we are here to talk about it. Observe in us and around us the quantity of time and effort put to the service of seduction, of searching for a "soul mate". We can be very tired, collapse into bed; the partner, who has more energy, comes and makes advances; it works, sexual excitation rises, let's go! Where is the sleepiness that was crushing us five minutes ago?

In short, the idea is to activate this energy of sexual origin and to make it rise. On its way, this energy will carry the tongue and allow it to rise higher; quite simply.

I have been able to observe that this sexual energy, rather than rising along the spine, uses a *nadi* of particularly large section; which takes root at the level of the base of the sexual organ and rises up to the region of *ajna*, passing through the front.

It is right to little by little overcome the sensual dimension to go towards an "a-sexual" sexuality: to only keep the "mechanical" part of sexual excitation, all the while erasing the sensual dimension as for example in a "standard" couple relationship. I have noticed that the more the practice is filtered from the sensual dimension, the more powerful it is; the more the quantity and quality of rising *prana* increases... Worth mentioning that this "non-sensual" sexuality is fully compatible with a "sensual" one!

I will not go any more into the details of the experiences that have led me to this knowledge. I have taken the decision to not share publicly some experiences in which the code of "good moral conduct", or even the "politically correct", are transgressed, or rather surpassed and sublimated in order to be used for "yogic" ends. I think that such sharing can be confusing and I do not write on that topic. Sometimes, rarely, I happen to share orally with some friends.

I have already been asked if it was good for one's health to bring the tongue up there and if it did not incur any risks. Relevant question to which I have no answer. More globally, is yoga good for health? Most people who practice yoga are concerned for their wellbeing, and the image of the yogi in perfect physical and psychic condition is widespread. Sometimes when I evoke my physical problems, or even my psychological or emotional difficulties, it surprises, and certainly reassures. This aspect of wellbeing is important for me and I have a tendency to take care of this precious and fragile vehicle. That being said, it is secondary: it can constitute a by-product of the yogic *sadhana*... or not. Indeed, in the introduction of *Roots of Yoga*<sup>39</sup>, the authors warn that some practices evoked in the book, if they are successful, end up in the death of the physical body. However, this does not prevent some to practice them in order to master them.

If the advances in *khecari* that were offered to me (and all the implications that result from it) must cost me a few years, even tens of years of life, no problem; I will happily sign up again! I would not exchange the gifts I have received for all the gold in the world, neither for an unlikely longevity. The progress that the *sadhana* has made possible for my soul, this component which will not disappear with this physical body, are infinitely precious: let's not forget that it is right to reason in a trans-migratory perspective: the yogi invests on the long term!

For what concerns *khecari mudra*, I have a few elements of answer to this question. One day, receiving treatment from an osteopath, comfortably sat down; we come to talk about the sphenoid. I learn that this bone "breathes". The practitioner accompanies me to become aware of the movements of the bones which define this breathing. I explain to her that I spend most of my time with my tongue pressed against the sphenoid. We explore: when I am in *khecari*, the amplitude of the movements of the sphenoid increases; the breathing of this bone increases in amplitude, which the osteopath interprets as a sign of good health. In short, according to her, from a "sphenoidal" point of view, the practice of *khecari mudra* would be good for health.

The more time goes, the more I realize that a well sharpened consciousness, the power of visualization, allows one to activate one of the two *nadis* without necessarily needing to plug a nostril, whether it is with the finger or the tip of the tongue. That being said, I had to use finger and then tip of the tongue before arriving at this stage; maybe I can little by little get rid of my crutches? At this time of writing these lines, I still have many of them. I am still very far from mastering *khecari mudra*. Once, I felt sensitive to the path that is left to be walked on the physical level. During this experience, everything was as if I had a

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<sup>39</sup>Roots of Yoga, James Mallinson & Mark Singleton, 2017, Penguin Classics.



little camera on the tip of my tongue which allowed me to "see" what happens up there. I adventure into the nasal fossae, and I see a long corridor where I can barely distinguish the end: I understand that there is a long margin of possible progression: *Kool! Stay Tuned!*

And let's not forget that *hatha yoga* is only one discipline amongst many others; *khecari mudra* is only one technique amongst many others.

*"Those dullards who practice internal purging, tasting with the tongue of the fluids at the palate... they do not obtain the reward of the doctrine taught in this text."*<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>*Siddhasiddhantapaddhati* (18<sup>th</sup> century), translation by Mallinson & Singleton, *Roots of Yoga*.

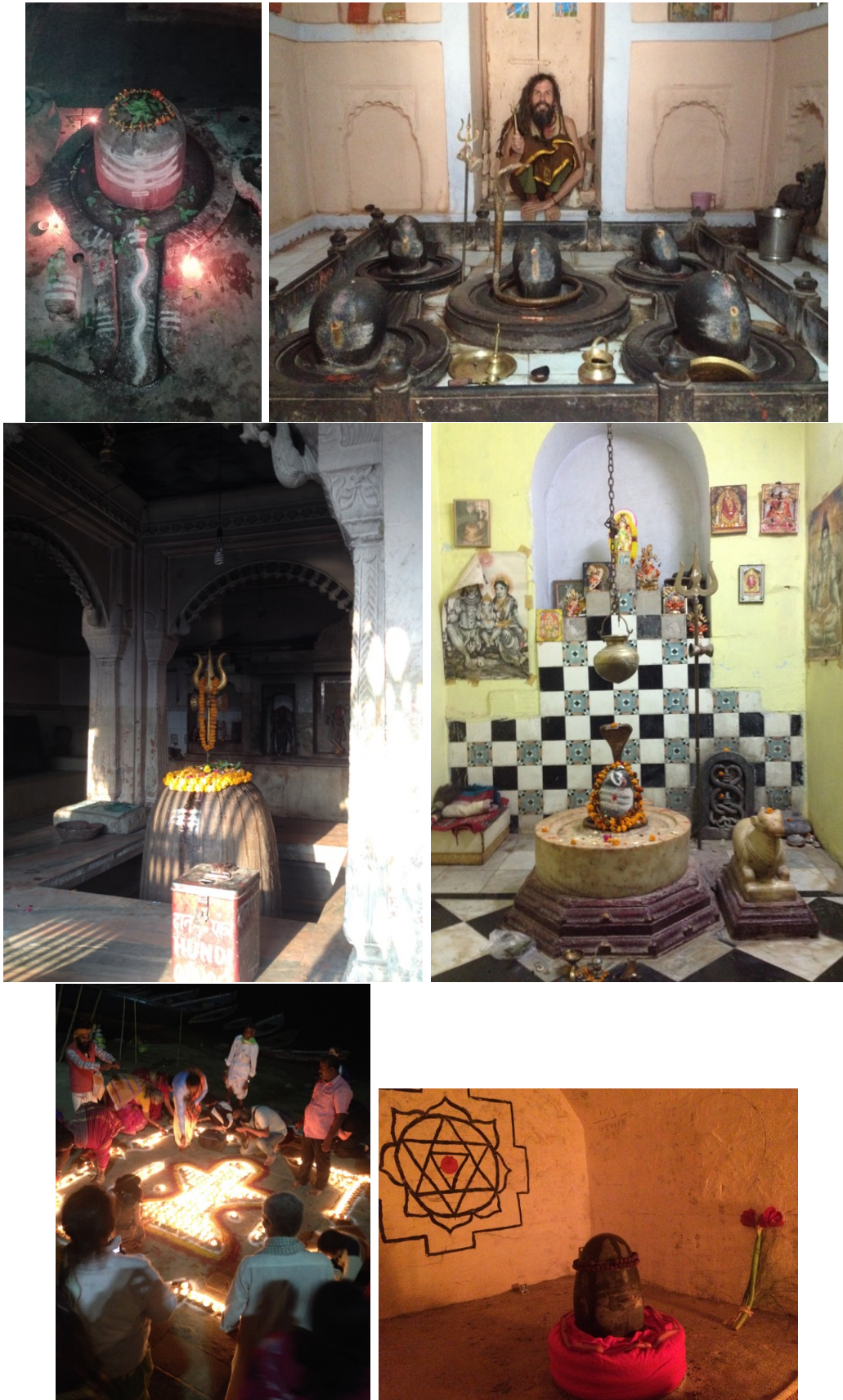


Fig. 1.— *Lingams* from Varanasi. One of them is at the Provencal *ŚivMandir*.