

Psychotherapy: a Powerful Yogic Tool

YOGI MAHEŚVARA

Khecari Devi Ashramam – Igreja Corazaõ de Jesus Christo

July 2018 – KHECARIDEVI.COM

Translated by Adrien Fried-Filliozat (December 2019)

”Yoga corresponds to the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind.”¹

Yoga corresponds to the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind, as Patanjali tells us, diving right in at the second verse of the *Yoga Sutra*. Many of these fluctuations are rooted in blockages in the emotional body.

In order to appease the mind, to not let oneself be carried away by wrong identifications through one’s fluctuations, it is right to heal these emotional blockages as much as possible, which allows, to some extent, the practice of yoga. Combining the practice of yoga with psychotherapy work seems to be relevant, even crucial in my case. This article intends to share some yogic experiences which illustrate the complementarity of these two approaches.

These emotional charges can govern our life without our knowledge, via a dynamic that is subtle and inaccessible when we are taken by them, incapable to take the necessary distance. These charges have an impact on the other dimensions of the human being, which are indissociable in practice, which ”discuss”, interact between each other to produce this complex thing that we name human being. Non-expressed emotions end up crystallizing and harming the circulation of *prana* in the body, which has consequences on the health of the physical body, and limits access to the intuitive and yogic body.

This is where the accompaniment of a third party, the therapist, proves to be useful. Perhaps in this space-time that we sometimes idealize: ”before, elsewhere”, the *guru* also played the role of psychotherapist? Maybe!

For the sake of this paper, I will make a distinction between psychotherapeutic work and yogic work. This distinction is incorrect since one work is occurring, globally. I call

¹Patanjali, *Yoga Sutra*, I-2.

psychotherapeutic work that which is directly linked to the emotional body and that which in general happens with the accompaniment of a psychotherapist. I call yogic work that which in general happens on a mat and combines asanas, pranayama, mudras, bandhas, dharanas, meditations, visualizations, listening to silence, study of texts, devotional chants, rituals, japa. . . or a least a certain number of these components.

These two tools invited (or rather imposed) themselves at the same time in my life during a singular experience in Chile which marked the beginning of an awakening process.

No! Not at the same time, it was first of all an opening of the emotional body that occurred.

Late 2009, on the Latin Land which is mine, on the day of my father's birthday, accompanied by a master plant, a cactus, San Pedro², which contains, amongst other things, a psychoactive substance named mescaline and which has been used in South America by shamans, sorcerers and therapists for millennia.

At a friend's place³ who cultivates this cactus with passion and devotion, to the point that it has literally invaded his garden, I ingest a dose; a powder with a highly vomit-inducing taste. . . it goes down. . . I have seen this cactus around for about ten years in Chile and Bolivia, but I never had the occasion to ingest it.

Alone, accompanied by these cacti proudly erected like *lingams*... The first part of the experience is calm, very calm, deceiving; I was expecting something that would transport me, a trip, but there was nothing as such; I go for a little walk in the deserted streets of the village, the eyes wide open, on the lookout for something; nothing! I go home to my friend's place where everyone sleeps peacefully, notably my wife and our children.

The night is fresh in the Chilean desert, even in the summer; I light a fire, stoke it, let myself be cradled, hypnotized by the flames, that's it! Visions appear, my unconscious opens for the first time; it's not so pretty: I contact emotionally traumatic events from childhood that were not possible for me to experience at the time, two in particular.

The common point between these two events is the risk that my parents will meet, which *must not* happen... I carry this responsibility, much too heavy for a child. The visions have an impressive precision: details of the places, the gazes, and especially the emotional aspect expresses itself, notably fear. A raw unveiling teaching, the plant shows

²Saint Peter, also called *guachuma*. Saint Peter is often represented in the catholic tradition holding two keys, giving him the capacity of opening and closing the gates of Heaven.

³Formally an hotel, which my friend calls "Hospital Espiritual, porque aca pasan cosas, catchay?"

me everything, without censoring, the tears flow profusely. At the same time, this cactus is present physically all around me, infinitely benevolent; at no moment do I feel unsafe during the experience. Never have I observed such benevolence in non-thorny therapists that I have met since. That being said, I do not think I would have been able to go forward using only the plant, it gave me the initial boost, but in my case, the long-term work goes through a physical third-person.

I clearly realize that a set of emotional charges have been weighing on me for more than twenty years, that they govern my life without my knowledge (I thought until then that I was going very well!), and that I am passing onto my children...

Being of an impermanent nature, the storm of despair ends up passing. The witnesses of this episode, the cacti, did not move by a hair. It is then that a *Light* appears; magnificent, pure, immaculate, devoid of any conditioning, infinitely benevolent, *Divine*. Instantly, without going through any process of analysis, I identify with this light, it goes without saying, fundamentally, I am this light: *Soy de Luz*⁴!

*He cargado tanto, y no lo sabia*⁵... I however become conscious that this charge did not prevent me from doing *luminous* things, notably I see the solar thermal energy projects that I undertook with my wife, in Bolivia, in France and in Mali.

The message that I received is more than clear: *this is your true nature, clean all these layers, these masks, and you will become who you are*

I remember spending the following days in a particularly pleasant state, joyous, with a lightness that was new to me. Short truce, to tell the truth; the emotional body now open, traumas could come back up, with all the suffering they contain. It is the identification with this light that helped me make it through all the despair I had the occasion to experience for around 2 and a half years, until *Śakti* rose past the level of *manipura*⁶. During this period, I knew deep within me that this suffering was necessary, that I could not escape it, that behind it resided this clear light, for now largely obscured.

A few months after this experience, I began to frequent a psychotherapist, *then* a yoga school. In short, psychotherapy and yoga are complementary: psychotherapy is a *powerful* yogic tool for me⁷; equivalently, I can say that yoga is a powerful psychotherapeutic tool.

⁴I am Light, in Spanish; this experience took place in Spanish, more precisely in Chilean.

⁵I carried out so much, without knowing it.

⁶See my book on *Khecari Mudra*.

⁷There are many schools of thought in psychotherapy. Here I do not refer to the common “Freudian”

During the whole year of 2011, period where I was on an emotional roller coaster, Friday afternoon was reserved for a particularly strong psy-yoga cocktail. I ate very little at lunch. Around 4 p.m. I went to see the psychotherapist for my weekly session. Then, I would go nearby to the yoga studio. I followed a "standard" hour and a half *hatha yoga* class for the general public, then a second session of two hours and a half, much more arduous, reserved for students following a teacher training. These Friday evening sessions were not offered for long in this school. I preferred them, as they were best adapted to my situation then; despite a slight apprehension because they illustrated quite well the translation of *hatha yoga* as *yoga of violent physical effort*. Indeed, it was quite intense; these sessions invariably ended with laughing, crying, screaming, and rolling around for some participants, including me. I went into these sessions like a "daredevil"; in the same way that agitating a fizzy drink bottle makes the cap explode from the pressure, I threw myself into the practice like a kamikaze into order to burst open the resistances.

One Friday in December 2011, once again on the day of my father's birthday, in the yoga studio, I contact trauma from my childhood, trauma that I had worked on several times with the psychotherapist. The following evening, after a big raclette⁸, I stretch my sore legs in *ardha pashimottanasana* and *pashimottanasana*, and I realize that I fall into the posture like never before! I thus understand that the emotional trauma I just healed was "imprinted" in my physical body and prevented me from lowering into the posture. Interestingly, *pashimottanasana* means "the stretching of the West". In India, but also for native Americans, the Western direction symbolizes the ancestors, the past, our history⁹.

Another similar event in spring 2014; late in the evening, after a copious meal and plenty to drink with friends from my adolescent years, I do not know why, I position myself in *mahakonasana*, a posture that I do not master at all. I am in the posture; a vision appears: I see a pile of paper, letters, correspondences of my childhood; notably some letters from my mother, loaded with guilt. I become aware that to keep all this paper weighs me down, pollutes me. As I happened to be where I grew up as a child, I take the resolution to throw away all this paper. At the moment of taking this decision, I fall all at once into the posture; far from mastering it, but still a significant progress.

psychoanalytic schools, but to the ones called "humanistic". The therapies I have experienced are not only speech-based; the process goes through the body. The analytical, intellectual understanding aspect is secondary to the therapeutic aspect. I often do not understand the processes at play in my therapy, I simply observe the improvement in well-being and the impact on my sadhana.

⁸Heavy French dish made of potatoes and cheese.

⁹See the article by Philippe Djoharikian, published in FIDHY INFOS, number 75. (In French)

At the time of writing these lines, I am still not at ease in these two postures, *mahakonasana* and *pashimottanasana*. I cannot serenely abandon myself into them as I can in other postures; there is a blockage in the lower back. Beyond physical flexibility, I am aware that the emotional part is important; work in progress...

Emotional knots and trauma have a complex dynamic; transgenerational and eventually *karmic*¹⁰. Indeed, the transgenerational dimension is inscribed into a *karmic* dimension: in order to let certain *karmas* express themselves, I am born into a particular family with ancestors adapted to this *karma* which must, mechanically, express itself at one moment or another. In short, we inherit at birth the trauma of our parents, grandparents...

The transgenerational dimension appeared to me clearly starting in summer 2016, when I observed behavioral difficulties in my eldest son. At this moment, my wife and myself have started therapy again, which we had paused, aware that the troubles of our son express a family dysfunction. Our therapist is specialized in transgenerational work. Several times, I have been able to observe how my son's troubles lighten following a mending of my own history, even with mending elements that belonged to my ancestors.

The impact of therapy on the *bhakti* aspect is also interesting. In particular, I have been able to experience exacerbated connections with the Divine just after a therapy session: the cleaning that took place allows me to be more easily sensitive to the shower of Grace.

I do not advise anyone to "go see someone", nor to "go consult", even less to "go get healed" because I think that would be counter-productive. On the other hand, it is my responsibility as a yogi to share what psychotherapy brings me in my path. Equipped with my meager experience in this domain, I can observe many yogis and yoginis who are blocked by functioning patterns that are susceptible to be settled quite quickly with the aid of a psychotherapist! What impact this could have on their *sadhana*! This powerful tool being easily available nowadays, it is right to use it. Our incarnation time is short, very short, and extremely precious; let us not waste a single second, not a single opportunity!

¹⁰At the time of writing these lines, I am still missing experimental data to share on the notions of karma and transmigration. These notions constitute an elegant model in which my yogic experiences naturally inscribe themselves, but not an observational evidence. I risk using them anyway.