

IX Yoga Darsana, Transpersonal Union

Verse Nine

When meditation is done with the gaze between the eyebrows and the tip of the tongue fixed above the uvula, then happens *khecari mudra*, which dispels torpor and fatigue.

12/4/7

Nine, nine is German for *neti neti*, “not this not this.” So if Narayana Guru stayed up late watching early German art films in the 1920s, he might have intended the pun. Of course, he probably didn’t speak English either.... All right, enough *schmaltz*. And after all, a yogic technique like the one he describes here is more akin to *asti asti*, “and this and this.” It is a positive endeavor, marking the high waterline of Darsanamala. Beyond this point the Guru uses one more verse to sum up yoga, followed by one more darsana to describe the recession of life toward its close. There is no more building up, but rather an easing back.

Through most of the Yoga Darsana, Narayana Guru described a simple and direct form of meditation. The last two verses mention first pranayama and now an extremely advanced yogic practice. Both should only be done under the direct guidance of a knowledgeable guru, because improper techniques can easily misdirect the very powerful energies involved. Moni, who has seen several yogis in *khecari mudra* was always cautioned that it was the last stage of yoga. The participants were all completely withdrawn, with eyes rolled up and barely breathing. Such yogis have spent a minimum of twelve years of diligent study and practice before attempting it.

Nataraja Guru and Guru Nitya always insisted that there was no need to torture the body or the respiratory system to reach Self-realization, meaning one does not need perilous techniques like these. Simple contemplation such as described in the Bhakti Darsana and the early Yoga Darsana is more than adequate. The Bhagavad Gita is in complete agreement, presenting union as an intellectual accomplishment rather than the culmination of any practice.

Deb started the ball rolling in the class with an excellent description of Narayana Guru's intent in this verse—and really in the work as a whole. That is, we begin our spiritual unfoldment from a fixed point of mental orientation, and gradually move to broader and broader vistas, becoming more flexible, tolerant and open. Our understanding blossoms. When we cease clinging to static concepts we become free to see far and wide. Thus seers survey all the terrain, not just their own location at the moment. Their mentality is expansive.

The word *khecara* means flying through the air; as a mudra, it refers to the magical power of flying. Literalists have therefore striven to levitate bodily. But we have learned in this class to take things symbolically, as relating to our psyches. This is about becoming lighter, about soaring in the soul. Nitya gives the example of a lark that leaves the ground where it has been sleeping in a little nest, flies high above the clouds, and bursts forth with an exuberant, heavenly song from the heart. The lark exemplifies our inner spirit. We don't have to spend a lifetime unsuccessfully striving to get our heavy bodies to float above the ground. When Eugene brings his talent and discipline together to sing a beautiful aria, inspiring and enchanting his audience; when Anne shares her love with a dying patient, converting their sadness and regret into peace and contentment; when Brenda waves her wand of beautification around her neighborhood; or when any of the rest of us touch our acquaintances in the ways we do, we are converting

heaviness and torpor into a soaring state of the joy of existence. These are examples of yoga in action, the very thing Narayana Guru is urging us, in his quiet way, to practice.

Just being alive is the most ecstatic thing possible. Guy Murchie, in *The Seven Mysteries of Life*, calculates just how rare and amazing each of us is, in his very amusing and uplifting Seventh Mystery. He begins by refuting the infinite number of monkeys on typewriters theory, the one where they eventually would write Hamlet. Using 50 for the number of possible keystrokes, what with letters and numbers and punctuation, and not even counting capitals, the first letter has 50 options, the next 50 squared, then 50 cubed, and so on. By the end of the first line this number is equivalent to 10 to the 110th power, so vast that it:

As physicist George Gamow once explained in a book, is a thousand times more than the total number of vibrations made by all the atoms in the universe since it was created. As atoms vibrate about a quadrillion times a second and there are quintillions of them in every speck of dust, the commonest of materials floating literally everywhere in space, 10 to the 110th is an unimaginably big number. In fact it demonstrates conclusively, I'd say, that not even one line of any book or speech can originate purely by chance in this finite universe. There just isn't space or time enough. So something else has to be behind things, somehow guiding them. And that, one might say, is a kind of mathematical proof of divinity—depending of course on your definition. (598)

Murchie then goes on to mathematically assess the unlikelihood of our individual existence as about the same as this vast number. Each of us is thus almost infinitely impossible and unbearably unique. As in the *Unbearable Lightness of Being*, one of the

greatest book titles of all time. Anything this rare is worth celebrating. And celebrating and celebrating. Just knowing how special it is makes our hearts leap with joy.

The ancient Egyptians taught that before entering the afterlife your heart would be weighed on a balance scale against a feather. If your heart was lighter than the feather, you were admitted to heaven. If it was heavier... well, let's not think about it. Can you say crocodile fodder? But that's what khecari mudra signifies for us: lighten up! Be light hearted! Relax and enjoy! Damn the crocs and full speed ahead!

It's funny that entropy still gets a lot of talk nowadays, as if it existed or something. It came up yet again in class and figured in an article in this season's Gurukulam Magazine. It's an excellent example of a theory designed to explain a limited and partial world view, in this case based on depression and despair. It has been entirely supplanted by new information for many years, and yet it continues to be cited as a touchstone for meaninglessness within the Big Picture.

The opposite of entropy is called negentropy. Life itself is the negentropic principle of the universe. Or we might call it consciousness. The superficial dissipation of energy that we see on the surface of things is more than compensated for by a source that is actually adding energy to the system. The expansion of the universe appears to be accelerating tremendously, caused by some vast unknown input of energy. This has been observed for more than a decade, and will eventually cause people to revise their one-sided views. But why wait? You can revise your views any time.

We have often mentioned the quantum vacuum in these notes as an undiminishing source of energy for the entire universe, or actually multiverse as has recently been substantially proven. Timothy Ferris is a classically skeptical physicist, author of *The Whole Shebang*, the state of current appraisals of the universe. Writing for National Geographic Magazine (November 2007), he

offers this perfectly mainstream version of our current picture (note that dark energy comprises 2/3 of the universe by current estimates):

It may well be that dark energy is inherent to space itself. Physicists had long suspected that such a “vacuum energy” must exist, since quantum fields, which contain energy, permeate even the emptiest voids out between the galaxies. Yet when physicists calculate the amount of energy in the vacuum, they get absurdly large results, ranging from infinite (“That can’t be right,” Nobel laureate physicist Steven Weinberg mused) to zillions of times more than is required even to account for the mighty force of dark energy. The disparity troubles them; Weinberg calls it “the worst failure of an order-of-magnitude estimate in the history of science.” Clearly, something is wrong with either the observations (but no error has yet been found, in many ongoing studies with Hubble and other telescopes) or with the consensus model of physics and cosmology, which for all their flaws stand as one of the grandest attainments of modern science.

Keep in mind that all these dedicated physicists are trying their damndest to prove that this energy doesn’t exist at all. These are not fundamentalists insisting God exists because they believe in Him. We’re talking about a phenomenon that is as real as anything in consensus reality can be real.

So don’t worry about running out of energy in the grand sense. Locally, there could be temporary shortages. As long as we rely on physical forms of energy like food and oil we can run out. Khecari mudra and levity in general redirect us to tune into more subtle energies that are extremely plentiful. This quantum energy is right inside every cubic centimeter of our bodies. It is either unlimited or very nearly unlimited, depending on the math. We

emerge from it into “ordinary” life, and remerge into it at its close. What’s to worry about? From the Gita, Chapter II:

28) Beings have an unmanifested origin and manifested middle states, and again unmanifested terminations. Where is room for complaint herein?

Once again I feel very humble that so many people shared so many great ideas, and I can’t possibly squeeze them into the notes and still make the plane to India in two weeks. There was a very warm feeling of the group, which I believe persists for awhile anyway after everyone drives off down the road. That warmth is the lightness of being recommended to us by the Guru and reactivated each in our own life in our way. Sharing it with one another compounds the energy even better than monkeys at typewriters compound the meaning of futility. This is indeed the high point of our in-depth study of Darsanamala.

Part II

Deb’s idea, that we should gradually move to broader and broader vistas, becoming more flexible, tolerant and open as we go, is one that I didn’t flesh out at all in the earlier notes, but which was the major discussion of the class. It arose especially in response to Anne’s question regarding sublimated erotics, “Well, what does that mean for my sex life, then?” It’s a question that hasn’t played much a part in Darsanamala study, which does not share the Christian notion of denial of the flesh in order to achieve godliness. However, many Hindus do believe in it. The Aryans brought repression with their religious and social norms, and these were codified by Sankara into brahmacharya in the ninth century. Today India is even more sexually repressed than some Christian-influenced nations.

Nitya personally followed the sexual-renunciate program, out of preference and natural inclination, otherwise known as his svadharma. But he frequently tempered his advocacy of it with cautions about repression, which can cause severe mental aberrations. Most people—in or out of a spiritually dedicated practice—work hard to repress their sexuality, and the result is an ocean of violence, bitterness and hostility on the one hand, or self-abnegation and depression on the other. Your chances of becoming enlightened through this method are only slightly better than those of Bonzo the Chimp writing MacBeth. Why would you even want to risk it?

Nitya's description of the khecari mudra is that it is erotic in the extreme, a thousandfold more intense than ordinary orgasmic delight. "Erotic energy is the highest that man can wield," he concedes. Sublimation of the ordinary attraction to objects is replaced by a unitive focus centered in the ajna, the third eye or sixth chakra. The more the whole being is concentrated, the more the entire psyche is harmonized. This brings "awareness without frontiers," and "leads to the discovery of the meaning of all meanings, the peak experience of supreme bliss." Whatever the bards may sing about carnal love, it doesn't usually promise quite that.

Or course, regarding sex most people think, "It's good enough for me!" And who can blame them? Nothing needs to be forced here. Start with the easy stuff like good sex, and keep adding blissful realizations and experiences as you go along. As you become more loving and blissful, it naturally pours out of you to others. This doesn't mean you go around having sex with everybody, like some gurus we've heard about. In fact, it doesn't require any overt expression at all. Subtlety is very nice, and overt expressions often dissipate energy rather than conserve it.

That was the class's main conclusion, that our goal is to pull back from all those banal activities that fritter away our energy,

and bring our psyches to bear on things that matter, things that promote and express beauty, truth and psychological development. We all know how it is to pour our energies into crummy relationships or stupid hamster cage trivial pursuits. Now we want to find a way to retain all that expended energy, for our own bliss and that of our friends and fellow creatures on this wondrous Earth. Khecari mudra, or “learning to fly” symbolizes this highest achievement of our fledgling humanity.

* * *

3/21/18

Yoga Darsana verse 9

When meditation is done with gaze between the eyebrows
and the tip of the tongue fixed above the uvula,
then happens *khechari mudra*,
which dispels torpor and fatigue.

Nataraja Guru’s translation:

*When meditation with gaze fixed between eyebrows,
And the tongue-tip touching beyond the uvula (take place)
Then happens that space-freedom attitude (khecari-mudrà),
Of drowsiness and fatigue dispelling capacity.*

The ninth verse is a bit of an oddity, the only one of the hundred that refers to any kind of specific yogic practice. Nataraja Guru, based on the commentary Narayana Guru provides, explains this as being a veiled reference to Patanjali’s Yoga, meant to include all such attainment-oriented meditational practices under one roof. His reflections on this may be found in Part II.

It is appropriate that Narayana Guru makes a reference to Patanjali's well-known masterwork of yoga in his Yoga Darsana, even as we keep in mind that detached wisdom contemplation is always central to his teaching. Even here, in his commentary via Swami Vidyananda below, he reminds us "It goes without saying that the attainment of wisdom is superior to any other form of spiritual attainment."

Nitya always taught that the attainment of wisdom was superior to *any* attainment, spiritual or otherwise. Much of his effort, in America at least, was to try and convince the unruly mob that spiritual insight was even more exciting than the more popular entertainments epitomized as sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. This is a subtext of his commentary here as well.

Deb affirmed that the main focus is a unifying and verticalizing of our interests. We are peaking in the study, and the deepening of unifying consciousness brings all things under a profound vision. Bill offered that most people understand mainly the physical aspects of bliss, but here we are turning it around, making a reference to what real bliss is as opposed to what people seek to enjoy in transactional reality. This reminded Deb of a time at the Center for Truth when Nitya was giving a talk while we were sitting on a treed hillside. She remembered him saying people think it is so blissful having physical stimulation, but sitting here with these trees, in these peaceful surroundings, what could be more blissful than this?

Nitya subtly follows Narayana Guru's hint, and works in yoga related to the three gunas, as well as the chakra system, which is the basis for much of yoga meditation. He preferred the term *synergic centers* to chakras, emphasizing the synergy generated by the conscious mind merging with the potent energy entrained at each center.

Both Nitya and Nataraja Guru visualize the pith of the verse as being located along the vertical axis. Nitya includes the gunas as

tamas at the vertical negative (alpha) pole, sattva at the positive (omega), with rajas alternating between the poles and bringing the other gunas energy:

The polarization between sleep and wakefulness is only an expression of the polarization between *tamas*, inertia, and *sattva*, clarity of expression. *Tamas* has the qualities which are usually attributed to inorganic matter. If we arrange in a series inertial matter, biologic functions, psychological activity, cognitive functioning, intuitive flash, and the highest perception of truth, we get a hierarchy of the gradation that ranges between the morass of the unconscious and the highest sublimity of consciousness.

As you probably noticed, the hierarchy here corresponds to the chakras in ascending order, with the highest perception of truth symbolized by the ajna, or “third eye.” Since we are at a most ecstatic point in Darsanamala, Nitya waxes poetic about awareness oscillating between *tamas* and *sattva*, with an aroused consciousness taking flight:

The mounting of consciousness from the inertial to the sublime is like the ascent of a lark from a nest in the valley where it sleeps to a height far above the clouds, from where it pours out its heavenly music. Hence the yogic discipline that arouses consciousness and enables it to soar high is called *khechari mudra*, the psychophysical set which is similar to a levitating body.

There are a few mistakes in the book that hopefully Beverley and I have now corrected, one of which is realizing the odd word frigid was probably meant to be rigid, though with the sexual subtext of Nitya’s talk we will never know for sure:

Rajas, the kinetic energy in us, has the power to shake off inertia, but it has no direction unless *sattva*, the clear knowledge of pure wisdom, monitors the psychic energy as it is released from its rigid state.

The monitoring of *sattva* is often equated with witnessing, yet it is rather more involved, less passive. Regardless, this is the basis of the wisdom that undermines the rigidity of *tamas*, allowing energy to flow up the vertical axis, or, analogically, the kundalini to emerge from the muladhara and ascend to the ajna. In the following instruction, ‘visual faculty’ is the part of the brain associated with vision, and not the looking aspect. Nitya knew that in blind people that region is as active as in sighted people:

To get into *khechari mudra*, the most essential and dynamic power of the visual faculty is detached from the rest of the organism and is placed in-between the eyebrows. This synergic center is called the *ajna*, the center from which all volitions come in the form of the will to act. Concentration is identical with the centering of consciousness in the *ajna*. When this is possible, consciousness has a mastery over all.

Nobody in our class is going to undergo the very strange discipline of the actual *khechari mudra*, but focusing the mind on the *ajna* can be done by anyone. If the tongue is severed at the base it can be placed up into the sinus cavity, producing a rare form of cosmic consciousness, according to Nataraja Guru. It really is odd that Narayana Guru mentions it, whether or not it’s the ultimate yogic act, because wisdom effort brings the mind to focus there as well. Nitya certainly never advocates actually doing this mudra:

In *khechari mudra* there is a wholesale sublimation of the entire libidinal energy by concentrating the arousal in the mouth region.... Erotic energy is the highest that humans can wield. This is concentrated in the mouth, and as a base for sublimation the tongue is erected in a vertical position and inserted through the cavity behind the uvula. Thus the verticalized flow of energy is brought into conjunction with the synergic center of volition, *ajna*, and the aspirant yogi roots out all incipient memories that are of an expending nature.

We humans are certainly big on mouths. Probably all creatures are. In our search for sustenance, we are in a sense being led by our mouth, and Nitya adds that it plays a major role in our reproductive efforts as well. For the most part in yoga it is something to be restrained. In any case, here is where Nitya reiterates the supreme value of going beyond mundane stimuli:

Even in an ordinary orgasmic delight one experiences getting high. In the *khechari mudra* the elevation that one gives to one's consciousness is a thousand-fold higher than any object-oriented delight, including sexual orgasm. This is a highly cathartic function in which the ego cathexis is transmuted into a spiritual cathexis. In other words, all pent-up libidinal urges to relate the ego to objects are directed to the transcendental. The uplifting effect of this is experienced at all levels, such as the physical, the vital, the moral, the cognitive, and the intuitive.

At Jan's prompting we chewed on cathexis quite a bit. Cathexis is investing a lot of energy in an object or person, which can be normal or pathological. Nitya is talking about converting ego cathexis—full belief in and reliance on the ego—to spiritual cathexis, a belief and reliance on the greater power of the Self or Absolute.

Jan homed in on how this is a cathartic act, nothing humdrum about it. Catharsis refers to, among other things, a release of emotional tension, as after an overwhelming experience, that restores or refreshes the spirit. A breakthrough, in other words. Jan felt it is in our very nature to seek the cathartic, transcendental experience, and she appreciated the idea of bringing it in as part of the presentation of unity. If the catharsis isn't unified, it can go wild, crazy. It brought to her mind many traditional cultures where intense dancing and music, often in tandem with psychedelic drugs, were used in the same way: to harness the libidinal energies to a higher purpose and bring about a catharsis.

I assured her that Nitya wasn't a wild man, always very dignified and calm. He thought of frenzies as a kind of self-hypnosis and looked down on them, possibly because he was surrounded by the watered-down modern equivalents in all of us hippie-dippies. But inwardly the catharsis has to be impelled to happen—the outward display is incidental. Those cultures didn't do their spiritual partying very often, usually as a rite of passage to adulthood or maybe an annual purging of the accumulated mental junk. In many ways it's easier that way, and probably more encoded in our DNA than deep contemplation—too many wise rishis renounced reproduction for it to remain in the gene pool.

Deb liked Nitya's transmutation of energies being seen as a psychological cathexis, how something that isn't whole is being made more brilliant, more transparent with all that redirected energy. In this we are moving past our ordinary world, but not pushing it away, though how we see and act in it is bound to be different.

Nancy added that in doing this you are ridding your mind of extraneous thoughts, but in that process you enter more into the realm of the energies that are the Self within you. She meant that it isn't something we have to access so much as remove impediments to, since it is already within us.

This reminded Prabu of Vargas Llosa, the Peruvian writer, who when asked how he managed to make a living by writing, answered I don't write to live, I live to write. Following your passion, if it harms no one else, can bring about a similar transmutation to the big breakthroughs we more often cite.

Nitya's closing paragraph is a masterpiece of compressed wisdom. Transmutation in this context is moving from duality to unity, the essence of yoga. Yoga is transmutation, going from the linear "subject-object oscillation" to a meaningful focus, leading to the meaning of all meanings:

This is a conscious function, but the consciousness involved is different from the binary function of subject-object oscillation. As both the articulating tongue and the gestalting eye are interlocked to aid meditation, the entire gamut of the semiotic process is put here in the crucible of a psychic alchemy. *Vasanas* which are encapsulated in concepts are transmuted into the spiritual awareness of a single unity. The existential verity of the referents of all concepts is reduced to one unifying and unitive existence. As a result of this, differentiating connotations are given up in favor of the one single meaning: awareness without frontiers. This leads to the discovery of the meaning of all meanings, the peak experience of supreme bliss. This is the significance of *khechari mudra* in a nutshell.

Paul led us in an exploration of the transmutation of *vasanas*, which Deb characterized as taking vision of the eye and the power of the psychic energy and uniting them, moving past the subject-object orientation of the everyday world. Paul was thinking of a star forming in space, coalescing and growing larger until it lights up explosively, showering energy in all directions. It's made up of innumerable specks of dust, almost pure potential, as are *vasanas*, but as they combine they are transmuted into the basis of all life as

we know it. He could see in this pregnant image how bundling together all the particles, which individually might induce fear or other unsettling emotions, converts them to something positive. It's exactly the kind of meditation that would suit this stage of yoga very well.

In concert with Paul, Bill read out the key from this paragraph: "*Vasanas* which are encapsulated in concepts are transmuted into the spiritual awareness of a single unity." He added that if all *vasanas* get turned into awareness of the one, then you have that spiritual awareness that directs the energy wisely. Deb called it transmuting duality into vibrant reality.

I'm going to a conference on consciousness this week, and anticipate being asked for an example of yoga dialectics. I figure the easiest dichotomy is good and bad, or good and evil. We are taught to be obsessed with being in the 'good' category, and we are also fearful of being 'bad'. Focusing on either is imbalanced, and only provisionally true, if that. In yogic synergy we expand that vision to encompass the whole context, realize we are neither good nor bad exclusively so they are false definitions, and transmute our attention into the present as wide-awake participants. We have no need to rate ourselves by arbitrary standards of predetermined frameworks. Such ratings are at best "after the fact."

Paul also noticed how feeble his intentionality is compared to his somatic conditioning. He recently had a phone call to set up another appointment for knee surgery, and although he fully expected it and needs it, he found himself getting irrationally upset. His body did not want to be cut open again, even though he did, and he knew it would make his life more comfortable. Why should he freak out even when he didn't want to?

Yoga in one sense is listening and relating to that deeper part of ourselves that may not be in accord with our conscious selections. It may not always be right, either. I thought Paul at least had a good opportunity to see how deeply his fears were lodged,

and how resistant they are to being dismissed. It's a challenge, for sure.

I just rediscovered the last bit of my second book, which speaks exactly to this. I'll reprint the whole page in Part II, but here's the most relevant part. Krishna is speaking to Arjuna:

Our actions begin deep in the psyche, in what you might call our unconscious intelligence, whereas our knowledge is compiled mainly by our conscious mind, so it lies much closer to the surface. That's why there isn't always a good match between our thoughts and deeds, or you might say our desires and the demands of daily life. The chaotic battle you are caught up in is exactly the kind of thing that happens when knowledge and action are out of joint. When our knowledge and action are in accord, though, they function seamlessly. In fact, that's how knowledge is converted to wisdom, by integrating it with our actions. You need to learn how to get them to work together, how to incorporate the impulses—both divine and demonic—from your unconscious into your awareness of the world around you. They are meant to be in harmony, but look what a disaster it is when they aren't.

Before dismissing the class I urged that anyone considering cutting the base of their tongue in order to perform khechari mudra should consult with me first.

So far, there are no takers.

Part II

Swami Vidyananda's commentary is excellent once again:

What is known as *khecari-mudrā* is a variety of meditation referring to the centre of the eyebrows. It refers to a special kind of

yogic practice whereby the tongue is bent inwards as far as the roof or palate of the mouth while the tip of the tongue enters into the cavity that continues upwards from the roof part of the mouth, the insertion of the tongue being fixed above the point where the uvula starts. At the same time the centre of the eyebrows is its culminating target, and the vision and meditation are fixed together at such a centre. This practice, however, is to be undertaken only in the actual presence of a *guru* who himself is a man who has practised it and can actually demonstrate it to the would-be *yogi*. The practice of this kind of attitude called *khecari-mudrà* is to destroy the basic tendencies which express themselves in active (*ràjasika*) and inert (*tàmasika*) tendencies constituting the main items such as fatigue and sleep which are hindrances to the attainment of Yoga perfection or peace (*samàdhi*). The use of the word *àdi* (and so on, etc.) in the above verse is intended to cover the nine kinds of dissipations or distractions such as illness, doubt, confusion, etc. and the consequent indispositions or debilities which are five in number, depression, lassitude, etc. This makes for fourteen subdivisions of hindrances. Because the centre of the eyebrows is the seat of consciousness it is very laudable to meditate with reference to that point.

Patanjali also says that all attainments or ends of Yoga are derivable from consciousness. It is also well known that discrimination is the guiding star for the unstable and alternating stages of phenomenal existence. It is, therefore, not an exaggeration to say that all the attainments derivable from other yogic practices are also inclusively covered by the (cultivation) of this supreme form of meditative practice which helps to magnify the power of positive consciousness, making it stronger, subtler, purer and of clearer penetration. It goes without saying that the attainment of wisdom is superior to any other form of spiritual attainment. The practice that leads to this attitude surely yields the

benefits of all other secondary practices. Even by the conquest of sleep and fatigue the *yogi* becomes qualified in principle for all other spiritual attainments.

* * *

Nataraja Guru throws additional light on this verse in his Integrated Science of the Absolute. Remember that he takes Vidyananda's commentary as Narayana Guru's own:

Verse 9: Here the famous *khecari-mudrà* (attitude enabling one to attain the freedom of pure space) marks the crowning attitude of an expert in correct yoga practice. Psychosomatic adjustments involving a hierarchy of lesser syndromes or synergisms are in principle covered by the attitude of *khecari-mudrà*. Pure space is not to be mixed up with actual physical space....

It is further to be noted that in the commentary on this verse, Narayana Guru states that the good effect or end result of practising *khecari-mudrà* results in the abolition of sleepiness and fatigue. Sleepiness touches the negative structural pole of the mind and fatigue comes within its positive pole. The *khecari-mudrà* is said to harmonize these two on the vertical axis. When fatigue is countered by sleep and vice versa, there is a middle state attained, which although understood in physical terms contains the same essence of absolute freedom or bliss, because it has a high degree of spiritual attainment implied in it as union or harmony on a more intellectual level.

Here the reference is not to any expert knower or man of practice, but to the event taking place as an occasional possibility. This is how an expert guides a disciple in such a rare attainment. Narayana Guru here cautions that this practice involving the cutting of the ligament joining the bottom of the tongue with the

lower soft palate has to be performed carefully and in stages and the practice has to be willfully cultivated through long periods, sometimes with the help of a silk thread passed through the nose. This is also referred to in the Yoga Upanishads. Expert guidance is important in conforming to such detailed requirements. Contact of the punctured tongue with the region of the pituitary (body) or the pineal (eye), where, even according to Descartes, the soul or consciousness has its main locus, is supposed by knowers of *khecari-mudrà* to produce a form of cosmic consciousness of a rare kind. By choosing to mention this *mudrà* (attitude) and omitting all lesser ones, Narayana Guru gives his indirect recognition in principle to all the stages of the eightfold way of Yoga, which are inclusively covered by this crowning yogic attitude.

* * *

Here's the Epilogue to my second book, *The Path to the Guru*. Krishna is summing up chapter II:

“It looks like we're off to good start,” Krishna said. “Do you see the value of investigating these matters further? Shall we continue?”

“This is a lot for me to absorb,” replied Arjuna. “Let me sit with it for a while. I want to spare you any trouble on account of my ignorance, so I'll be sure to sort out what I can before I ask anything more of you.”

Krishna smiled in appreciation, then went on. “Let me sketch out the next step, which will assist you in your preparations. We're going to reassess knowledge and action, and see how they fit together. Ordinarily there is a gulf between them, but yoga is a way to bridge the gap. I call the bridge karma yoga, unitive action.

“Our actions begin deep in the psyche, in what you might call our unconscious intelligence, whereas our knowledge is compiled

mainly by our conscious mind, so it lies much closer to the surface. That's why there isn't always a good match between our thoughts and deeds, or you might say our desires and the demands of daily life. The chaotic battle you are caught up in is exactly the kind of thing that happens when knowledge and action are out of joint. When our knowledge and action are in accord, though, they function seamlessly. In fact, that's how knowledge is converted to wisdom, by integrating it with our actions. You need to learn how to get them to work together, how to incorporate the impulses—both divine and demonic—from your unconscious into your awareness of the world around you. They are meant to be in harmony, but look what a disaster it is when they aren't."

"I can certainly see the disaster part," agreed Arjuna, "but why is action such a big deal? I thought I was getting out of it."

Krishna shook his head, chagrined. "Action is pretty much the whole game," he went on. "The universe is all about things happening. That's the fun of it. Even thoughts are a kind of action. Our mental posturing either holds us captive in oppressive conditions or frees us from them. A lot of your thinking is still tying you down. So you might want to investigate it a little further."

"I know we've touched on this already, but I don't think you've understood it as much as you could, so let me reiterate. For most people, action means doing your duty. It's like being in a work crew: you have your assigned job in an enterprise, be it building a skyscraper, playing team sports, running a business, raising a family or what have you, and you do it well or poorly, depending on how successfully your task is completed. For most, that's the essence of spirituality, doing your duty well, what other people expect you to do well. And that's fine as far as it goes, but those are actually the most mundane matters. Part of you, what I call the divine part, is desperate to express some of the more complex abilities you possess, and if you don't bring them out they make you frustrated and depressed. You really are a miraculously

complicated creation of mine, don't you know? I always intended humans to do more than scabble for food or run swords through each other.

“What I want to teach you is how to access your full inner being, because your real duty is to develop your unique talents, to become what you truly are capable of as an independent entity, instead of always conforming to a template laid down by someone else. Your best features have been driven so far underground you don't even remember them yourself. Reclaiming them is the real spiritual quest, and it's the essence of what I'll be helping you to discover. I assure you, once you are in tune with your true nature, you will fulfill your mundane duties easily, and with pleasure. You will also know how to dance, how to flow through life creatively. That's the best contribution you can make to yourself and the world around you. Sound interesting?”

Arjuna nodded thoughtfully. “When you put it that way, how can I refuse?”