

Research Frontiers in Spiritual Awakening: Transformations of the Self

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[[this is the book in progress, in a nutshell]]

Once marginalized in the wake of limited empiricism, the notion of self now enters the center of psychological discourse. This presentation summarizes 15 years of research in the theory and practice of guidance of psychospiritual development, with data contributing to the clinically applicable theory of psychosomatic transpersonal self. The category of psychosomatic transpersonal self presents a clinically useful alternative to both “imagination deprived” personality theory, and to the “disembodied” hierarchies of consciousness. While the possibility of characterological transformation is still questioned by psychological science, these studies in spiritual transformation of the self indicate the possibility of deep characterological change, associated with particular track in adult development (“Kundalini rising” process). Marker religious/spiritual experiences signify the overall changes in the self, specifically changes in perception, self-awareness, self-identification, values, attitudes and character structure. Stages, spread through the life span, are not associated with the biological age. They can be viewed as the actualization of the noetic structures of the Spiritual Heart, the major bodily center of consciousness.

The work is based on the historical and ethnographic field research of the central archetypes of Spiritual Heart and Kundalini-Shakti, as presented in the texts, artifacts and contemporary configurations of self in India, Russia, Turkey, United States and Europe. The multimodality of research justifies the eclectic methodology, including case studies, field observations, phenomenological dialog and interviews, focus groups; use of the reference panels and expert consultations; textual analysis of the original sources; phenomenological analysis; surveys and questionnaires. Currently, the data are undergoing approbation in the scientific community, via conference presentations and separate journal articles.

General overview of the research will include the early findings in the underground groups of spiritual awakening in Russia in 80s. It will also include conceptualization of the body as a code of consciousness, longitudinal phenomenological analysis of the psychosomatic spiritual development through the life span, the study of the phenomenological architecture of self-awareness, data regarding the alternative developmental tracks, and the use of spiritual practices in pastoral counseling (spiritual guidance) and education of the population with self-identified spiritual awakening. The social implications of this research allowed to establish two non-profit corporations aimed at spiritual and transformative education in Russia (Breathing World Association, 1989) and in U.S. (Hridayam® School, 1999).

Secondary outcomes include the contribution to developmental studies in mainstream psychology; the implications for the human science, such as the use of spiritual practices in the training of the phenomenological researcher; the interface between transpersonal psychology and

neuroscience searching for the neurological correlates of consciousness; and health related recommendations for the use of Prayer of the Heart in palliative and preventive healthcare.

Selected Publications

- Kungurtsev, I., & Luchakova, O. (1997). The unknown Russian mysticism: pagan sorcery, Christian yoga, and other esoteric practices in the former Soviet Union. In T. R. Soidla and S. I. Shapiro (Ed.), *Voices of Russian Transpersonalism* (pp. 7-15). Brisbane, Australia: Bolda-Lok.
- Louchakova, O. (2004). Via Kundalini: Intentionality of consciousness according to Shakta-Vedanta.[Abstract]. Proceedings of the bi-Annual Science of Consciousness Conference in Arizona, 2004.
- Louchakova, O. On Advantages of the Clear Mind: Spiritual Practices in the Training of Phenomenological Researcher. (in press). *The Humanistic Psychologist*.
- Louchakova, O. (2001). *Shakti-Yoga Verbatim (psychospiritual practices and contemplative psychological techniques)*. Lafayette, CA: Hridayam[®] School. Prepublication manuscript.
- Louchakova, O. & Warner, A.(2003). Via Kundalini: Psychosomatic excursions in transpersonal psychology. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 31(2-3), 115-158.