

Psychospiritual Practices from the Prayer of the Heart in Monitoring the Cardiovascular Disorders: A Case Study

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Qualitative analyses of the case histories of brain strokes and heart attacks in practitioners of body-centered forms of mysticism shows the differences in the course of the disease and in the recovery process, as compared to those of non-practitioners of spirituality. In particular, the subjects practicing chest-centered form of mystical prayer, or chest-centered forms of meditation, display significant degree of psychological transformation in the direction of more balanced and integrated personality structure, integration of archetypal level of the psyche, increased capacity of letting go. The recovery is faster, and missing anatomical functions are frequently totally restored. These suggests the "spiritual" nature of some cases of stroke or heart attack, where the disease

can be associated with the activation of the particular centers of consciousness in the subtle body, energetically connected with the affected areas of the heart or brain. This suggests that the body centered forms of spiritual practice can lead to uncovering, activation and release of the psychosomatic conflicts, which underlie the development of some forms of cardiovascular pathology. Consequently, psychosomatic forms of Prayer can be also used for the prevention and possibly treatment of some forms of brain strokes and heart attacks.

The presentation reviews several cases of cardiovascular disorders where practices from the spiritual tradition of Hesychasm (early Christian mysticism) were successfully used for self- management of the health problem.

The first case history describes the male student of yoga, in his late 50s, with the progressive, possibly hereditary, disturbance of the rhythm of the heart muscle. Used over the course of 5 years, the practice of the psychosomatic focusing in the heart area allowed evidently to monitor the condition of the heartbeat, and to avoid the in-patient treatment.

The second case history will describe the brain stroke in the long-term practitioner of the Prayer of the Heart. We will speculate that the use of the psychosomatic form of prayer allowed reducing the possible damaging effect of the stroke. The video material will be presented, illustrating this perspective.

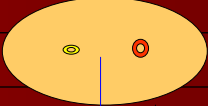
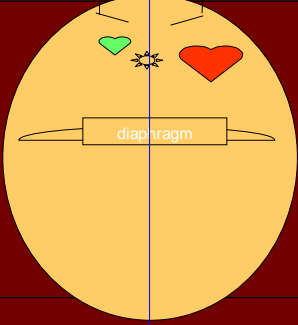
We will also analyze the case history of the female students of Kundalini yoga in her 50s, who suffered the brain stroke. The psychospiritual practice with the focusing on the spiritual heart center allowed her to re-gain health, reducing the adverse consequences and complications of the stroke. Though the psychospiritual practice used in this case was from Kundalini yoga, it bears the similarity to psychosomatic approach of the Prayer of the Heart.

Speculating about the hypothetical mechanisms of release of the bodily symptoms, and possible characterological transformation, which accompanied the healing in the prayer practitioners, the study introduces the map of the centers of Spiritual heart according to early psychosomatic Christian mysticism. There will be the demonstration of some of the practices. The presentation will also speculate regarding the possible biological mechanisms involved in the effect of the Prayer of the Heart, and outline the perspectives of future research.

References: The Monk of the Eastern Church (Ware, K..) (1987). The Jesus Prayer. Oxford, England.

Cases of brain strokes and heart attacks with the distinct spiritual component

- Story of Fr. Bede (brain stroke)
- Story of Sa. (brain stroke)
- Story of Ram Dass (brain stroke)
- Story of Henry Le Saux, a.k.a. Swami Abhishektananda (heart attack)
- Story of Sy. (heart attack)

Centers of the right side	Zones of the body	Centers of the left side
		
<p>Center doesn't have a corresponding anatomical structures. Psychological aspects are connected with the psychodynamic level, and formation of the self. Spiritual – allows to recognize the formless spiritual Self.</p>		<p>Center corresponds with the anatomical heart. Psychological aspects include powerful archetypal dynamics; spiritual aspects are connected with Cosmic consciousness.</p> <p>Blue center in the core of the chest is associated with the phenomenological emergence of the mind; with the recognition "I am the non-dual consciousness".</p>

Subtle centers of the chest according to Hesychasm (Christian Mysticism), Kundalini Yoga, Shakta Vedanta, and Sufism.

Psychosomatic Prayer

PS Prayer consists of:

- 1) Devotional repetition of the names of God(dess)
- 2) Simultaneous activation of various functions of the psyche: subtle spiritual states, experiences of faith, trust etc.
- 3) Focusing on the various somatic faculties:
 - breath,
 - sensations,
 - degrees of awareness in the interior space of the body.

Developmental Stages in the Prayer of the Heart

- Vocal prayer
- Mental prayer
- Prayer of recollection
- Perfume prayer
- Illumination
- Theosis

Phenomenological account of the practitioner of the Prayer of the Heart.

“...The first step is that of purest prayer,
From this there comes warmth of heart,
And then a strange, a holy energy,
Then tears wrung from the heart, God-given.
Then peace from thoughts of every kind.
From this arises purging of the intellect,
And next the vision of heavenly mysteries.
Unheard of light is born from this ineffably,
And thence, beyond all telling, the hearts illumination.
Last comes – a step that has no limit
Though compassed in a single line –
Perfection that is endless... ” (Theophanis the Monk, 8th cent)

In depth faculties are accessed in the process of Psychosomatic Prayer
(contemporary clinical observations and maps by PseudoDionisius in
The Divine Names and by al-Jili in his treatise Universal Man)

Personality level

Each individual of the human species contains the others entirely, without any lack, his own limitation being but accidental... For as far as the accidental conditions do not intervene, individuals are, then like opposing mirrors, in which one fully reflect the other"... (al-Jili).

Pre-personal level

"Heavens and earth contain Me not, but the heart of My faithful servant containeth Me" (hadith).

Level of the essential Self

modes of Unicity, Unity, Singularity, Self-subsistency etc.

Activities and functions

Powers of speech, decision, thought, imagination etc.

Groups of Divine Names

- Names of the Essence
- Qualitative Names
 - Qualities of Transcendence and immanence (nouns)
 - Divine Activities (verb derivatives)

The experienced teacher will advise the name which can either augment or inhibit certain qualities of character (story of Ryan, story of Ekananda, story of Atri).

Use of Prayer in the clinical practice

- Story of N.
- Story of R. and J.
- Story of A.