

The Inner Sanctum, My Daily Practice - My Own Self-Created Devotional Life

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Most days I rise between 3:00 and 3:30 am. I go to the small room at the front of our apartment that my wife and I jokingly call The Inner Sanctum, thus I begin my daily "practice."

I began my own self-created devotional life just over 30 years ago in 1991. I was born with serious congenital heart defects, a deformed valve, a hole in my septum, and a strange arrhythmia where my heart would suddenly begin to race, sometimes for hours. This situation plagued my life until at the age of 40 when my heart, as it was, could no longer sustain my life. I became too weak to even stand at the sink long enough to wash the dishes, and spent six months in the mode of dying. This situation led me to interface with the medical community. I met a wonderful doctor, and through her I met a gifted Indian surgeon. Together with two other specialists I underwent open heart surgery in which the valve was replaced, the hole was patched, and the errant pathway which caused the racing was ablated. I would never be super strong, but for the first time in my life I was stable.

Oddly enough however, my surgery was not the beginning of my healing, but actually came at the end. It was the culmination of a process that had taken place in the seven years prior, from 1984 through 1991, while living in the Washington, D.C. area. The years immediately after Heung Jin Nim's ascension were times in which the spirit

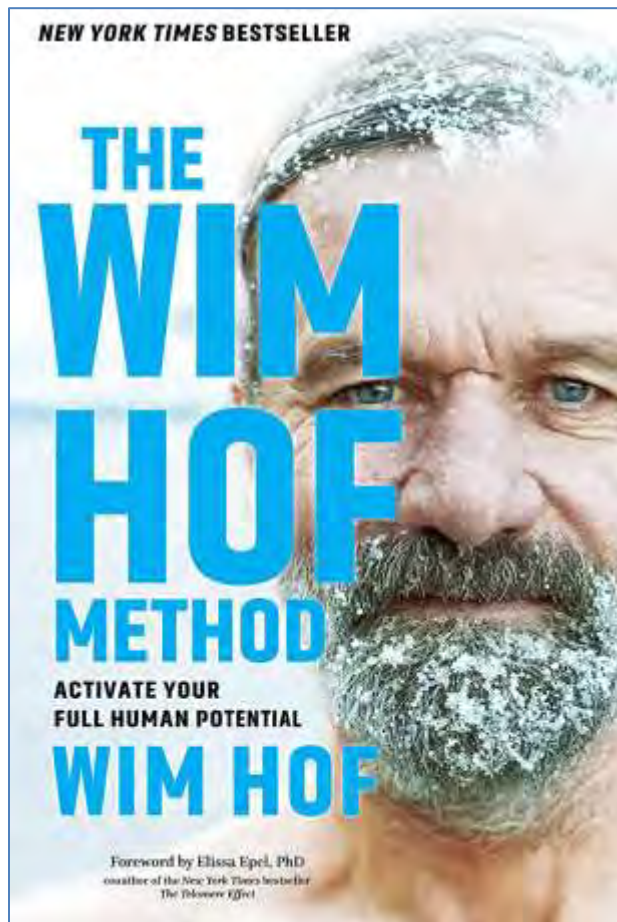
world was very active and my wife and I had the good fortune to be part of a group of spiritually oriented couples who formed a powerful healing community. During that period I was able to gain knowledge, even to the very cause and root in my ancestry as to why I had been born with heart problems. Especially helpful was a period of about 40 days of revelations providing insight about how I personally came to have a mentality as a victim and as a survivor, and how limiting that was. But beyond that, how that syndrome applied universally to all people as a result of the fall. All of this preceded my brush with death and ultimately culminated in the healing of my body through surgery.

Almost immediately my family and I moved to my hometown in Maine. My grandmother had passed while I was hospitalized, and while my family decided what to do with the property I was able to convalesce in her beautiful, old cottage right next to the beach. It was the nearest thing to an ancestral home. While there I asked myself the question what did I really want to do each day? The answer came from within. I wanted to devote three hours each day in the early morning to prayer and study. It began as prayer life, but I just followed my own nose, and over the years it would take on a life of its own.

In its current iteration my practice has four parts, meditation, body work, reflection and prayer. I will share briefly about each. I discovered formal meditation about 15 years ago. I could appreciate its value very quickly. It is an ancient, and probably the most pervasive spiritual practice. Thousands of very old analects and very new books have been written about it, but they can only provide context because its essence cannot be described. Its affects can be miraculous given that the practice is so simple. One need only a quiet place to sit and to follow the breath. The breath's importance as a Way is the thread that runs through and connects every type of spiritual endeavor. It represents the literal spirit of God (Genesis 2:7). To become one with the breath, and then to transcend even that, reveals and allows one to experience the realm of mind unadulterated by the fall. This is because the original mind is not gained or formed by certain activity, but already exists, full and complete and can be known simply by removing the impediments to its realization (CSG pg. 888 #14).

The next phase is bodywork. Officially defined, it means techniques which promote the awareness of mind/body connection and there are numerous types, and thousands of people are becoming aware of the need to involve the body in healing, but the real reason for the explosive growth of interest in bodywork is that the original mind needs the original body as its place of settlement. Because I'm almost 72 years old,

but still do physical work every day, I do 15 or 20 minutes of basic yoga to keep limber and strong, and then an amazing healing modality called the Wim Hof Method. Wim Hof is a Dutchman who has obtained renown in the last few years for his almost super-human feats of endurance. He seems to have unlocked ancient secrets to control the autonomous nervous system. His method involves several minutes of intense breathing exercises (of course) followed by exposure to cold. My routine right now is a long, cold shower, but I'm headed toward ice water baths. WHM strengthens immunity and eliminates anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders, and renews health on a cellular level. What I have realized over time is that spiritual insight, in order to last and bear fruit, must be connected to, be rooted in, and make changes to the very metabolism of the body.



I then take a pause, brew a strong cup of coffee, and enjoy it slowly during contemplation and self-reflection. Coffee helps open my spiritual senses and my heart and helps prepare for prayer. Yes and finally prayer, how does one write about prayer. I have never considered myself a good member and I have long been a prolific sinner, but if I have one redeeming quality it would be my prayer life. It has always come naturally to me and it is something I have sincerely and devoutly invested in almost my entire life. My prayer life has never stagnated, never gone dry and I have continued prayer no matter what else was going on. It has been my most consistent and rewarding habit and I think it's the one thing I have the greatest aptitude for. Here's my theory, If nothing else the universe is fair. I had a huge deficit in the area of my heart physically and suffered with it for 40 years yet I recognize I was hugely gifted in the realm of heart spiritually and as I have gradually become aware of my gifts it has made all my suffering more than worthwhile and I would not change a thing. True Farther once said " you can never come to the end of prayer" and it's true. My experience is that of all spiritual pursuits the perfection of prayer is the most liberating and ultimately transformative. Because it is relational, over time, with attention, and by an almost organic

process, the connection, the resonance, the honesty and the embracing intimacy just grows, and awakens, and deepens more, and more, and more. I always end my practice with a short Hoon Dok Kae, just one section. A few years back, just before I turned 60, I had an epiphany concerning myself. I was reflecting on the fact I didn't know anyone who practiced as I do, and something from inside informed me that I am what is called a mystic. I had never thought of using that word to describe myself, yet immediately I had a warm, comfortable feeling embracing me and I felt that I finally understood myself. Simply defined, a mystic is one who is driven to know God experientially. All religions have them, all religions need them. Mystics recognize the vital importance of religion, but want to go beyond it. We respect the intellect but know its limitations. We acknowledge theology but know that the most important and vital things cannot be described in words.

Heavenly mysticism is based on the understanding that the ideal cannot be fully understood just by having it described to me, but must be experienced and ultimately assimilated. Although consistency is helpful it need not be pursued to extremes but joyfully and in the spirit of a hobby lifestyle. No need to reinvent the wheel though, because through the ages ways have been revealed to unite mind and body, and many men and women have spent lifetimes investing in that area and made significant achievements and left beautiful traditions but there was no world for those people to live in, so they became monks or hermits and were often celibate. But now anyone can inherit those accomplishments and together with the change of lineage there are no longer any limits to what can be achieved through right directed effort.