

THE SPACE OF THE HEART (*HRDAYA ĀKĀŚĀ*)

Why did God need a place to hide? So our hearts could exist.

The heart is the area in which the heart happens to be.

The heart is for seeing what is otherwise unseen, for touching what is otherwise out of reach, for hearing uncreated sound, for tasting the sublime, for savoring, discerning, conceiving the inconceivable, stabilizing the emotions, seeding the love that shines on the soil. Heart is sun and its shining, thoracic cave conscious without content, the upwelling of light—with earth and sky as one wave of upending light with the heart as its occasion.

Here, there's no difference between symbol and the anatomical. They share synonymy with wonder. A symbol is simply the reality of that which it symbolizes.

"I" is there (in the heart); "I" has only ever been *I*—the terms of all we come across and cross over. Why is the heart a place? So one can be there, where "I" changes over to "Am." Place your I there (not your self or your soul; not *jīva*, not identity, not ego, not nous, not particles smashed into their final component. They will not stand with you when all is gone, when "I" brings you to its end as your only guide

External and internal fuse, behind and beyond the sternum. A cause without any effects. Whole and part upheld by one diaphragm. Coherence, in itself. Heart.

The unpulsing pulsation (*sphuratta*) of the source of the cosmos and the beating heart are one entrainment, a match made in the heaven they themselves made.

The *jivanmukta* Ramana Maharshi said the "I" was located in the heart's right atrium, one finger-width from the body's midline. The "I" is coextensive with *hrdaya*, the omni-faceted Sanskrit word for "heart." Both brain and heart are *hrdaya*. The heart is not necessarily location-dependent. In Ayurveda, both blood circulation and brain function are included under *hrdaya*, the place of consciousness. There, thought is Creator, prior to thought.

The visualization is simple. There's a sun radiating through the ribcage.

Breaking *hrdaya* down to its roots: *hri* "to give," *da* "to take," and *yam* "balance." Just as the physiological heart gives and takes with perfect balance in our bodies, our interactions are harmonized through the heart's prayer, as the cosmos is held together by its own subtle trembling.

"*Hrdaya*" is not "*anāhata*." The *anāhata cakra* within the *hrdaya* is named as such because the unstruck sound is found there. A seemingly contradictory coincidence: beating *and* unstruck overlapping. Why locate unbeaten sound in the place of the beating heart? The beating of our hearts is self-arising. The pace-keeping sinoatrial node is indeed located in Maharshi's right atrium, one finger-width from our axis. Or, perhaps the *cakra* name came first, and the *nāda* heard there is named *anāhata* simply because that is where it's heard,

without "unstruck" necessarily being an attribute of the sound. In any event, the scriptures, sutras, treatises and tantras all point to a perfect confluence of elements, beyond our comprehension, gifting us a beating, resting and unbeating heart.

Although there are scattered accounts of the unstruck sound manifesting elsewhere (in the right inner ear, the *brahmarandhra*, in every pore in the body or all along the *suśumna*) it is dependably immanent in the *hrdaya*.

"Of the sound produced in the *anāhata* of the heart, there is the reverberation (*nāda*, *dhvani*) of that sound: there is the radiance (*jyoti*) penetrating the interior of that radiance." (*Mandalabrāhmaṇa Upanisad*, 5. 4-5.)

From the *Yogacudamāni-Upanisad* (115): "When the vital air (*prāna*) has reached the *ākāśa* of the heart, a great sound is produced, as of bells and other musical instruments."

"Of the sound, *Anāhata*; what is the echo of that sound; the radiance that is in the interior of that echo; the mind that is in the interior of that radiance; when the mind meets with dissolution..." *Yoga-Śikhopanisad* (4-21.)

"There is none who sounds it voluntarily, nor can anyone prevent its being sounded. The deity abiding in the heart of living creatures sounds it himself." (*Svacchandatantra*: 7,50.)

"He whose mind together with the other senses is merged in the interior space of the heart, who has entered mentally into the center of the two bowls of the heart-lotus, who has excluded everything else from consciousness acquires the highest fortune, O beautiful one." (*Vijñānabhairava*, v 49.)

Indic intricacy culminates in the compressed theoretical and ritualistic formulations found in the writings of the Kashmiri aesthetician Abhinavagupta. From his *Tantraloka* (6, 217): "There is one phoneme (*varna*) in the form of sound vibration (*nāda*) in which lie all the phonemes latently in an undivided form. As it is ceaseless, it is called *anāhata* i.e. unstruck, natural, spontaneous, uncaused. As all the phonemes originate from this *nāda*, therefore, it is called *varna* proleptically."

"*Hrdaya*, the resting place of all, is mantra, which, in its essence, is nothing but free-consciousness, which also is simply the power of the self-manifesting word (*para vak*)." (Abhinavagupta, *Iśvara-Pratyabhijñā Vimarsini*.)

"It is the heart whose nature is a vibration which constitutes the supreme method for achieving the highest non-duality which consists of a universal grace. For the nature of the self-referential character of the consciousness which composes the awakening in the heart is that it is an astonishment brought about by the total fullness of consciousness." (Kṣemarāja, cited from *The Triadic Heart of Siva*, Paul Eduardo Muller-Ortega, pg. 123.)

Typically, the Vedic hymns are *deva-kṛta* (made by the gods) and *apauruṣeyā* (unauthored.) The abodes of the gods are the hymns. In particular, it is the goddess Vāk who reveals herself to the ṛṣis, in effect making them ṛṣis. The revelations of the ṛṣis are also known as ... ṛṣis. These divine impulses, visions (*dhi*, *dhiti*)

and inspirations (*manisa*) were received in the *hrdaya*. The *r̥ṣis'* role was to faithfully render (within the *hrdaya*) these tacit, supernatural cognitions into intelligible, vocalizable verses. Recitation of the hymns is thus a process of returning them to their producers, heart to heart within the *hrdaya*.

"My ears range wide to hear and wide my eyes to see, wide this Light that is set in the heart; wide walks my mind and I set my thought afar; something there is that I shall speak; something that now I shall think." (*Rigveda* 6.9.6, translator, Sri Aurobindo.)

Again: "Sages having meditated in their *hrdaya* have discovered by their wisdom the connection of the *sat* with the *asat*." (*Rigveda* 10.129.4.) The elementary, harmonizing, liberating power of the heart is succinctly stated in this verse. The interdependence of *sat* and *asat* "existence/nonexistence," the bond between being and nonbeing (*sató bándhum ásati*) is, in a way, the whole story, told in the space of the heart, right within us.

It should also be noted that the West is not entirely bereft of contemplative hearing-heart/cognitive-heart practices. There is the *Sacratissimum Cor Iesu* (Most Sacred Heart of Jesus). There is the Orthodox practice of *nepsis*, i.e., inner attentiveness in the heart, guarding of the heart (in fact the primary text of the Eastern Church is titled *Φιλοκαλία τῶν Ἱερῶν Νηπτικῶν*, *Philokalia of the Neptic Saints*). There is the hesychastic *noetic prayer of the heart*. There is *theoria*, i.e., the "oro" or viewing of *Theos* through contemplation. There is *metanoia*, the mind-in-heart of *nous*, and the good old fashion Western *askesis* and *anachoresis*—all viable venerations, veritable forms of *pratyhara*.

Space of the heart, starting point. Quieting. *Antara-kumbhaka*, breath held, ribcage gently hugs filled lungs. This is plenty.