



Summer: The Time of Spiritual Evolution

by Shoshanna Katzman

Summer is the season when the element of fire is at its optimal level. It is when the cycle of nature has risen to its highest peak and everything comes into bloom in the warmth and light of the sun. This includes the glorious flowers, as well as the bright life of shen or human spirit. The shen encompasses both the spiritual aspects of the body as well as those related to consciousness and the mind. It is thus known as the “root of the spirit” or the “spiritual element of a person’s psyche,” respectively. Summer is the time of spiritual evolution when the shen matures, expands and finds its true expression and full potential. It involves a process of energetic transformation that requires a strong physical body, focused mind, and nourished shen.

Energetic health of the heart is a key ingredient in this process because it is where the shen resides and is the yin organ of the fire element, which is also associated with the season of summer. The heart is described as the “heart mind,” which when strong and steady leads to proper control of emotions.

The tongue is said to be “the sprout of the heart,” whereby a balanced heart leads to expression through appropriate and meaningful words with right intent. Moreover, the heart is responsible for the ability to express warmth and engagement towards others through facial expression. When the fire energy of the heart is balanced it increases the tendency to communicate and connect with others through sharing love and intimacy. Ample and harmonious blood and qi of the heart leads to a peaceful shen, further supporting one’s ability to interact successfully with others. It is within this realm of experience that the shen is sparked and the spiritual power of the fire element strengthens. This is what makes the summer such a likely time of the year to be social with friends and the “summer of love” for so many.

This fortuitous state of being is further augmented through ample abundance of the Three Treasures, which are the most important vital substances for a well functioning body and healthful longevity. Shen is one of the treasures,

together with the vital essence of jing and the vital energy of qi. Mutual nourishment and harnessing reserves of these treasures is attained through conversion of vital energy beginning with jing changing into qi and then qi changing into shen. Shen substance is thus dependent on ample nourishment via this transformative process as illustrated in this analogy.

The wax and wick of the candlestick represents jing as the physical basis of the candle, the candle flame represents qi as the energy produced through transformation of the physical base (jing), and the radiance emanating from the flame represents shen, allowing the candle to be a source of light. Accordingly, the light (shen) is brightest with a bigger candlestick (jing) and a larger flame (qi).

The maturation and spiritual evolution of the shen is thus derived from a multitude of factors. A person’s level of shen substance is evident through body appearance, especially in terms of energy flowing through the eyes. When shen is strong the eyes are bright, sparkling, clear and responsive. Whereas, disturbed or deficient shen is seen as dull and lack luster eyes, as if no one is present behind them. Shen possesses a subtle quality described as life luster that involves ability for awareness and cognition, thoughts and feelings, as well as will and intent. A clear shen leads to balanced emotions, passion for life, peak cognitive ability, good judgment and sound decision-making. Evolvement of shen culminates in spiritual, intuitive and psychic acuity with the keen ability to stay present in the moment. This experience is one of great joy, as the heart is calm and pacified and the shen and its companion treasures are at their peak.

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