

Equilibration in Transcendental Meditation (TM)

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ABSTRACT

Today in the realm of theoretical and applied humanities, the main concern is the ways to attain inner equilibrium than prosperity and the ways to discover it. Equilibrium, in some way, evokes the development of tolerance and a peaceful life which is mostly, a controversial issue in Christianity and with a few differences, in sophism controversies. The present meaning seeking human or modern and post-modern human is testing different anti-progress and prophetic theories for peace and inner equilibrium to end his adversary and outer contradictions. By the massive advertisement on meditation and Transcendental Meditation (TM) and its effects on health and equanimity which has been started since 1960s in Europe and continued to spread everywhere with the help of global networks, it seems necessary to study the roots, vitality, necessity, levels and related techniques and compare it with Islamic religious and cultural concepts and investigate the positive and negative aspects of these practices. The present study aims at discovering whether the equilibrium or peace attained through TM is genuine and beatific.

Keywords: Transcendental Meditation (TM), meditation, equilibrium, Islam

Introduction

TM is one of the main spiritual concerns of modern age which is based on post-modernism. The spiritual method of Transcendental Meditation or TM was established by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in 1940. Mahesh Prasad Varma (later changed to Maharishi Mahesh) was born in Madhya Pradesh, India during the years 1911 to 1918 in a Hindu family living in the small village of Chichli, near Jabalpur, in the central part of India. During 1940 to 1953 he was trained by spiritual Indian Gurus and yogis. In 1957 he founded his own first organization 'The Spiritual Regeneration Movement' and started to teach his own developed style. He introduced a model of Buddhism meditation and because of its simplicity he named it *Transcendental Meditation*. In his opinion, the aim of life is to raise and develop pleasure and happiness (Sharifi, 2010).

There is a salvation from life afflictions in meditation, concentration and equilibrium rather than supernatural teachings. In this ideology, there are principles of Buddhism, Humanism and Secularism. The corner stone of the Buddhism expertise is inner introspection, meditation, nullity of the world and attaining Nirvana, a transcendent state in which there is no suffering or desire and no sense of self which is only within the bounds of meditation.

Maharishi Mahesh tries to introduce and train all the people of the world the transcendent meditation. He describes the transcendental model and shows that anyone who practicing it, will attain the deep equilibrium. Bloomfield (1944) stated that one can attain inner equilibrium by sitting or lying while breathing deeply along with mental relaxation, twice a day for 30 minutes.

Metaphysical view, intense equilibrium reason

Some empirical studies on people practicing transcendental meditation –the Indian traditional Yoga, introduced by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi which is based on the repetition of 'the call of inner voice'- for the first time revealed many physiological changes caused by metaphysical view. In some of these participants all the recorded changes indicated a deep equilibrium in them (Hewitt, 1928).

When considering the psychological aspects existing in Eastern metaphysical view and Christian meditation, this fact is revealed that why praying or concentrating on something can be so relaxing and pleasing. Herbert Benson in 1975 (cited in Hewitt, 1928) stated that four fundamental elements are essential to do most traditional customs of metaphysical views. These elements make the metaphysical view manifestation release from the basic changes in equilibrium reaction. These elements are:

- A quiet place to practice the meditation
- A relaxed body position
- An object to concentrate or focus on
- A receptive and reactive attitude

Metaphysical view

In Indian yoga, the central issue for the metaphysical thought is *Mantra*. Mantra is a Sanskrit word in which the total concentration is on the breath. Both Mantra and breath consideration are the effective elements for the achievement of peace or equilibrium. TM practitioners make a voice in their mind in Sanskrit. Experiments show that choosing an inner voice give rise to peace and equilibrium.

History and definition of meditation

The word *meditation* is derived from the Latin word *meditatio*, from the verb *meditari*, meaning "to think, contemplate, devise, ponder and meditate". Meditation is used to express different inner equilibrium conditions and to describe different methods of attaining peace because in its higher forms, it "...aims for the attaining of peace of mind, inner silence and spiritual awakening" (Remez, 2012, para. 1).

Meditation in general sense refers to any kind of activities that draw one's attention to the present. It usually makes the attention turn inwards, and be away from the external world. When the mind is relaxed, it thinks about neither past memories nor future plans which are the major sources of stress and anxiety affecting people's mental health. Remez (2012) later adds that:

"In its higher forms, meditation aims to free the mind from the subconscious compulsive habit to think incessantly. This leads to inner peace, inner freedom, and to awareness of one's real essence - The Inner I - The Spirit, which is above and beyond the mind. It also leads to serenity, clarity and bliss. In this sense, meditation means 'a cessation of the thought process'. It leads to quietening of the endless chatter of the mind (para. 3)."

Craze (1998) asserts that meditation is a simple way to bring balance between physical and emotional or mental aspects and is very applicable to reduce and pain stress. Meditation is a state in which meditator fixes his or her attention on some objects or mental issues. It seems to be noted that there are some techniques for meditation; some involve visualization while others imply the Mantra recitation. Some techniques need contemplating on the meaning of some selected verses from scriptures, and others require focusing the attention on the breath, a certain shape or an object. Other techniques require silencing the mind and being aware of the inner self within.

In this kind of concentration it requires focusing the attention on the breath or an outside shape. Some scholars think of meditation as a component of Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism and consider TM as a subcategory of meditation. Some scholars think that meditation dates back to 5000 years ago or even to the period of primitive hunters waiting for their prey in the ambush sitting and staring. To find its history some refer to documents such as Tantra in India. However, Buddha who lived about 500 B.C, is known as the major supporter of meditation in history and Maharishi Mahesh known as 'Yogi' and the founder of TM. In general it can be claimed that the present meditation is the follower of Eastern style. In other words, it has an Indian and Buddhism basis although in recent centuries in practice it follows its other counterparts (Osho, 2002).

Therefore, in the diachronic process it can be seen that meditation with Indian and Buddhism origin travelled to Japan, China, Tibet, Korea and later to Europe through India and was globally practiced. In meditation publicities, it is mostly maintained removing fatigue, stress, depression and anxiety as well as regulation of physical mechanisms through patience which sometimes in the long term leads to awareness and insightfulness. But the most significant effect of meditation can be its peace, equilibrium and soothing effect.

The aim of meditation

The aim of meditation which also shows its necessity -in any style, basis or concept- is the very inner peace and accordingly its outer equilibrium but through forgetfulness and removing the mental issues rather than struggling with inner and outer mental whats and whys. The only same result that all meditators achieve is peace. But peace in what and from what? In meditation, three phases are expressed: first is the natural mind which is invaded by thoughts about family, money, food, job, entertainments, friends, etc.; second is the concentrating mind focused on an object or a subject, affected by distracters (thoughts) but that object or subject in return affects those thoughts until the third phase in which only the meditator's mind and the focused object are left.

Therefore, the results of meditation are not achieved spontaneously and in this phase forgetfulness happens i.e. we concentrate on something to achieve the mind emptiness status in which there is no thought inside and finally mind is intermingled with the concentrated object and there is nothing left outside the world of mind. Maharishi Mahesh claims that those who practice deep meditation communicate with the source so profoundly that they gain a great deal of peace, joy, creativity and authority. He adds that under the shade of meditation, people get more happiness, effectiveness, kindness and virtue.

According to Payne & Donaghy (2010) people meditate for different reasons:

- finding peace
- attaining awareness
- achieving insightfulness
- finding self
- evacuation of mind
- experiencing reality

In some religions and sects especially those primitive and Eastern ones, practicing meditation is for the metaphysical purposes and these practices were a means to gain mental awareness and in the supreme phase, it aim at getting *unity* with the spirit of the world or God in which the ultimate goal of meditation is already clear to the practitioner. Sometimes meditators practice meditation for individual, some of them for physical and therapeutic purposes and finally some people practice it to restore their inner peace or equilibrium.

When meditation is chosen as an aim, it suffers from a number of pitfalls. First, it confines the human knowledge to mental and physical awareness which means that one considers a limit for human knowledge. As it is clear, if a meditator attains a higher aim, he or she will not confine himself or herself within it and is looking for a much higher degree instead. Second, the aim and the means to reach the aim are considered the same which demonstrates a null cycle i.e. meditation for meditation. Sometimes these two are given other names, for example, meditation for peace and peace for meditation because one meditates to get peace and sits in peace to meditate. In such cases, compared to divine knowledge, sitting calm in one posture is as sitting in front of idols. Therefore, being in one position or posture impedes the devotee from promotion. For the follower of God an abstinence to get promotion (even spiritual) will impede the devotee to achieve the higher and main goal. To see the manifestation and ignoring the reason of that manifestation can be an impede itself. People practicing meditation to praise, should know that innovation in religious affairs is erroneous and if they reach to a manifestation or discovery, their revelation is only a superficial one (Sajjadi, 1971).

Meditation: a means to attain peace or equilibrium

Praying is speaking to God, but meditation is the response of God. In Chambers 21st Century Dictionary (2012) meditation is defined as: *deep thought; contemplation, especially on a spiritual or religious theme*. Moreover, meditation is a tool for religious excavations, a route toward glory, a way to know yourself, and part of spiritual order to make a joyful communication with a divine creature. Craze (1998) sates that: meditation is a way to attain peace. Moreover, Payne & Donaghy (2010) explain that hundreds of studies indicate that TM brings physiological changes leading to the creation of peace.

Meditation is both a state and a method. As a state, it is condition in which mind is clam and listens to itself. The meditator achieves equilibrium but he is still conscious. Meditation as method, is concentrating on a selected thing. This concentration is maintained, but according to Payne & Donaghy (2010) this is done without any endeavor and this brings separation of the meditator from the outside events on the one hand and from the mental activities on the other hand.

The importance of meditation

There is not a single person in the world with no ambitions. Having a good life makes people hunt for pleasure. Therefore, by satisfying their wishes, they achieve a feeling of inner peace in which they are pleasurably plunged rather than thinking to find a way to attain the unachieved ambition or to get rid of it.

It is worth to mention that there is an essence of heaven within human being and we can think about it and live a peaceful life in this world. This is the message of God. There is no need to abstain and do not enjoy our life and to suppress our natural needs under the name of virtue which in contrast with divine religious laws. Instead of choosing an ascetic life, the men of God should be among others and have dealings with them. In this way, acquiring the human knowledge and achieving the value of life is better and easier and one will experience more glory in life. Maharishi Mahesh stated that a glory life will be attainable only through deep meditation through which our mental awareness spreads through our spiritual life and there will be mental developments. He added that try to discover your powerful inner abilities which are the sources of knowledge, peace, happiness and creativity.

The characteristics of Secular knowledge (Meditation)

Nihilism

Meditation is unfortunately considered the same as prayer by some negligent religious people Hewitt (1994) believes that there are four elements for meditation:

1. a quiet place
2. a comfortable position
3. something for concentration
4. an indifferent look

He adds that all these help the meditator relieve oneself from all the mental distracting thoughts and images and reach silence and seclusion.

An all accepted fact in this method is that all of our distress and disturbance is because of our disturbed mind. If the mind is serene, we will get relaxation. Based on this, two rules are recommended. One is that you should make your mind engaged in something and the other one is that you should be reluctant toward your mental images. Needless to say that, these two are interrelated to each other, i.e. if one is busy on something, you will automatically be reluctant to other affairs.

According to *Louis* (1989) the leaders of meditation suggest that there are some ways to keep mind busy such as:

1. Trarak (staring at a candlelight)
2. Mantra (recitation of voices or words)
3. focusing on breath

Hewitt (1994) stated that Dr. Herbert Benson (1975) tested the focusing method for relaxation on his patients and found it very useful. But of these three, Maharishi Mahesh used Mantra which is nowadays widely used throughout the world. Mantras are usually selected from Sanskrit language and for meditators it is not important that they are meaningless because they are going to help them evacuate their minds from mental stresses and bring them mental relaxation. Here, the aim of concentration is not to understand something but it is to make the mind exhausted and stop the brain functioning to understand. Concentration means mental relaxation and Mantra is used to make the brain enervated. Therefore, although it is meaningless for meditators, it helps them stop mind working. Hewitt asserts that meditation trainers charge people with a heavy cost to teach them Sanskrit words as Mantra and insist that only those words are proper for their nerve system. However, this idea has not been scientifically and empirically supported.

Dr. Benson (1975, cited in Hewitt, 1994) points out on this matter that although TM is very effective in eliminating stress and establishing relaxation, surveys at Harvard University and Thorndike Memorial indicate

that any words, used instead of Mantra will lead to the same result. Therefore, the changes happened in relaxation condition is by no mean, related to the Mantra; words from the unknown Sanskrit language.

Therefore, TM doesn't appropriately use the human cognition facilities for the development of an individual. Undoubtedly, thinking is a way to find out reality and if it is not used properly, Sufism is senseless.

In Islam, prayer is the focus of thought on the divine meaning of Quran's teachings and the titles of Allah. The titles that bring people both relaxation and awareness through which a link with God is bestowed as Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) pointed out. All these are for those who say their prayer and understand what they are saying and focus and contemplate on what they recite. Prophet Muhammad said that if someone knows what he says in his prayers, there will be no veil and sin between him and God. But in meditation the meditator doesn't think about God and his great titles. What is taught as Mantra now is the recitation of some words to distract mind from the routines and chores which bring about stress. Louis (1989) describes the effect of Mantra and indicates that a good way to quieten mind is not to fight with it but it is better it give it something as a toy to make itself busy just as a child made clam by giving him a toy to play with.

Hallucination

Nihilism can lead to hallucination because the relaxation resulted by the recitation of Mantra is the reason of mental fatigue i.e. the fourth element of meditation which is "an indifferent look. Pavlov cited by Hewitt (1994) believes that by recitation of a word, a part of brain is exhausted and gradually spreads and causes a kind of equilibrium which is a state of relaxation.

Bloomfield (1976) believes that Maharishi Mahesh looks at the mind as an ocean with waves on the surface and calmness in depth. The conscious activities (thoughts, emotions and understandings) are like waves on the ocean surface which cause disturbance and in the depth of mind it is calm. Our thoughts come from the depth of mind and get agitated and flustered when they reach the surface. In the meditation process the person dives from the stormy surface to the deep peaceful mind and releases himself from the agitated surface.

Bloomfield (1976) acknowledges that absolute look at something indicates that your mind is like a container containing absurd imaginations that can be got rid of by indifferent look and reach to the calm depth of mind and experience a state called relaxation. In the relaxation condition, mind is active to the extent that it doesn't fall asleep.

It is clear that if we think of mind as an obstacle to relaxation, therefore we have to stop it to attain equilibrium. In contrast, when we pray we should be totally conscious since we would exactly understand what we are reciting.

False equilibrium and happiness

One of the components of secularism is to have worldly and terrestrial desires. Therefore, their ultimate goal is achieving worldly peace and happiness. In these kinds of insights, relaxation, meditation and yoga are attained by recitation. The reason for the inclination of human to these kinds of mysticisms can be exhaustion from urban life. To escape from this tiresome urban life, stress and mental fatigue, the people take refuge in fictitious and false peace.

Dalai Lama and Cutler (2009) believed that the aim of life is a happy life, joy and peace and attaining this equilibrium have little to do with people's religious beliefs. They added that the main goal of life is seeking happiness and it is axiomatic that it makes no difference whether we believe in religion or not.

The omission of Metaphysics and God

Metaphysics and God are not considered in secularism and if they do they are not the divine one as in divine religions. Mysticism in the past was to approach God and to be godly. But today it is seen as a tool and technique to cure diseases, to do magic, to earn money and to get peace or equilibrium. However curing can be done by medicine in which there is no sign of being godliness, access to God, devotion. In secularism the emphasis is on man himself and without believing in God human can achieve joy, and spiritual equilibrium and the devotee can attain himself in secularism. He also asserts that this is the common characteristics in all American and Indian mysticisms.

Differences and similarities between meditation and divine insight or theism

Meditation is a practice to escape from logical thoughts about believed principles. In other words, in meditation the superiority is on human and all the beliefs about human are allowed. If each meditation phase is prerequisite for another level and has a promotion status, meditators should reach to the knowledge of universe and then God after achieving the knowledge of himself. It means travelling from terrestrial to celestial world. However, in the advanced level of meditation and yoga the main purpose is the unity with the spiritual world. But in religious mysticism the ultimate goal is approaching God.

In meditation there is not a predetermined goal or even a specific practice method. By applying techniques, meditators try to ignore all the things except the focused object through mind evacuation and forgetfulness by the help of concentrating on a specific object while sitting and breathing or relaxation. However in theism or divine worshipping the aim of the follower is approaching God. The follower tries to make himself closer to God and enjoy the equilibrium attained by this proximity. Therefore, the devotee recites meaningful citations to prevent him to ignore that he is speaking to God.

Another difference is in the recitation existed in meditation and theism. In meditation the recitations are Sanskrit words which are meaningless to the meditator and only the whisper of these recitations is important. On the contrary in theism, the recitation is meaningful to the individual which can be said loudly or whispered. Equilibrium resulted by meditation, is because of forgetfulness of grief and is acquired through integrating with imagination (Chittick, 1989).

Conclusion

Maharishi Mahesh presented a model of Buddhism meditation and because of its simplicity he called it transcendental meditation (TM). In his view, the aim of life is the development of joy and happiness. He describes it to show that anyone practicing TM will reach to a deep equilibrium. He mentions that meditation is a simple way to establish a physical, emotional and mental balance which can help us remove pain and curing stress. Meditation is a state that the person focuses his attention on an object through which his inner attention is fixed on a single point. Some scholars know meditation as a component of Eastern religion such as Buddhism and Hinduism and believe that TM is one of its new branches.

The aim of meditation is inner and subsequently outer peace or equilibrium through forgetfulness and evacuation of mind and struggles with what's, inner, outer and mental whys. People do meditation for reasons such as: to find peace, for attaining awareness, to be clear-sighted, to find himself, for the evacuation of mind and to experience reality.

The equilibrium produced by meditation is transient which is subjected to lessen through the passage of time and soon should be repeated to renew. But the peace and equilibrium attained through godliness is long lasting and is true because you feel the warmness and proximity of God under which you feel supported. In fact, TM has a secularist foundation and believes that mind can be calm through having a quiet place, relaxed position, and concentrating on a specific subject to pave the way for the mind to focus which subsequently results in a state that the person is indifferent toward his mental struggles.

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