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THE WORLD WITHOUT FEAR AND ILLUSIONS: MEDITATION AS A MEANS OF OVERCOMING BINARY OPPOSITIONS OF CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

Since their childhood people have lost contact with unconditional reality. In the world limited by space, time, and causation they perceive existence through the prism of binary oppositions - the attributes of European culture in general. Under certain conditions this may cause the state of torn consciousness. Meditation is the best way to go beyond such a distinction, overcome automaticity of thinking, eradicate existing patterns of behavior, and develop human abilities and talents. Reaching the state of non-duality, the meditating person experiences her/his deep belonging to all the being and perceives the world as the whole harmonious picture.

Key words: meditation, binary oppositions, non-duality, reality, Zen Buddhism, Taoism

1. INTRODUCTION

Many Eastern traditions claim that the true nature of reality is non-dual. All binary oppositions are either unrealistic or inaccurate description, which is used to simplify an interpretation of the world. For example, Buddhist schools teach that the individual "I" does not exist. Duality "subject – object" is an illusion. Mental images of things and emptiness are inseparable. Humans have to go beyond the dual thinking to perceive the true nature of their minds. They are usually preoccupied with the concepts of duality; however, pure mind is not prone to this error. Mental phenomena appear and disappear, but basically they are empty. Mind can not exist in external phenomena, which are constantly changing. Thus, Eastern sages say that mind is empty. This emptiness is seen as clear light. All concepts of duality dissolve into this awareness.

Zen Buddhism is a tradition of non-duality. The spirit of Eastern philosophy is concentrated in Zen. Zen is not based on logical analysis, it is rather the antipode of logic with its dualistic way of thinking. Zen has nothing to do with any assertion or negation because assertions include the opposite element and can not exist without it, and vice versa. Zen seeks to understand the world in its non-duality and go beyond thought, verbal expression, and intellectualization. We come into this world for clear and complete understanding by means of our own experience; otherwise the essence of life can not be realized. Zen tries to understand the true nature of mind. The purpose of Zen practice is awakening our soul and awareness of the true basis of life.

In Taoist tradition the concept of Yin and Yang, which is often misinterpreted as a symbol of duality, in fact expresses the idea that all apparent opposites are complementary parts of One whole (Ericson&Murphy, 2013). During meditation Taoists are immersed into their inner world to understand the rhythms of the universe. Yin and Yang transform each other (Wang, 2012); life and death are two aspects of the same continuum. Seeds are returned to the soil, summer turns into winter, life ends in death and death gives birth to life again. There is neither beginning nor end, there is only the way to go. The purpose of life in Taoism is a return to its eternal root. The one, who understood the essence of transformation, has become enlightened.

2. HYPOTHESIS

Trying to achieve a state of absolute unity, Eastern traditions use meditation techniques, which have been developed over the centuries, especially in Yoga schools and Buddhism. Meditation acts as a means of addressing binary oppositions of culture. It contributes to the experience of the absolute unity of all existence. Meditation allows us to perceive the reality, which can not be described by means of any conceptual apparatus. Words are the tools of our thoughts, language acts as a mediator between humans and reality. The emergence of language, the ability to convey thoughts through words is one of the main reasons for mankind's progress. However, it is also a source of

difficulty. People subconsciously assume that to name something is to some extent to own it. They live in the world of words and thoughts, and this life replaces the direct contact with reality. Language as a representation of mind does not express the whole person, but only her/his reasonable, rational part. The mind is always active; it is fully occupied with itself and creates a veil that hides the world from people (Murdoch, 2013). To see the world as it is, we need to abandon the comprehensive activity of our mind, stop it, empty the mind, and eliminate our verbal power over the world.

3. METHODS

The author has used hermeneutical methodology.

4. DISCUSSION

The perception of the world is its description. Anyone interacting with children acts as their teacher constantly describing the world, until children begin to perceive the world as it has been described (Castaneda, 2012). Thus, people learn to transform and create their own flow of perception in accordance with the culturally adopted description. World as description becomes their supreme reality; they, in fact, enter the linguistic realm of being. People forget their children's holistic perception of the world because it does not correspond to the structure of culturally adapted description. Therefore, people have no terms to interpret it (Wilber, 1999). Meditation helps get rid of thoughts, concepts, false notions, and dreams originated in our mind. And person experiences each moment in its entirety and is able to perceive the true nature of reality.

From the very beginning our consciousness is immersed in the world. Other people become the background for its identification. The vital necessity compels consciousness to see all things as certain "weapons", "tools". This fosters the emergence of egocentric "I", which in turn reinforces the trend to see the world as "equipment", to see others, according to M. Heidegger (2008), in "the context of belonging". "Immersed in the world" human beings feel lonely, unhappy, completely isolated from it. They suffer from a limited world created by their thoughts full of contradictions. In their fight against the world, in their struggle with loneliness and themselves people lose a sense of the fullness of life inherent in their children's perceptions and become unable to understand their true nature. Perception of the world as "equipment" leads to a mechanistic way of thinking, which under certain conditions can cause physical and mental illness. Meditation serves as a means of changing this distorted worldview.

Being able to reflect on her/his ideas, a person suffers from binary oppositions Life - Death, Good - Evil. Consciousness creates the problems of individual "I" as well as the problems of life and death, good and evil, justice and injustice, etc. A person divides her/his mind into two parts; and one of them reflects on the content of another. In fact, the mind is indivisible, but every moment the mental impulse is analyzing the previous one, i.e. the idea about idea, the thought about thought arises. It causes concern, anxiety, and confusion. However, there is no duality in pure existence.

Meditation purifies anxious mind and makes it more flexible. It eliminates any mistake and contradiction and prepares our mind for a new experience and an intuitive perception of reality. Meditation is the best way to overcome automaticity of thinking, eradicate existing patterns of behavior, and develop human abilities and talents. Since their early childhood, people lose contact with unconditional reality and experience alienation from the world. During meditation, humans get rid of this poor state of mind experiencing a total cessation of the process of conscious thought - thought that Zen calls "wrong thought".

'In zazen, you first learn how active your mind is. Then, after the shock wears off, by simply returning to the breath, you gradually strengthen your ability to put your mind where you want it, when you want it there, for as long as you want it there. This process of quieting and centering yourself continues for a while. You eventually reach a point where you slip into samadhi or single-pointedness of mind. The thoughts disappear for a short period of time and you enter into a state of mind where you're not processing anything. You're not letting go of anything. The watcher disappears. And then, in an instant, you're back again, aware of something' (Mondo: Samadhi and Zazen with John Daido Looi, Roshi, 2005).

This is a state of enlightenment, tranquil non-dual mind, and total fusion with the Absolute.

Human consciousness was formed for life and activities in this world of space, time, and causation. These categories have generated the perception of the world as the world of opposites and differentiation. That is why consciousness usually does not think about the worlds of other dimensions, but creates a deceptive world of culturally conditioned reality. Activity of consciousness ceases in samadhi. Practitioners cease to perceive time, space, causation. They go beyond the world of contradictions, finally destroy it and embrace the unity of all things. They awake and realize their eternal essence perceiving reality as unconditional "clear mirror". In this state of consciousness binary oppositions become illusions; humans come to understanding that there is no difference between birth and death, subject and object, matter and consciousness. Reaching the state of non-duality the meditator experiences her/his deep involvement in all that exists.

Meditating person perceives the world as the whole harmonious picture, understands that there is neither good nor evil, neither life nor death; that they are binary oppositions of human notional apparatus, which has little to do with reality. This is an apprehension of the absolute truth, insight into the nature of reality, individual "I's" entry into "the world". Meditators see the world in completely unexpected and nevertheless real perspective; they see things in their true form. Their mind is filled with absolute peace and harmony; everything has deep meaning and value.

'Meditation is, if anything, a sustained instrumental path of transcendence. And since – as we saw - transcendence and development are synonymous, it follows that meditation is simply sustained development or growth. It is not primarily a way to reverse things but a way to carry them on. It is the natural and orderly unfolding of successively higher-order unities, until there is only Unity, until all potential is actual, until all the ground-unconscious is unfolded as Consciousness' (Wilber, 1999, p. 109).

Feeling their oneness with all existing, people do not perceive this world as hostile, do not split it into familiar, friendly Cosmos and dangerous Chaos. Anxiety, fear, and tension become less powerful and not so unbearable. Humans understand that life and death, good and evil, spirit and matter are two different aspects of the same Unity. They feel an unusual silence of the mind. In this silence /or void/ the sources of all activities are at rest. This is a state of pure existence - the initial form of human existence.

Coming back to the world of the conscious activity, the meditator feels that being has changed. Another "I" with a wide worldview, where there is no room for hatred, envy, and fear, "I" that can be called "I" devoid of "I" replaces "Ego". This is a state of freedom. People are no longer tied to their false mental constructs. They perceive the world differently, their consciousness expands. They do not define things, decompose objects or phenomena. They just experience them. Being not able to escape the world of differentiation, they face a new dilemma. This entails internal conflict. To overcome it, people learn to avoid distinguishing in this binary world, i.e. to cultivate the unbounded mind. Every moment humans create themselves, their thoughts. This affects their further thoughts and actions. Any time they can change aspects of their existence. They are responsible for their future and for the future of the mankind.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Thus, in the world limited by space, time, and causation, in the world of distinctions and oppositions a person achieves freedom of the mind and goes beyond such a distinction. A new worldview without preferences towards any binary opposition is formed. True understanding that oppositions do not exist without each other, that they transform into each other comes. Human mind is completely changing. People become existentially absorbed in the world - the changeful world of artists and children, the world where everyone undergoes transformation. People become shapeless, formless, like water – water that changes its flow due to terrestrial landscape, while retaining its unchanging essence. They demonstrate plasticity, flexibility, high level of adaptation; they feel stronger in daily life and do not waste energy tilting at windmills. Facing something that seems to be so horrible and unacceptable, people realize that it is the other side of what they love. Meditators gain the ability to see the world as another person, to understand and share another person's reality tunnels, to accept other people as they are. The world seems to be new, radiant, and multifaceted. Meditation leads to new horizons, to awareness of infinity and diversity of life.

Buddhist scholar Jo Hoshi wrote: 'The man who has exhausted truth is vast and void, and leaves no trace. All things are one's own making. He who realizes all things as himself is none other than a sage' (Sekida, 1985, p.174).

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