Self-regulation techniques in Vietnamese Zen Truc Lam Monastery

The impact of mental processes on the physiology and mental state is not a new topic among scientists. Many well-known classic Western psychologists drew inspiration from Eastern philosophy: William James, Carl Gustav Jung, Abraham Maslow or Erich Fromm. Nowadays, researchers have empirically demonstrated the impact of concentration techniques on personality, behavior, emotions, motivation, cognition and mental state.

Especially, the process of meditation was deeply explored. So far, a number of studies on the effects of meditation on psychological and physiological processes were conducted. The most important findings show that regular meditation: influences the emotional state, health and stress reduction; helps reduce anxiety.

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and depression and contribute to the decline in mortality\(^8\); increases resistance to chronic pain\(^9\); acute pain and migraine headaches\(^10\). Some effects of meditation on chronic diseases were also found\(^11\) as well as effects in reducing fear, curbing drug abuse, increasing empathy in counselors\(^12\), decreasing generalized anxiety\(^13\), decreasing test anxiety and reducing blood pressure and hypertension\(^14\).

In contrast to the Western psychology, the Eastern philosophy denies the existence of independent personality or ego. According to the psychology of the East there is only the infinite set of processes that arise and pass away, where only the illusion of the existence of personality grows out of mutual movement and pools these impersonal processes. “Human personality is like a river, which retains the shape and apparent permanent identity, although even a single drop is not the same as it was before”\(^15\). Therefore, Eastern psychology allows the possibility of mental influence on all types of physiological processes.

The key to understand this mental influence is additional energetic system in human body, described many years ago in Eastern medicine. Some Western scientists from Necker Hospital in Paris proved the existence of energetic system in human body. The authors investigated the pathways of acupuncture meridians in the human body through the injection of radioactive tracers technetium (isotopes) at acupuncture points\(^16\). Morphological studies found those tracers migrations from acupoints in both 250 healthy and 80 sick patients (but not dead body) followed the same identical pathway with those described as meridians in Asian traditional medicine. The migration speed and patterns of a radioactive tracer along pathways which coincide with the Asian acupuncture meridians show