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Well-Being And Spiritual Transformation in the Post-Covid Era

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Abstract: Health and well-being have emerged as a major topic of interest both from a collective as well as a research perspective. The pandemic was a major catalyst for this pursuit and visitation of the question of the purpose of life. As such, spiritual transformation became a buzz word during this time and my study aims at clarifying some of the concepts as well as introducing quantum concepts and tools for the process of spiritual transformation. It also introduces the concept of measurement of transformation and the signposts one could use to confirm that one remains on the path.

Keywords: Health, Spiritual transformation, measurement, quantum principles..

INTRODUCTION

Health as a concept has been present since times immemorial where it was recognized to be a complete complex phenomenon. In ancient times, health was a harmony of the body and soul.

Aristotle introduced the concept of “eudaimonia” to reflect human flourishing as a reflection of virtue and the development of one’s full potential, in contrast to pleasure-centered hedonic wellbeing. In medieval times, health came to be associated with the ideas of sin and salvation. Health as a pursuit of salvation became a leading concept. Over the decades, it transitioned to the physical dimension of health being at the forefront along with the dichotomy of health and disease. As a result, the holistic vision of a person was lost. The 1948 WHO definition of health being “not just the absence of disease, but a complete state of physical, mental and social well-being” is now found to be insufficient. In 2011, Health was defined as the ability to adapt to and to self-manage, in the face of social, physical and emotional challenges¹. The new definition of health was arrived at, following an international conference in Netherlands in 2009 and it was measured over six dimensions of health indicators that includes Spiritual/existential dimension and all of them totally cover 32 aspects of health. Spiritual or existential dimension addresses meaning/meaningfulness, striving for aims or ideals, prospects and acceptance. We are thus slowly returning to the integrated holistic concept of a human. This is evident by “the return to integrity”, as we now define what human wellbeing is. It is a multi-domain and dynamic concept that involves the domains of physical, mental, spiritual, social components and health-related behaviors. Ryff et al describe wellbeing to be associated with better physical and mental health with less autonomic arousal, less inflammation and better adjustment to chronic diseases².

Psychology and traditional conceptualizations of subjective well-being have also expanded to include constructs that capture a more holistic version of well-being moving the focus to spiritual growth. The pandemic brought about a shift of

focus from the daily grind to health, well-being and purpose of life. Spirituality was invoked to answer these questions. People were no longer afraid to openly dwell on spiritual growth. What then is spiritual growth?

Spiritual growth is the purpose of human life. To know the direction of growth, one needs to know what the reality of life is. Quantum science describes it in the most accurate way. It enables us to move from our ego self to our higher spiritual self, the real self– the non-dual or the Quantum Self, as is known in Quantum Science. In Quantum worldview, non-dual awareness transcends the duality of subject-object dichotomy.

Spiritual growth begins with spiritual awakening, which in common language, indicates an experience of a greater sense of love for self, for others and the freedom of thought and feeling. According to the model developed by Maurya et al³, in their Grounded Theory study, spiritual awakening evolves through four stages. Spiritual awakening can occur during self-inquiry, meditation or during use of Psychedelics. It can also begin dramatically with a personal or global crisis. There is an initial transient shift in perception but further practice to support spiritual development and surrendering leads to a continuous journey of spiritual development and transformation. Thus, the awakening phase needs to be supported by spiritual practices for a deepening of perception and meaningful transformation or change to occur. It is a personal journey; it is not a “way” but a process. The result of such a journey is to promote well-being.

Spirituality was always something esoteric and felt to be more connected to religion and a belief system. Something that science couldn’t explain. And then came Quantum physics: the study of subatomic particles and how they behave. The core principles such as the observer effect, entanglement, superposition help understand and provide a scientific basis for spirituality⁴⁻⁶. Quantum science posits that consciousness is the ground of all being. It is the super intelligence governing what is in us and around us. It presents everything as infinite possibilities (superposition) until we observe it and focus our energy on it, at which time it becomes a reality.

The limitless possibilities present us with a plethora of options to choose from as our personal reality. We can co-create our life experiences by choosing from our highest self – the Quantum self, by focusing our energy on a particular option. Given that Consciousness is the connecting link, we are all interconnected, and we are one with everyone and everything-Quantum entanglement. This also means that what we do affects everyone and everything. Choosing wisely, for the highest, good becomes crucial. Quantum science also talks about our multidimensionality – we comprise, not just of the physical body, but also of the Energetic or Vital, Mental, Supramental and Bliss bodies. On the physical plane, interconnection is not as apparent, communicating with one another takes time for transmission of signal. If we were to operate from the energetic or mental bodies, centered in Love, we operate from the state of Oneness and communicate instantaneously. There is no medium required for this communication since everything is a part of us. This is the principle of Nonlocality which begins to operate when we choose to work from our highest self of unconditional love. The connection between people and things gets stronger, becomes entangled. When we grow as spiritual beings in Oneness, we begin to experience our inherent gifts such as intuition and extrasensory perceptions. We get more creative, as all these ideas come out of the blue – another Quantum concept called Discontinuity. Hence my operative word for this transformational process is “Spiritual Transformation using Quantum tools and techniques”.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO STUDY THIS?

In addition to higher life satisfaction and richness of life experience, spiritual transformation has other fringe benefits. Research has shown that high levels of spirituality predicted a higher level of well-being across many variables. According to Minodora et al⁷, those who were self-transcendent, were creative, thoughtful of others and had a greater sense of personal fulfillment. Mihaljevic` et al showed that people who were spiritual were at lower risk of depression and suicide⁸. Haber et al showed a negative relationship between spirituality and alcoholism⁹.

Similarly, there are many studies showing the beneficial effects of spiritual living, including health benefits¹⁰⁻¹². Given the health benefits of spirituality demonstrated in these studies, it is appropriate to explore spiritual practices and how to integrate them into our lives. Integrating them would mean that we need to understand the process, how it works; what it entails and if there is a way to verify if we are on track so we could correct the course.

Unlike Sheldrake’s three -way classic model of purgative, illuminative, unitive patterns, it is now believed that spiritual growth is not linear but circular or cyclical. According to Henri Nouwen, it is the swinging movement of the spirit between the mind and the heart between the poles of fear and love on one hand to loneliness and solitude. Spiritual Growth or Transformation as defined by Benner is an enduring expansion of consciousness that expresses itself in four ways: increased awareness, a broader, more inclusive identity, a larger framework for meaning making (how we understand and make sense of our self, others, God and the world) and a reorganization of personality that results in a changed way of being in the world¹³. There are many paths and the speed with which one moves differs. However, the end point is the same – a sense of expanded awareness, expanded consciousness, self-realization. In the early stages of this journey, one is unsure of where they stand and sometimes wonders if one is slipping backwards. Though it becomes apparent at a later stage that no experience or no path is bad and each one helps shape us, it would help to find that assurance. The spiritual journey goes a full circle, called a Hero’s journey, leading to transformation. The process of transformation begins again and the journey returns. The whole transformative journey is akin to a labyrinth, with each journey cycle we complete, we move inwards, closer to learning about ourselves and at some point, attain self-realization when we reach and experience the seat of the soul! Transformation is sometimes apparent in our field of awareness and is a conscious change. It can be at the unconscious level too – being unaware of it unless we are mindful, especially in the early stages.

Literature search revealed that though there are many paths and practices such as Prayer-Devotion-Meditation; Purity or Virtue; living a spirit-empowered life filled with love, peace, patience, generosity, kindness self-control; compassion and service, there are no validated mile markers. There are some projected milestones. The spiritual journey begins with an awakening where one would realize that the quantum self of each one is, in essence, a part of the Universal self. According to Vedanta, one of the hallmarks of spiritual transformation is a sense of lightheartedness; being carefree, joyful. When the ego self, which is the serious part of us, the part of us that takes itself too seriously, peels off layer by layer, it is but natural to feel lighthearted and joyful. One can laugh at oneself, seeing through the drama of the ego self.

Qualities of those who are brave enough to embark on the path of spiritual transformation include dedication, discipline, desire to explore and learn continuously, and on a deeper plane, humility to accept learning from even ordinary circumstances.

Various disciplines such as psychotherapists have tried to measure the impact of spirituality on the person. Zinnbauer et al state that one cannot measure whether an individual has found God but can study the physical, psychological, and social footprints left by those engaged in the search as a surrogate marker¹⁴.

A study by Mills et al did suggest that a short intensive program providing holistic instruction and experience in mind-body healing practices showed that it can lead to significant and sustained increases in perceived well-being. They also demonstrated that relaxation techniques alone are not sufficient to improve certain aspects of wellbeing¹⁵.

Many a time we experience the call to look for something greater than ourselves by leaving the familiar and embarking on a journey to the unknown, a journey to wholeness- the hero's journey. It is a quest to reconnect with our soul, release our ego, discover our true nature by going to our very core. Aurobindo beautifully describes the path of personal transformation or Yoga as a 3-stage process. First, the Psychic

transformation, followed by the spiritual and then the supramental transformation¹⁶.

What was previously a journey for the monastics or monks, is now a clarion call for the common man. More and more people are feeling this deep yearning to unite the soul and the spirit. The compelling force to explore is the spiritual awakening and the spiritual transformation is the change that happens to us at the end of the journey. We begin to understand our true nature, become aware of our innate gifts. The path is unfamiliar, unknown and it is easy to get lost.

Unfortunately, as mentioned earlier, there are barely any studies on characteristic traits of transformation and measures of transformation given that the definition of wellbeing, spiritual awakening, spiritual journey, and transformation are unclear. Reviewing what is known about the nature of spiritual transformation is helpful for novices.

Some of the traits of those engaged in spiritual journey include positive thinking, inner peace, egolessness unconditional love, optimism, harmony, humility, responsibility, compassion, justice, simplicity and reciprocity¹⁷.

Some of the signs as described by Aletheia Luna, a psychospiritual writer and educator are:

1. Old ways thoughts /beliefs begin to disintegrate
2. New doors begin to open, synchronicities increase
3. Comfort in letting go and surrendering
4. Self-identity loosens and one lets go of rigid ways leading to lightheartedness
5. Some people, especially those not vibrationally matched, leave from our life
6. Profound insights into the nature of reality as epiphanies
7. Energetic purging and detoxing
8. Greater sense of inner security and trust in life that everything is working for us
9. Deepening love and compassion

Allen Parr describes 5 measures of spiritual growth.

1. Selfness, thinking about others
2. Willingness to sacrifice
3. Willingness to serve
4. Willingness to submit
5. Willingness to suffer

Adam Brady, a Vedic educator affiliated with the Chopra Center, in his article on measures of spiritual progress, describes ten markers that indicate that transformation is taking place. Here is a description of the ten markers, in his own words¹⁸.

INDEPENDENCE OF THE GOOD OPINION OF OTHERS

Slowly the self-identity shifts to focus from object-referral to self-referral. One aims to learn about the self by going inwards and the need to please others and depend on their good opinion fades away. All actions are guided by the Quantum self, and one stands tall, confidently rooted in their truth.

LEAVING THE TRIBE

Guided by the Quantum self, one experiences progressive desire to withdraw from conventional life of herd mentality and following the crowd. One doesn't mind walking the life path alone, focused more on inner guidance than collective opinion. This doesn't mean one becomes a recluse and retires to solitude. There is just an internal shift; one is still able to lead a normal life, however operating at a different state of awareness or consciousness.

SOFTENING OF EXTERNAL BOUNDARIES

As the Hero progresses on his spiritual journey, there is a reunification of body, mind, spirit, and environment. With continued practice or sadhana, there is no demarcation between external and the personal internal world and one can identify with others and their environment, frequently losing all sense of separateness. The seer, seen and the seeing, all blend, resulting in a unity consciousness. "I AM THAT".

LIGHTHEARTEDNESS

According to Vedanta, one of the key indicators of spiritual progress is that one becomes carefree, easygoing, and lighthearted. There is more joy, life seems less serious as the ego-self, which is the serious layer that is constantly struggling to maintain its self-importance begins to dissolve. One becomes less anxious, less worried, and finds joy in every moment.

INCREASED LOVE, COMPASSION, FORGIVENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

As the sadhana continues, there is a noticeable change to one's way of living. One can understand another's viewpoint, see the bigger picture, fathom what others must be going through and empathize with them. One begins to love everyone unconditionally without any judgement, in a state of expanded consciousness. One strives to always alleviate the pain and suffering of others and be of service in thought word and deed.

THE DESIRE TO SERVE

Guided by the Quantum self, and the desire to Love all, help ever, hurt never, one moves onto the path of selfless service, without any expectations. This starts to come naturally and becomes a way of life.

SLOWING DOWN

As one becomes more mindful and aware of the present moment, actions become slow, deliberate, and mindful. There is no agenda, and one begins to enjoy every moment.

EXPANDED INTUITION

New channels of awareness open because of which new perceptions, understanding, knowing, are downloaded spontaneously- DIVINE DOWNLOADS. These are accessed through the nonlocal domain of Consciousness. All thoughts break their bonds, and all limitations are transcended. The gifts that have been dormant, such as Clairvoyance, Clairsentience, Clairaudience, Claircognizance etc., start to manifest their presence and one can tap into those special states of awareness and intuition.

EXPERIENCING SPONTANEOUS FULFILLMENT OF DESIRE

With spiritual practices, mental, emotional and energetic blockages that inhibit the free flow of manifestation are removed. There is a direct connection to the conscious energy field. With more refined intentions and mindfulness, synchronicities, little miracles begin to appear with shorter lag time between desiring something and its fulfillment. At this stage, one goes with the Flow without much anxiety, finding joy in the process.

UNSHAKEABLE PEACE AND EQUANIMITY

With the deep shift in consciousness comes deep peace and equanimity felt despite outside turmoil and chaos. As Adam Brady says, Being and living in peace is one of the most transformational qualities of living a life of spirit and one of the most important markers of progress in the evolution of your consciousness. According to Swami Sivananda, “the real spiritual progress of the aspirant is measured by the extent to which he achieves inner tranquility.”

These are like mile markers and not the destination and will enhance one’s ability to notice the subtle transformations that are taking place because of the spiritual practice. At a later stage, one is independent of these signs and is confident and comforted in their journey.

Like many, I have been on this journey for decades now and many a times wondered where I stood, despite many different spiritual practices, gurus and guidance. I worried that I was steering away or even worse, going backwards. Enrollment in the study of Quantum Science offered a scientific methodology to the spiritual journey. At the same time, I wanted to see and document tangible benefits from quantum practices.

These quantum tools were divided into two major categories- practices that were foundational followed by practices that were core. The aim of this study was to see if there were any benefits following foundational practices.

Materials and Methods: The pandemic offered the right milieu for exploring health, wellness and spirituality. 15 volunteers who were already engaged in spiritual practices consented to be part of my study. The first set of Quantum foundational practices involved invigorating the vital mental body in addition to the physical revitalization with Mahamudra.

MORNING ROUTINE:

- SURRENDER- prayer, visualize hourglass.
- INTENTION FOR THE DAY
- WHITE LIGHT PROTECTION
- DEVICE HOLIDAY- on waking up -30 minutes.
- PHYSICAL: MAHAMUDRA
- VITAL: rubbing palms chanting the shloka Karaagre vasate Lakshmi (invoking the Divine Feminine in her aspects of abundance, wisdom and courage)
- MENTAL: Pranayama –YOGIC BREATHING (belly breathing)
- BODY AWARENESS - during SHOWER

DURING THE DAY:

- MINDFULNESS
- ATTENTION TO BREATHING
- Check on thoughts and action every 2 hours.

EVENING:

- MENTAL CLEANSING/EMPTYING
- FORGIVENESS
- GRATITUDE
- JOURNALING

The second set of practices were taught 4 weeks later:

- CREATING +VE EMOTIONAL CIRCUITS – AFFIRMATIONS TWICE A DAY
- AMPLIFYING VITAL ENERGY- PRANA MUDRA
- MINDFULNESS & CONCENTRATION – THUMB MEDITATION 12 SEC

- **AWARENESS MEDITATION** – watching your thoughts while focusing on the 3rd eye. This is followed 10 minutes later by watching the watcher.

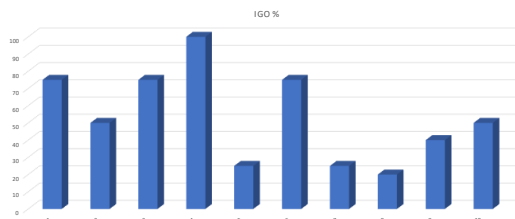
5 people dropped out during the 10-month period of foundational practice.

At the end of 10 months of foundational practice, a brief questionnaire using Adam Brady’s markers for transformation was used. The practitioners were asked to rate the percentage of change for these categories since beginning this Quantum journey.

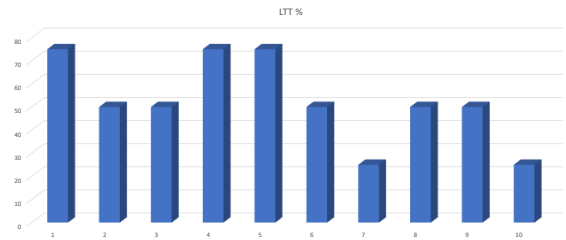
- INDEPENDENCE OF THE GOOD OPINION OF OTHERS
- LEAVING THE TRIBE
- SOFTENING OF EXTERNAL BOUNDARIES
- LIGHTHEARTEDNESS
- INCREASED LOVE, COMPASSION FORGIVENESS
- DESIRE TO SERVE
- SLOWING DOWN
- EXPANDED INTUITION
- SPONTANESOUS FULFILMENT OF DESIRE
- UNSHAKABLE PEACE & EQUANIMITY

RESULTS:

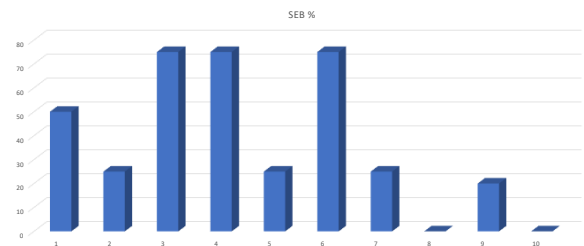
INDEPENDENCE OF GOOD OPINION OF OTHERS - % CHANGE



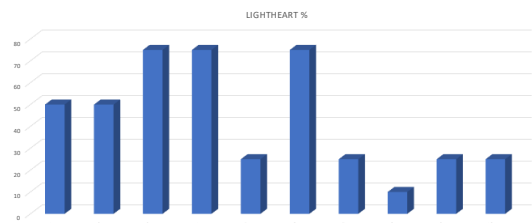
LEAVING THE TRIBE - % CHANGE



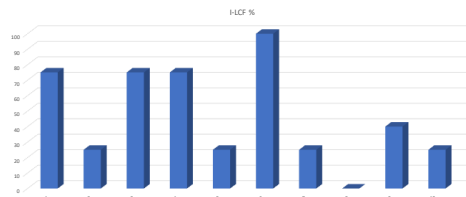
SOFTENING OF EXTERNAL BOUNDARIES- % CHANGE



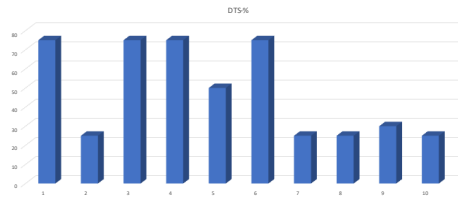
LIGHTHEARTEDNESS- % IMPROVEMENT



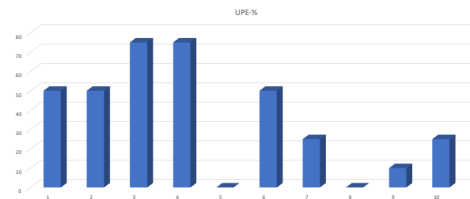
INCREASED, LOVE, COMPASSION, FORGIVENESS, UNDERSTANDING % CHANGE



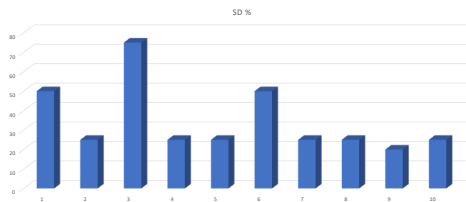
DESIRE TO SERVE- % CHANGE



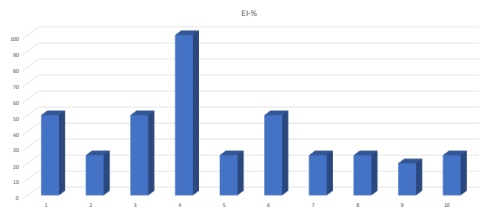
UNSHAKEABLE PEACE & EQUANIMITY% CHANGE



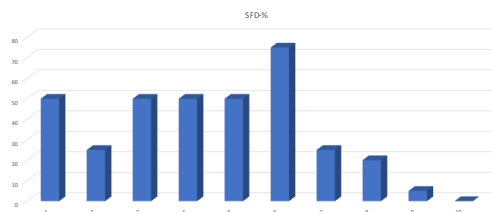
SLOWING DOWN- % CHANGE



EXPANDED INTUITION- % CHANGE



SPONTANEOUS FULFILLMENT OF DESIRE- % CHANGE



RESULTS:

- Most did well on IGO (Independence of Good Opinion) scoring > 50%
- Highest percentage of change (> 50%) came with measure of LTT (leaving the tribe) - internality, detached from causal world.
- Most struggled with SD scores (Slowing Down). Slowing down requires Mindfulness, looking inwards – signature of quantum experience.
- Lowest percentage of change (<=50%) – was found in the quality of EI (Expanded Intuition)

INFERENCE AND DISCUSSION:

The above results are not surprising. I can say that Independence of the Good Opinion of Others and Leaving the Tribe are the earliest changes. It involves the Quantum Principle of Nonlocality, which is the earliest change seen on the spiritual transformational journey. Independence of the Good Opinion of others requires shifting from object to self-referral.

Once the identity shifts from outer to inner, the boundaries soften, separation between the self and the world slowly begins to dissolve. Attention to the inner world leads to the realization that the true nature of the self is divine, and the ego self is a construct of the mind. Slowly the ego begins to dissolve, a huge weight is dropped and there is a sense of lightheartedness. One realizes that they are not separate from the outside world. Everyone and everything is ONE at this stage, one can visualize a situation from broader perspectives

or viewpoints and find the inter-relatedness. This is the next Quantum principle of tangled hierarchy. The stage where emotional intelligence is achieved. Out of this, flows love compassion and understanding for fellow beings. Desire to serve others and to be of use to others takes shape. One is more mindful and attentive, there is nowhere to go, nowhere to be, nowhere to rush, but to experience every moment. Life begins to slow down. There is no rush to achieve anything, since everything is already there in us. We previously lacked the awareness that we are inherently perfect given our inherent Divinity. Being rooted in this Divinity, one can perceive from a higher vantage point and is receptive to higher perceptions including Intuitions, which invokes the quantum principle of Discontinuity. It requires the development of supramental intelligence. At this stage, desires are for the highest good and manifestation begins to happen instantaneously and effortlessly. There is a free flow of energy, the self is just a conduit. Life happens as one goes with the flow. Everything is a flow experience with one being totally immersed in the moment. When these experiences are deep and long

lasting, there is peace and equanimity, knowing that the doer, doing and observer or experiencer are all one. One is just an observer of the rhythm of life.

Foundational practices did bring about certain changes and as expected, changes invoking the principle of Nonlocality were the first to occur followed by Tangled hierarchy. But only foundational practices are insufficient to bring about a leap in the transformational journey unless other Quantum principles are invoked. Bringing about changes such as unity consciousness, manifesting higher gifts etc., needs healing old emotional wounds and trauma and healing at a cellular level followed by deeper practices involving the vital body. However, I want to emphasize that foundational practices are steppingstones, that are required to move to deeper experiences and to the next level and cannot be relegated to the background. It certainly does help in the initial stages of transformation, to be aware of the markers so one can remain rooted in the journey without being fixated on the results.

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