

Amor Fati and Memento Mori in Marcus Aurelius' Meditations: The Synthesis of Stoicism

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Abstract

This article examines the philosophy of Stoicism in Marcus Aurelius' philosophical work Meditations. Stoicism empowers us to embrace the pleasures and pains that come in our life without any reaction. It creates a mental disposition that leads to the stage of equanimity. Meditations exposes the power of stoic virtues like Amor fati (love of fate) and the Memento Mori (remember that you will die). These virtues pave the path for the cardinal virtues like wisdom, moderation, courage, and justice. The stoic virtues make us realize that we are in the abyss of infinity, and we do not exist only for ourselves. Aurelius' Meditations muses on these great mysteries of life, echoing the vibrations of eastern and western lyre of Stoic philosophy. This article implements a qualitative approach to research, and interpretive paradigm to crystallize the radiance of stoic wisdom in Meditations. It is equally significant to discuss the applications of Stoic norms in the pedagogy that transform the junior citizens into the new humans to face the challenges of the modern age.

Keywords: *Amor fati*, cardinal Virtues, macrocosm, *Memento Mori*, microcosm, Stoicism

Introduction

Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* expounds the vibes of stoicism postulated in the eastern and western philosophical thoughts. This work talks about the concept of the microcosm of the macrocosm, exposing that we are all a part of totality in the abyss of eternal time. Our conditions are determined by natural coincidences. Thus, we should love our fate and destiny. This concept is called *Amor fati*. Likewise, one should remember that one must die. This ideation is called *Memento Mori*. *Amor fati* and *Memento Mori* are Latin terms often discussed in relation to Stoicism. To

embrace death by keeping it in mind helps us to utilize our time. One becomes liberated from the snarls and tutelage of these constructed patterns of society by following the spirits of *Amor fati* and *Memento Mori*. The cardinal virtues like justice, wisdom, moderation, and courage lead a person to the zenith of life, making life a worthy and meaningful one. One ceases to exist for oneself; rather submerges in the whole and totality. All these ideations are the tenets of the philosophy of stoicism propounded in the philosophy of Upanishads, Buddhism, Taoism, the New Testament, and notably by the stoic philosophers like Zeno, Chrysippus, Epictetus, Posidonius, Seneca, and Cicero in Athens around third century B.C. Although Aurelius is labelled as a stoic philosopher, he does not talk about Zeno in his book *Meditations*. Thus, it remains to see how his *Meditations* proves to be a rendezvous of the stoic philosophy propagated in the east and the west.

Stoicism bears the aura of eastern philosophy because it was propagated during the Hellenic age after the death of Alexander the Great in 322 B.C. It was the time when the west and east intersected with each other. The crosscurrents conglomerated the two cultures. Casaubon (2017) writes the founder of Stoicism; Zeno was born in Cyprus. He lived there from around 350 B.C to 250 B.C. Cyprus was the nexus for the trade between the east and west. Thus, he must have come in touch with the east and its culture through Asia Minor. In this regard, the coalescence of the eastern and western vibes in the philosophy of Stoicism demands a new revisiting.

Marcus Aurelius (121-180 A.D.) was a Roman emperor. His thoughts expressed in *Meditations* are powerful. *Meditations* is the collections of his personal diary that were written on some war fronts and during the crucial time of his life when he had to face hardships. The book was never designed to be published, but it was published in 1559 A. D. with the title *To Himself*. But later on, all these entries were collected and published as *Meditations*. Clay (2006) writes:

Marcus wrote in Greek. In Greek these admonitions came to be entitled *ta eis heauton* - 'addresses to himself'. In these aphorisms, pithy definitions, reflections, reminders, and exhortations, Marcus occasionally urges himself to give up books and reading in favour of the more serious enterprise of self-mastery and self-improvement. (p. xiv)

Meditations delivers intense thoughts on diverse subjects like nature, providence, time, fate, love, virtues, death and so on. The words are loaded with in-depth perceptions that have the power to move and touch the readers. The book never failed to influence the Roman civilization and since then has been maintaining an enduring impact on the civilizations throughout the different ages.

Review of Literature

Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* is a work of classic. A work of antiquity never escapes new interpretations and commentaries with the touch of novelty. Clay (2006) cites a poem from a Greek poet of the seventh century named Simokattes Theophylaktos that highlights the entire glory of *Meditations*:

If you want to gain control of pain,
open up this blessed book and enter deep within it.
Its wealth of philosophy will bring you

to see with ease all the future,
 the present, and the past, and you will see that joy and distress
 have no more power than smoke. (p. xxxviii)

The above lines clarify that *Meditations* possesses the mines of knowledge of philosophy. Its philosophy enables us to see the essence of time, and maintain a stage of equanimity in joy and distress. These are the ideals of stoicism. This paper unmask its knowledge from the standpoint of Stoicism. In this regard, this study establishes its gravity.

Mathew Arnold (2006), a renowned English poet and critic, hails Marcus Aurelius in his *Essays in Criticism*, saying him the most beautiful figure in the history of mankind. He further praises Aurelius and says, “He is one of those consoling and hope-inspiring marks, which stand forever to remind our weak and easily discouraged race how high human goodness and perseverance have once been carried and may be carried again” (as cited in Hammond, 2006, p. vii). It proves the worth of Marcus Aurelius. Likewise, he praises *Meditations* as a work of antiquity “stretching out his arms for something beyond - *tendentem manus ripae ulterior is atnorey* ('out of love for the further shore')” (as cited in Clay, 2006, p. xl). To praise *Meditations*, he cites these lines from Virgil’s *Aeneid* (6.314) that substantiate that the work carries us something beyond this mundane concern. Similarly, critics like Shaftesbury, Walter Pater, Grube, and Politician Bill Clinton also pay their great admiration for the different dimensions of this work. If according to Arnold, *Meditations* meditates out of love for further shore, then a new quest of its esoteric features is always justifiable.

To understand *Meditations* is to preview a new world. Only one-sided approach does not prove justifiable. Critics like Hays (2002) view that understanding stoicism is not sufficient to judge *Meditations*; rather the readers must be familiar with the role of philosophy in classical time, and equally other philosophical systems that underlie the work. In this regard too, *Meditations* demand a systematic study of relating it to the tenets of Stoicism in the eastern philosophy. The classical book can be labelled as the admixture of many religious philosophies as it encompasses them. Critics like Kingsley (2016) justify this notion and talk about teaching “that there are no degrees of good and evil, but rather that these two are absolute and eternal opposites. In this assertion, he follows a teaching which is in accordance with Christianity and many other religions” (chapter 5, par. 8). In this regard too, Aurelius’ *Meditations* designate a philosophy that reverberates the diverse religious philosophies at the surficial level while adhering to the same principle in their underlying patterns.

Critics like Grayling (2020) claim about Aurelius and *Meditations*, “The humanity and stoic dedication to service exemplified in his book have been admired ever since” (p. 113). It presupposes that the book is all about humanity. Russell (2013) views that philosophers like Aurelius always invent the consolations for the bad times and for the good times they always make a quest for pure intellectual endeavours. *Meditations* are some of them. Russell (2013) says, “The Stoic may say truly that his philosophy is a cause of virtue in those who adopt it, but it seems that it will not have this desirable effect unless there is a certain admixture of intellectual terror” (p.254). This is the power of *Meditations* so that this work can have an enduring effect.

Meditations have attracted much criticisms and interpretations, yet the book has not been interpreted systematically in relation to the eastern concepts of stoicism, *Amor fati* and *Memento Mori*. The book crystallizes that everyone is the part of whole and totality. To attain this realization, we should possess the dynamics of *Amor fati* and *Memento Mori* and cardinal virtues like justice, courage, wisdom and moderation. The eastern philosophies like Vedanta, Buddhism, Taoism, and the Tradition of Abrahamic religious philosophy like the New Testament also talk about these concepts. At this juncture, it remains to see how Aurelius' *Meditations* become the rendezvous of diverse philosophical tenets. Thus, this article reveals these ideations by answering these research questions:

- a) What are the dimensions of stoicism that underlie Upanishadic philosophy, Buddhism, Taoism, and the New Testament of the Holy Bible?
- b) How does Aurelius' *Meditations* encompass the patterns of stoicism, especially cardinal virtues, *Amor fati*, and *Memento Mori*?

Methodology

This study applies the qualitative approach to the research because it relates perceptions and tenets of stoicism in Aurelius' work *Meditations*. Likewise, "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). In this regard, this study implements the interpretive paradigm while analyzing the contents of *Meditations*. According to Croucher and Cronn-Mills (2015), interpretive paradigm constructs the reality with subjective perceptions and the interpretations to formulate the reality. Likewise, the postmodern world favours the micro-narratives and the pluralization of the world views rather than the meta ones and It attempts to explore what Habermas talks as the "new obscurity" (as cited in Flick, 2014, p.12). This study interprets the dimensions of stoicism concerning Upanishadic, Buddhism, and Tao philosophies. Besides, the concepts of *Amor fati* and *Memento Mori* have been interpreted in *Meditations*. This text has been taken as the source for primary concepts. Out of twelve chapters in the book, only the related concepts have been selected by using purposive sampling method as suggested by Croucher and Cronn-Mills (2015). Related commentaries, literature reviews, and online sources have been considered as secondary sources to justify the arguments with warrants.

Reviews and Interpretation

Aurelius' *Meditations* is a milestone as it integrates all the fundamentals of stoicism from both the east and the west. The subsequent sections crystallize how this work of classical heritage reveals the tenets of Stoicism that prevail in *Meditations*.

The Tenets of Stoicism in the East and West

Stoicism was founded by Zeno in Athens around the early part of the third century B.C. This philosophy possesses grandeur of vision that a single divine reality guides everything. Later on, Chrysippus, Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius systematized and enriched this vision in their philosophical works. Tarnas (2000) summarizes the crux of stoicism when he says, "In stoic view, all reality was pervaded by an intelligent divine force, the Logos or universal reason which ordered all

things. Man could achieve genuine happiness only by attuning his life and character to this all-powerful providential wisdom” (p.76). One acquires the freedom, finding in concordance with the will of nature, God or cosmic power. The life gets its meaningful swing only in “the virtuous state of the soul, nor the circumstances of the outer stage. The stoic sage, marked by inner serenity, sternness in self-discipline, and conscientious performance of duty, was indifferent to the vagaries of external events” (Tarnas, 2000, p. 76). A stoic follows the principle that external objects do not find their value until and unless one reacts to them. It suggests not comparing ourselves with others because there is no comparison between the same particles of the divinity just as the sun and the moon are equally important. They shine when their time comes. The cosmic course is the maintenance of the divine force. This concept of intelligent divine force has its coalescence in *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. This Upanishad postulates that a single reality rules the cycles of creation. That single reality is *brahman*. It states, “*Brahman*, indeed, was this in the beginning. It knew itself only as ‘I am *Brahman*.’ Therefore it became all” (Radhakrishnan trans., 2016, p.168). *Brahman*, the ultimate reality, pervades everything.

Like the Logos or universal reason of Stoicism, the projection of *brahman* dominates the entire philosophical drives of Upanishads. *Chandogya Upanishad* also substantiates, “This (world), my dear, was only the being, in the beginning, only without a second. It is true that some say that this (world) was only non-being in the beginning only one without a second” (VI. 2.2. Deussen trans., 2010, pp. 162-63). This postulation of singularity as the absolute reality brings the Greek Stoics and Upanishadic seers very near in their insights about the idea of the One. All the principal Upanishads support this idea. *Mundaka Upanishad* clarifies, “*Brahman*, indeed, is this universe. It is the greatest” (II.2.12; Radhakrishnan trans., 2016, p. 685). Similarly, *Katha Upanishad* substantiates the entire Upanishadic message of same logos, rationality and the cosmic force. It says, “There is one eternal thinker, thinking non-eternal thought, who, though one fulfills the desires of many” (2.13; Muller trans., 2000, p. 134). The agglutinative relationship between the Vedic seers and the Stoic philosophers proves that there must have been the crosscurrents of ideas in the Hellenic age that intersected the concepts between the east and the West.

The Stoics believe that the natural laws guide the creation, humankind and their daily affairs. For them, “each person was like a world in a miniature, or ‘microcosmos,’ which is a reflection of the ‘macrocosmos’” (Gaarder, 1996, p. 131). So, they blur the distinction between the individual and the universe. Since everything comes out of the same divine intelligence, the differentiation between the spirit and matter bears no value at all. Gaarder (1996) clarifies the stoics claim that there is only one essential nature of everything. They, in this sense, prioritize monism. This idea incites them to be cosmopolitan. *Politai* signifies citizen, and cosmos means the world. Thus, cosmopolitan means the citizen of the world. This is the point that they focus on harmony among the humankind. Cicero (106 -43 B.C) formulates the concept of humanism that regards a human at the center. Human is the measure of all things. Later on, Seneca (4 B.C.—65 A.D.) intensified this gravity in his powerful saying, “to mankind, mankind is holy” (as cited in Gaarder, 1996, p. 132). It consolidates that all these ideas of cosmopolitanism and humanism have their roots in Upanishadic philosophy. The *Isha Upanishad*, though composed earlier than the trend of stoic philosophy, concentrates:

All this that moves in this moving universe is encompassed by the Self. When thou hast surrendered all that (i.e. material wealth), and wilt seek not what others (continue to) possess, then thou mayest truly enjoy.

He who sees all beings in the Self, and the Self in all beings, he never is away from it.

When to a man who understands, the Self in oneself has become one with all things, what sorrow, what trouble can there be for him who has known that unity? (1. 6, 7; Muller trans., 2000, p. 17)

The radiance of divine intelligence as a guiding force, the gravity of cosmopolitanism, and humanism have been engraved in the *mantras* of the Upanishad. It shows that the true and everlasting ideas have the same underlying patterns throughout the ages no matter the space and time differ. This great confluence becomes the vibrant force for humanity that spans millennia.

Since Stoicism believes in logos and a determinant cause, earthly phenomena like birth, sickness, and death have their own course. These take as the natural phenomena. According to Russell (2013), Zeno defies the notion of chance and the natural courses take place because they are determined by natural laws. In this sense, human cannot escape destiny. The laws of necessity make everything happens. Instead of complaining about this natural course, one must build a sense of tolerance and endurance. It is a process of soul-making and rising up again in life after having long perseverance. Facing the challenges and sorrows, ups and downs are the ways to lead a zenith of life. In life, the nadir comes and goes because nothing is permanent in this life. According to Gaarder (1996), this is the idea of stoic calm. These ideas of perseverance, stoic calmness, and vale of soul-making are better expressed in Buddhism. Buddha, who was born in the sixth century B.C., better expresses the power of perseverance and stoic endurance in *the Dhammapada*, “That one I call a brahmin who fears neither prison nor death. Such a one has the power of love no army can defeat” (26. 399; Easwaran trans., 2015, p. 249). The power of endurance leads us beyond death. When one escapes the snarl of fear, one is freed and liberated. This is one of the fundamentals of Buddha’s precepts.

The stoic endurance heightens the art of living. It provides the solace to live. The elixir of life sprinkles with endurance. It remakes oneself. These ideals of stoicism postulated by Greek philosophers are exposed by Buddha in *the Dhammapada* when he says, “That one I call Brahmin who is free from *I, me, and mine*, who knows the rise and fall of life. Such a one is awake and will not fall asleep again” (26.419; Easwaran trans.,p.252). One who accepts success and failure with a calm attitude is a person of equanimity temperament. Sri Krishna in *the Bhagavadgita* talks about the beauty of man of equilibrium, “He whose mind is untroubled by sorrows, and for pleasures has no longings, beyond passion, and fear and anger, he is the sage of unwavering mind” (2.56; Mascaro trans., 1994, p.53). This is the power of being a Stoic. Not yearning for things beyond control is the way of liberating oneself. Things that we cannot influence should not be given importance in life. Indifferent to anxiety, fear, rise and fall, and desire for possessions are the ways to be the man of equilibrium. Grayling (2020) focuses that stoicism is an attitude of being indifferent or being apathetic not to the dignified life, but to the vicissitudes of destiny, the trap of ageing, sorrows, sickness and even death. Cicero, the stoic philosopher, has rightly stated that one should learn how to die (as cited in Grayling, 2020, p.114). One who is free from the entanglement of birth and death transcends

everything. It signifies that the ideas of stoicism are the key to a happy life.

Christ in *the Holy Bible* heightens endurance. His sacrifice has become a symbol of stoic endurance and stoic calmness for the world. In the Sermon of the Mount in the Mathew, he has expressed some powerful proclamations of being guided by tolerance to the vicissitudes of life. He preaches, “Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other one. And if someone wants to sue you and have your tunic, let him have your cloak as well” (Mathew, 5: 39, 40). It projects the power of being stoic. Endurance always leads to the way of remaking oneself. Similarly, he again clarifies how one becomes free after having stoic calmness. He says, “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has its enough troubles of its own” (Mathew, 6: 34). The problems and sorrows pass away without affecting the person. One is left liberated when one does not react to the affairs of the external world. The power of being stoic is graphically presented in Tzu’s (1997) *Tao Te Ching*(*The Tao of Power*):

To know the Absolute is to be tolerant.
 What is tolerant becomes impartial;
 What is impartial becomes powerful;
 What is powerful becomes natural;
 What is natural becomes Tao. (p. 16).

Tzu presents the power of being tolerant and natural which is the major aspect of stoicism. To be tolerant is the way to realize the Tao—the ultimate path. In this regard, stoicism has its fundamentals in the underlying patterns of eastern and western philosophy. The basic patterns of being tolerant, impartial, and natural lead to greater realization and liberation.

Cardinal Virtues, *Amor Fati*, and *Memento Mori* in *Meditations*

Aurelius’ work *Meditations* projects the prescience of Stoicism. It blows the conches of stoic power and its thrust. It rejects the mercurial nature that lurks inside the psyche of a person. Each and every line bears the significance of stoic nature and provides a systematic essence of stoicism that has been expressed in the religious philosophy both from the east and the west. The book opens from some powerful viewpoints about the way of remaking oneself. Aurelius (2006) inspires the readers by relating what he has learnt from his mother, “From my mother: piety, generosity, the avoidance of wrongdoing and even the thought of it; also simplicity of living, well clear of the habits of the rich” (p. 3). The thrust and dignity of piety, and generosity intensify the inner growth. When one abstains from wrongdoing and even from the thought are ways to be affluent inwardly. These preoccupy the cardinal virtues of stoicism. Clay (2006) clarifies, “They are: prudent self-control (*sophrosune*), practical intelligence (*phronesis*), courage (*andreia*), and justice (*dikaiosune*)” (p. XXVI). Aurelius (2006) enlarges these virtues to make a surety to live a healthy living. He opens the stage of soul-making:

My soul, will you ever be good, simple, individual, bare, brighter than the body that covers you?
 Will you ever taste the disposition to love and affection? Will you ever be complete and free of need,
 missing nothing, desiring nothing live or lifeless for the enjoyment of pleasure?(p. 94)

The monologue with the soul is the way of sensitizing the internal virtues, Christ profoundly suggests to his disciples to “watch yourselves” (Luke, 17: 2). The hardest knowledge is to know oneself. These cardinal virtues of Aurelius are the weapons to know oneself. Buddha in *the Dhammapada* too suggests one to “Be victorious over yourselves not over others” (8. 104; Easwaran trans., 2015, p.135). This is the vale of soul shaping. One rises to a higher attitude moment by moment in this remaking process of the self.

The dichotomy of control is another stage of stoicism. In this state, one should always keep in mind the things that we can control or let them just go as they are. One should always differentiate whether the thing is under control or not. External affairs are not under control, but our emotions, feelings, anger and so on are in our domain to watch them. Aurelius (2006) suggests:

Finally, then, remember this retreat into your own little territory within yourself. Above all, no agonies, no tensions. Be your own master, and look at things as a man, as a human being, as a citizen, as a mortal creature. And here are two of the most immediately useful thoughts you will dip into. First those things cannot touch the mind: they are external and inert; anxieties can only come from your internal judgement. Second, that all these things you see will change almost as you look at them, and then will be no more. Constantly bring to mind all that you yourself have already seen changed. The universe is change: life is judgement. (p.24)

One should accept that the change is the natural course. Life is to be judged and lived for every moment. Transcending the fear and agonies and accepting the natural dualities is to accept the totality. This brings the real knowledge of life. It is the gateway to embrace wisdom and evolve inwardly. Gill (2013) justifies that “over and above the biological or physical and purely external or formal dimensions of our existence, we should aim to shape our lives as the expression of an ongoing journey towards an ideal state of character, understanding . . . (p. XIII). In this process, *Meditations* is to meditate on the phenomena of the worldly existence and remake and reshape the life. It provides the way to rise beyond the tribulations of life. We can control our thoughts, speech, our boundaries, actions, and our goals and so on. The actions of others, past, future, the natural outcomes, and the perceptions of other people towards us are beyond our reach. Realizing this dichotomy of control paves the path for the solace of soul and mind.

Amor fati, a Latin phrase, centralizes the idea that one should accept fate choicelessly. It radiates the notion that one should love fate. Curbing one polarity of life and accepting the other one simply deludes us. *Meditations* raises the crucial issue that one should never possess grievances about fate. One should endure and make possible decisions out entanglement of the problems. Aurelius (2006) harmonizes the issues of *Amor fati* in his *Meditations*:

You have seen that: now look at this. Do not trouble yourself, keep yourself simple. Someone does wrong? He does wrong to himself. Has something happened to you? Fine. All that happens has been fated by the Whole from the beginning and spun for your own destiny. In sum, life is short: make your gain from the present moment with right reason and justice. Keep sober and relaxed. (p.28)

These maxims provide guidance in our life. It does not matter in life how you fall; the existential issue is that how you rise up simply rejoicing in fate. What is lotted cannot be blotted. Sri Krishna in *the Bhagavadgita* substantiates these notions of inner power when he says to Arjuna, “Yield not to cowardice,

O son of Pritha: it becomes thee not. Cast off poor impotence of heart, and rise” (2.3; Hill trans., 1973, p. 82). The power of *Amor fati* disseminates the seeds of inner evolution. An escape from the fear paves the way to liberation from the tutelage of superstitions and entanglements of worldly vicissitudes.

The confluence between Sri Krishna and Aurelius’ stoicism provides the antidote for the people perennially. Aurelius (2006) justifies the power of forbearance and stoic endurance:

'It is my bad luck that this has happened to me.' No, you should rather say: 'It is my good luck that, although this has happened to me, I can bear it without pain, neither crushed by the present nor fearful of the future.' Because such a thing could have happened to any man, but not every man could have borne it without pain. So why see more misfortune in the event than good fortune in your ability to bear it? (p. 33)

In the above lines, Aurelius provides the therapy of the soul. Self-cultivation, forbearance and endurance make a person his/her sculptor. We attain the courage to struggle against the turbulences of life. What we think; we become that. The thought of positivity leads us to vitalism. Clay (2006) justifies that Aurelius’ philosophy of forbearance and endurance remains therapeutic consolidation to the soul. He implements various therapies to cultivate his soul. In this regard, his *Meditations* become medications (p. xxxiii). Medications are not only to him, but for the generations to come. Aurelius’ powerful point heightens when his philosophy of microcosm of macrocosm reverberates for the humankind. Aurelius (2006) remarks:

Say to yourself first thing in the morning: today I shall meet people who are meddling, ungrateful, aggressive, treacherous, malicious, unsocial. All this has afflicted them through their ignorance of true good and evil. But I have seen that the nature of good is what is right, and the nature of evil what is wrong; and I have reflected that the nature of the offender himself is akin to my own - not a kinship of blood or seed, but a sharing in the same mind, the same fragment of divinity. (p.10)

It proposes that we are all the drops of the same ocean. This sense of harmony in perceiving oneself in others integrates society. Casaubom (2017) views that “a strong insistence on the unity of the universe, and on man’s duty as part of a great whole. Public spirit was the most splendid political virtue of the ancient world, and it is here made cosmopolitan” (p. 8). Aurelius centralizes the theme of cosmic integration. Even we have our equal duty to the creatures and the plants. We are the microcosm of the great macrocosm. To be a cosmopolitan is a way of living a meaningful life. Kingsley (2016) justifies that the highest good for Aurelius is to live a life of virtue, free from evils and vices. That will be the lasting contribution a human can give for the world and the universe. Thus, this idea of integration inspires the human to meditate on the *Meditations*.

Memento Mori is another great theme that dominates *Meditations*. *Memento Mori*, a Latin term, proclaims that “one should keep in mind that one will die”. This idea does not overwhelm us; rather it energizes us to embrace reality. Death is a natural transformation from this stage to that source from where we arrive. That’s why; its remembrance inspires us for the maximum and the best use of the time that we are granted in this world. It is just a great departure. Aurelius (2006) qualifies the mystery of death:

Death, just like birth, is a mystery of nature: first a combination, then a dissolution, of the same

elements. Certainly no cause for shame: because nothing out of the order for an intelligent being or contrary to the principle of his constitution. (p.25)

Death is just the dissolution of elements. The unity of elements becomes life, and their disintegration proves to be a death. However, no part is ever destroyed, nor created. The whole scene is just the play of “Many grains of incense on the same altar. One falls to ash first, another later: no difference” (Aurelius, 2006, p. 26). He glorifies death. Aurelius’ Stoicism rejects death as Sri Krishna in *the Bhagavadgita* where he says, “Being existence lives forever\ there is no such thing as death\ for this omnipresent source of the universe” (as cited in Lepes, 2008, p. 19). If one sees from this higher perspective, is s\he entangled in the framework of time? Of course, one goes beyond time. For Sri Krishna and Aurelius, death does not exist.

The true spirit of *Memento Mori* collapses the boundary between life and death. The mystery of death now becomes the known one. The message of *Meditations* on death “Either dispersal, if we are atoms: or, if we are a unity” (Aurelius, 2006, p.63) exhilarates throughout the ages. The philosophy that teaches us the mystery of life and death does not simply remain a philosophy; rather it becomes the divine one. Aurelius (2006) speaks as if he is a prophet while he talks about the death:

Do not despise death: welcome it, rather, as one further part of nature's will. Our very dissolution is just like all the other natural processes which life's seasons bring - like youth and old age, growth and maturity, development of teeth and beard and grey hair, insemination, pregnancy, and childbirth. In the educated attitude to death, then, there is nothing superficial or demanding or disdainful: simply awaiting it as one of the functions of nature. And just as you may now be waiting for the child your wife carries to come out of the womb, so you should look forward to the time when your soul will slip this bodily sheath. (p. 84)

Welcoming the natural cycles is the perpetual way. The recurrent dialectical processes of life and death have changed this world and creation a worthy place to live. Had not there been the cyclic processes of these two natural phenomena, the creation might have gone astray and changed into a mere void of nothingness. Hammond (2006) clearly explains the truth “ is that the range, diversity, and honesty of Marcus' reflections on human life and death in the perspective of eternity –doubt and despair, conviction and exaltation all equally intense – have enduring power to challenge, encourage, or console” (p. vii-viii). Thus, Aurelius inaugurates the positive philosophy while talking about the so-called bitter truth of death.

Aurelius celebrates the idea of death because it liberates us from the traps of time, ageing, sickness, and so on. The subject of death has become a motif in *Meditations*. Gill (2013) justifies that this motif intersects with the transitoriness of life. This transience of life provokes the value of time Aurelius (2006) shows the coexistence of life in death:

Your death will soon be on you: and you are not yet clear minded, or untroubled, or free from the fear of external harm, or kindly to all people, or convinced that justice of action is the only wisdom. Look into their directing minds: observe what even the wise will avoid or pursue. (pp. 30-31)

To realize the value of *Memento Mori* is the greatest wisdom. Death is there, so has life become precious for us and “this idea co- exists with the idea of eternal recurrence, that everything is repeated in cosmic cycles” (Gill, 2013, p. xlix). So Aurelius’ treatment of death is the therapy to give a creative shape

to vaulting emotions and gain solace in our life. The way to this solace is to “Imagine you were now dead, or had not lived before this moment. Now view the rest of your life as a bonus, and live it as nature directs” (Aurelius, 2006, p.66). The amalgamation of death in life gears us to gain the serenity of eternity. The crux of the ultimate way is as expressed in these powerful lines:

What a tiny part of the boundless abyss of time has been allotted to each of us - and this is soon vanished in eternity; what a tiny part of the universal substance and the universal soul; how tiny in the whole earth the mere clod on which you creep. Reflecting on all this, think nothing important other than active pursuit where your own nature leads and passive acceptance of what universal nature brings. (Aurelius, 2006, p.122)

Meditations teach us to meditate on the power of death and provide the summation of the entire stoic philosophy postulated both in the east and the west. The evanescent time allotted to us changes to eternity if we cease to exist not for ourselves and accept nature’s course perpetually.

Conclusion

The present paper has explored the essentials of stoicism propagated in the east and west. Likewise, this study has provided a new avenue for viewing Aurelius’ *Meditations*. There were the crosscurrents, intersections, and amalgamation of philosophical ideas during Hellenism. Zeno, the founder of stoicism, was born in Cyprus and Asia Minor was the meeting point of the eastern and western thoughts at that time. While living there, he must have gone in contact with the eastern philosophy. Later on, philosophers like Chrysippus, Epictetus, Posidonius, Seneca, Cicero, and Marcus Aurelius added their philosophical flavours to the trend. Thus, we find reverberations of Upanisadic, Buddhist and Tao philosophy in the underlying patterns of stoicism. The great coalescence raised the power of endurance and tolerance to shape life. The morals like forbearance, moderation, wisdom, virtues, *Amor fati*, *Memento Mori*, the acceptance of fate, courage, the harmony with providence and nature remain as the dynamics of the stoic philosophy that maintain adhesive coherence with the eastern philosophy. Stoicism teaches us only to be conscious about the present time because the future will be guided by it. Aurelius galvanizes the concepts of *Amor fati*, *Memento Mori*, and the cardinal virtues that have become the milestone for the way of living. *Amor fati* teaches us to accept our fate courageously. That is the best way to reshape ourselves because a person is the sculptor of his/her soul and mind. It teaches us that hard time creates strong human that changes the hard situation into the easier ones. It is the process of reshaping and cultivating the self. Aurelius in his *Meditations* proclaims that one should be guided and abide by cardinal virtues like wisdom, courage, justice, and moderation. *Memento Mori*, remember your death, heightens the attitude that no one is immortal in the abyss of time. Death is simply the dissolution of elements that change into the flux of eternity. Besides, the remembrance of death makes us realize the beauty of life. Life is worthy to live because of death. It is a great departure not for an ending process, but for another beginning. This is a perpetual process. In fact, there is no death the moment we realize that we exist in all and all exist in others. Realizing that we are the microcosm of the macrocosm is the greatest wisdom. These are profound messages that *Mediations* disseminates throughout the world. If our teaching pedagogy encompasses these ideals of stoicism and

Meditations, then we can create new humans that blow the conch of a new humanity, cosmopolitanism, and the religion of fraternity and harmony for the entire creation. *Meditations* needs furthermore touch of research with the standpoints of eastern philosophies like Buddhism, Vedanta, and Sankhya in the days to come. May such ideas of antiquity flow throughout the ages.

The Implication of Stoicism and Aurelius' Philosophy in Teaching Pedagogy

The ideas of stoicism find their regulations in our daily lives. Since the time of the propagation of this philosophy, it has been giving lasting impact on the following generations. In our daily lives, we unknowingly apply the regulations of stoicism and Aurelius' concepts of *Amor fati*, cardinal virtues, and *Memento Mori*. Kingsley (2016) claims that nowadays many colleges and universities include these essentials of stoicism and Aurelius' philosophy in their curriculum because these concepts boost our duty towards nature, society, and the nation as well. When these parameters of duties are inscribed in the students' minds, surely it will create a healthy and integrated and humanitarian society in the days to come. However, Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2016) in the stratification of pedagogy talk about twelve dimensions of pedagogy that include mental, social, cultural, political, spiritual, physical, emotional, practical, behavioral, experiential, historical, and personal aspects. Where is the place of philosophical dimension in this stratification of pedagogy? It is as important as other dimensions because this is the age of *Pedagogical Pluralism* and without the dimension of philosophy, it cannot deliver properly. That's why; the implication of philosophical issues in the pedagogy brings larger mobility in the total educational system. Pedagogy is like symphony; it lures when all the musical instruments are duly played when they suit the best.

Stoic and Aurelius' ideations of valuing the present, self-reflection, pursuing happiness, the elimination of procrastination, handling the failures and making a new attempt to rise again, watching emotions, controlling the self, self-retreat, forbearance, endurance, the sense of cosmopolitanism always bring the positive outcome in the psychology of students. The world suffers in the present time with the materialism, industrial magnate and chasm of capitalism. If the vibes and primal beat of stoicism engrave in the tender minds of students, then the future citizenry will be responsible, rational, and critical without being whimsical. We can never claim that our teaching system is gearing to produce the mechanical human resources; rather we are looking for the flowering minds that balance the emotional and rational aspects in their temperament and behavioral aspects of life so that they can add the humanitarian and cosmopolitan virtues in their lives which ultimately make the world better place to live in. We can claim that the inclusion of stoicism in the teaching pedagogy teaches telescopic philanthropy. To change the world, we must start with our pedagogical system. In this regard, the fundamentals and essentials of stoicism along with the philosophical points of Aurelius are a must in our pedagogy and curriculum system.

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