

## Transcendental Meditation

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Perhaps, the most widely known current example of the universalist type of Psychotherapy is known as Transcendental Meditation (TM). Unique in many ways, it nevertheless incorporates many of the historically typical components of successful non-professional healing enterprise: a charismatic founder and leader (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi); an appealing but global body of theory that partakes of both science and mystique (the science of creative intelligence or SCI); a parental enterprise representing the founder's original organizational effort (the spiritual regeneration movement or SRM), derivative organizations such as the Student's International Meditation Society or SIMS and the establishment of a major institution for the promulgation of the belief, the promotion of the movement, and the diversification of its enterprises (Maharishi International University or M/U).

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the man behind T.M. was born around 1918, in central India. Not much is known about his past, because he refuses to talk about it. This much, however, is known that in 1940 he took a Ba-

achelor's degree in physics from Allahabad University. Then for 13 years (till 1953) he sought enlightenment under his guru Swami Brahmanand Saraswati, who was then Shankaracharya of Jyotimath in the Himalayas. It is said that just before the swami died, he commissioned Mahesh Yogi to evolve a simple form of meditation which anybody could learn and practise. In obedience to this, he hid away in the Himalayas for two years. When he emerged he started the "TM" movement. In 1956 he took the title Maharishi.

In 1958, after he found Indians reluctant to accept his technique of TM, he decided to take it to the West, to the people "who are in the habit of receiving things quickly". He first went to England and then in 1961 to U.S.A.

It is because of two historical factors that Mahesh Yogi has become more popular in the West than his any other contemporary Indian. The first was the conversion of the Beatles to TM. They soon gave it up, describing it just a waste of time (John Lennon). But while they were with him, he was in the head lines.

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The second factor was his apt time of reaching California, which has the most fertile climate for founding cults. When he got there in 1965, the youth revolution for a counter-culture was in full swing, and the students were beginning to get dis-illusioned with the political alternatives offered by the New Left. In the autumn of 1965, about 40 students from the university of California enrolled for a course on the principles and practice of T.M. By 1971, the number had risen to 73,000, recording a growth of 300 percent a year.

He inaugurated a "World Plan" on January 8, 1972, on the Mediterranean Island of Mallorca, after 7 days of silence with 2,000 newly trained teachers of T.M. According to Maharishi the world plan will continue until "The problems of today's world are substantially reduced and eventually eliminated and the educational institutions of every country are capable of producing fully developed citizens".

Nepal was the first country to officially invite the Maharishi to spread his message through T.V. A television station is being set up in Los Angeles. There is already a talk of launching a Pan America TV network.

"The Age of Enlightenment in Asia" was inaugurated by Maharishi on Tuesday, March 11, 1975 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, to boost the progress of the World Plan, in India.

Maharishi and his followers say that in T.M. they have a key to solve all the problems of the world or in other words "one solution to eradicate all suffering".

The following quotations will suffice to emphasize their tremendous utopian optimism. Mahesh Yogi says, "The science of creative intelligence is a glorious meeting ground for the Eastern and Western ideals for gaining knowledge. All men everywhere will now enjoy the ideals of life in the fullness of all glories, material and spiritual."

Max Fisher, a senior Lecturer in English and drama, at the college of All Saints, London, feels;

"It is only recently that such a vast claim has been capable of rational acceptance. Now the revival of the whole life of mankind is inescapable."

Dr. Anthony Campbell, a medical Journalist, and Editor of the magazine Creative Intelligence, has said about the movement,

"Throughout the succeeding years I have become more and more convinced that Maharishi's coming out into the world with his system of TM is by far the most important event of our time. This seems, and is, a large claim but I believe it can be justified.

Maharishi denies that his teachings and technique are in any way a philosophy, or religion. He insists it is a science and a simple mechanical technique for physiological, psychological and social benefits with no religious over tones.

## **Technique and Philosophy of T.M.**

### **A. Philosophy behind T.M.**

The exponent of T. M. in its modern form, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi defines the philosophy of T.M. as —

“turning the attention inwards towards the subtle levels of a thought until the mind transcends the experience of the subtlest states of the thought and arrives at the source of thought”. *What does this mean?* What is the source of thought where mind arrives after transcending the experience of the subtlest states of thought? What is pure or bliss consciousness? What is state of being? Maharishi has answered these questions in his lectures, Radio and T.V. interviews.

He explains that the process of thinking starts from the deepest most refined level of consciousness and becomes grosser as it develops. Eventually it becomes gross enough to be perceived on the surface level of consciousness, the ordinary level of thinking. An analogy will clarify this principle. A thought starts from the deepest level of consciousness, from the deepest level of ocean of mind, as a bubble starts at the bottom of the sea. As the bubble rises, it gradually becomes bigger. When it comes to the surface of the water, it is perceived as a bubble.

Mind is like an ocean. The surface layers of the mind function actively while deeper levels remain silent. The functioning surface level of mind is called the conscious mind.

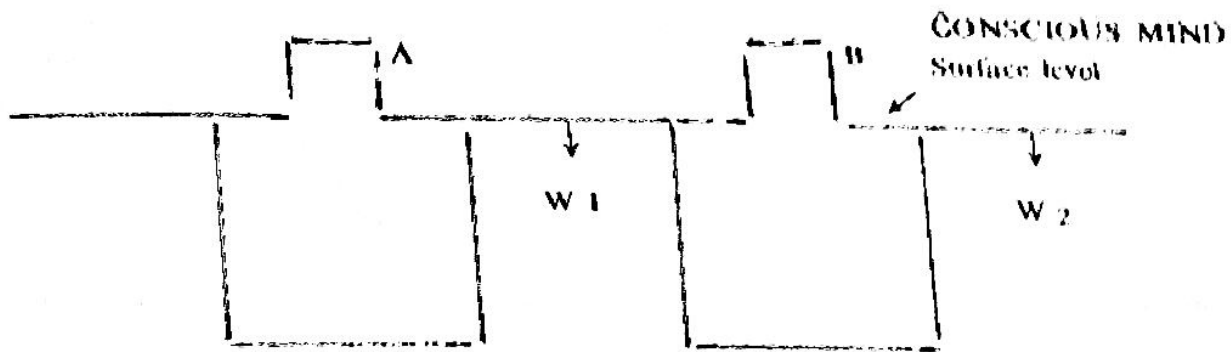
Any thought at the surface level is consciously cognized (noted) and it is at this level that thoughts are appreciated as thoughts. A thought starts from the deepest level of consciousness and rises through the whole depth of the ocean of mind until it finally appears as a conscious thought at the surface. Thus we find that every thought stirs the whole range of the depth of consciousness

but is consciously appreciated only when it reaches the conscious level; all its earlier stages of development are not appreciated. That is why it is said, that for all practical purposes, the deeper levels of the ocean of consciousness are as though silent.

Referring to the illustrations the bubble of thought rising from level A, grows in size. By the time it reaches the surface level B, it has developed sufficiently to be appreciated as a thought. This is the level of conscious mind. The subtle states of the thought-bubbles below this conscious level are not appreciated.

If the thought bubble could be consciously appreciated at the level below B, and at all levels of subtlety from B to A, it would then be possible to bring the level A, within the range of conscious mind. In this way the depth of the conscious mind (represented by W1), would become greater (as represented by W2) and the power of the conscious mind would be increased enormously. This expansion of the conscious capacity of the mind happens automatically on the march towards being. It is as if the waves on the surface of the ocean have communicated with the deeper levels of water so that each wave is mightier than the wave before. The full mental potential is thus unfolded and the conscious capacity of the mind is increased to the maximum extent.

Bubbles of thought are produced in a stream, one after another, and the mind is trained to experience the oncoming bubble at an earlier and earlier stage of its development (see diagram). When the attention reaches level A, it has traversed the whole



depth of the mind and reached the source of creative intelligence in man. This source of thought (A) thus comes within the scope of the conscious mind. When the conscious mind transcends the subtlest level of thought, it transcends the subtlest state of relative experience and arrives at transcendental being, the state of pure consciousness or self awareness. This is how, in a systematic manner the conscious mind is lead, step by step, to the direct experience of the transcendental absolute being

The same philosophy behind T.M. was emphasized by Maharishi in a highly popular television show in U.S.A. the "To night" programme of Jonny Carson. Asked by CARSON to explain what he meant by "bliss consciousness" and "Pure consciousness," Maharishi explained that T.M. is the technique where mind travels. It does not remain steady. It (mind) travels from the grosser state of thought to the subtle state of thought to the subtler and subtlest state of thought till it arrives at the source of thought. And arriving at the source of thought the conscious mind gains the state of bliss consciousness of transcendental consciousness or pure consciousness. This is the state of pure existence or pure and creative intelligence.

Asked by Carson whether the "origin of thought" was in the brain? Maharishi ex-

plained, it was at the deepest level of the brain. From there it comes up further and becomes speech or action. So, from the development of thought into speech and action, our awareness travels from inside to outside. In T.M. the attention comes from outside to inside, to the source of thought; and then the conscious mind, gains that transcendent awareness which Maharishi calls bliss consciousness. In the same T.V. interview Mahesh Yogi explained that in T.M. the process of thinking is reverted i.e. instead of bringing the thought to awareness outward. In T.M. thinking goes deep within and gains that inner being of pure consciousness.

Maharishi further told Carson that any one who can think and through thought brings his awareness outward, can reverse the process of thinking and take the awareness to the source of thought. It is just thinking but thinking in a manner so that awareness goes deep within and gains that inner being of pure consciousness.

As regards the choice of thought in T.M. Maharishi says that one has to take a specific thought whose vibrations, whose impulses suit the existing impulse of our nervous system. Each man is different. He compares this to selection of a particular blood group for each individual.

In conclusion, Maharishi explained in his T. V. interview "To Night" programme that T.M. was not a religion, it was a philosophy. T.M. was a technique: taking the mind inward and harmonizing the outer material with the inner.

#### **Technique :—**

The Maharishi describes the meditation as an effortless, automatic mental technique in which the mind settles down to finer states of thought.

The meditator usually sits comfortably in a chair, with eyes closed, and allows the sound of a selected word - his Mantra given to him during his initiation - to echo in his mind at will. He avoids pursuing any special line of thought, maintains an alert but relaxed state of mind and permits all intruding thoughts to fragment or refine themselves, until they are no longer any specific ideas at all, only an experience of transcendent awareness or pure consciousness. From time to time, specific thoughts return, only to dissolve again peacefully.

This meditative state is usually practised for about 20 minutes twice a day.

During meditation, according to Wallace and Benson (1972) there is likely to be a considerable degree of bodily relaxation with a slowing of pulse and respiratory rate, and elevation of galvanic skin resistance, a diminution of blood lactate, and other signs of decreased metabolic activity. At the end of each session there is typically described a sense of refreshment, alertness and well being. Those who practise the procedure twice daily over a period of months, commonly report an over-all rise in spirits, energy and morale.

Routine tasks are accomplished with more relish and effectiveness. Various unhealthy practices, such as use of tobacco and alcohol, drug abuse, seem to fade away without special effort. (Benson and Wallace, 1972). Creativity is said to increase; Ch. tension and neurotic symptoms do diminish and a sense of peace and benevolence towards others emerge gradually.

All this comes through devotion to a modest practice that some times causes Maharishi to burst out laughing when he described it, as it is "so simple", as he puts it. According to L.J. West (1976) Maharishi told him that he fully and seriously believes that the practice of T.M. alone, supported by theoretical knowledge and values of the Vedic tradition as formulated in his teachings as the "Science of Creative Intelligence (SCI) could eventually lead to the disbanding of the armies, the emptying of jails and the conversion of mental hospitals into recreation centres. Mahesh Yogi according to all accounts, is a radiantly warm, gentle and intelligent man who elicits great loyalty and devotion from his followers. He is said to supervise all aspects of the international movement that he began. However, once a person learns how to meditate from a trained teacher, he meditates on his own and is not required to maintain any membership in the Spiritual Regeneration Movement (SRM) which was founded by Maharishi in 1957 or any of its derivatives, such as Maharishi International University (MIU) or Students International Meditation Society (SIMS), even though continuing participation is encouraged.

The scheme of psychological functioning and its relation to the nervous system inherent in the description of T.M. are totally different from comparable metaphors of Western Scie-



nce. In the T.M. framework, continuously subtler levels of mind contain more and more powerful and profound values of thought. An expansion of consciousness takes place as the mind passes through these more subtle levels until all mental activity has become pure consciousness. The expansion of consciousness that occurs during meditation also carries over into ordinary activity, so that the benefits of meditation are primarily realized in every day life. Maharishi says this second step is essential and brings about an integration of expanded consciousness with successful action. Meanwhile, the deep relaxation provided twice daily by T.M. relieves any stress that accumulates during the day.

Cultural or ideological differences between persons are believed to have little or no importance in terms of T.M.'s effectiveness.

All persons instructed in all cultures receive the same teaching.

The fact that Maharishi is both a Vedic Scholar and a practical 20th century man who has done advanced University work in physics, may account for the attractive combination of mystery and practicality that has contributed to the popularity of T.M. Instruction is not time consuming, and in comparison to most rival movements, is quite inexpensive. Apparently most normal persons of about age 10 or older can learn and practice the technique. But it may well be that the mystique of ancient Eastern Wisdom gives T.M. its greatest appeal.

## THE VEDIC TRADITION.

The vedic tradition of philosophy, literature and personal development is the old Indian cultural source from which all other main aspects of the culture emerge. The Vedas themselves,

the basis of the vedic tradition, are an enormous oral and written heritage that discuss both the organization of the physical world ( Rig Veda ) and the nature of consciousness ( Sama Veda ). Although Vedic literature is known to western scholars for more than a century, their value is only beginning to be appreciated now

The Vedas, along with such derivative literary works as the Bhagvad-Gita, are said to have provided Maharishi with the basis of the science of creative intelligence (SC) and with the technique of T.M. However, T.M. does not require a knowledge of science of creative intelligence (SCI). Maharishi considers SCI and T.M. to form a scientific discipline in that they constitute a formal discrete theoretical and practical means for investigations of natural phenomenon.

## USES OF T.M. IN PSYCHIATRY.

Recent efforts have been made by B.C. GLUECK and co-workers to incorporate T.M. into hospital psychiatry in 3 ways:-

- (1) As a self-improvement technique for members of the staff.
- (2) As an adjunct to more traditional therapies.
- (3) As an alternative to other means of treatment.

Glueck's group found that patients who can become significantly involved in T.M. are more likely to be discharged early from the hospital and, for the brief followings to date, are less likely to require re-admission. There is also some evidence that T.M. decreases the amount of psychotropic medication required. The adjunctive usefulness of T.M. seems to hold, regardless of diagnostic categories.

Even teen-age patients who become regular meditators for a week or more, apparently enjoyed a variety of subtle benefits, including a significant improvement in school performance. Older patients, noticed definite subjective improvement in anxiety and tension.

No serious contra-indications to the employment of T.M. as an adjunct to psychiatric treatment were seen. Glueck feels that the meditation process seems "to reach into the unconscious", permitting the emergence of considerable material quickly. This emergence, he feels, may be made possible by the phenomenon seen in T.M. that, during meditation, ideation seems to be stripped of the intense emotion that ordinarily accompanies it. Some patients were able to recall such ideation later on and even to discuss it in psychotherapy. In such cases their therapists have reported a significant speed-up in the therapeutic process as an apparent result.

In the hands of Glueck's quantitative E. E. G. laboratory, the E E G. correlates of the beneficial effects of T.M. did not prove to be related simply to concomitant increase in the amount of Alpha activity. Increased alpha activity has recently been held to be beneficial; much effort along the lines of Biofeed technique is aimed at raising the percentage of alpha activity: previously, it had been taught that T.M. may produce its beneficial effects by elevating the amount of alpha. Glueck found an increase in alpha during first 10 to 15 sessions of T.M. but subsequently there was a fairly rapid drop off. The rhythmical, silent resonating of of Mantra, usually 2 or 3 syllables, in the mind's ears, seems to exert its effect not by increasing the percentage of alpha activity but by synchronizing electrical activity over

the entire surface of the cortex to a much greater degree than is usually found to be the case. This finding is particularly interesting in the light of the results recently reported by J. P. Brady, who has regularly produced related states through the soft playing of metronomic rhythms in patients ears.

There is a brand of SCI concerned fairly specifically with the restoration of physical or mental health to those who are ill. Although the emphasis of the over-all organization of Maharishi International University (MIU) is to teach T.M. to persons who are relatively NORMAL, special techniques of meditation may be given out by teachers, who may themselves be physicians, with particular interest in curative aspects. Used in addition to regular twice a day meditation, these special techniques are directed toward the alleviation of specific problems.

The development of this branch of the movement, in addition to its major goal of universal self-improvement, appears to justify the designation of TM as a non-professional psychotherapy.

In 1972, the movement published a 24-page booklet "Scientific Research into Transcendental Meditation", containing 16 plates which show, through graphs and charts the unique results of T.M. Most of these studies were conducted by meditators themselves and many by Dr. Keith Wallace, President of the Maharishi International University. Dr. Herbert Benson, an associate professor at Harvard Medical School, has cooperated in many of these studies. Dr. Benson's recent Book "Relaxation Response" has become a best-seller.

## ORGANIZATION :

Maharishi's organization has spread around the world since its origin in 1957. The initial training of large number of teachers began in 1960 at several places in India, Europe and U.S.A. The University aspect (MIU) was founded in 1971 and has since become legally established in about 30 states of U. S. A. and a number of other countries. Major centres of M. I. U. are located in Santa Barbara, California, New York State, Switzerland and Rishikesh in India.

On the basis of results obtained by computerization of all records, since 1967, the total number of persons trained in TM is about 6 lakhs, of which 1% are trained initiators. Of these 6,000 qualified teachers of TM, about 10% are full time teachers of MIU course materials.

TM trainings pay a single fee, ranging from 35 to 75 dollars depending upon age and economic status. More than 3,50,000 Americans have learned TM so far. Germany and England have second and third largest numbers of meditators. By the end of 1973, some 15,000 new meditators were being trained each month in U.S.A. alone. However, some people have estimated that at least 25% of those who receive instructions are no longer meditating by the end of a year. Whereas in 1960's University age population provided such impetus for TM, today it appears that more than half of the new TM trainees are the adults.

The various teaching organizations viz. Students International Meditation Society, International Meditation Society, Spiritual Regeneration Movement, American Federation

for the Science of Creative Intelligence, and their international homologues-all use standard procedures to ensure uniform instructions. The learning of T.M. goes through 7 steps, including two introductory lectures, a personal interview between the prospective Meditator and the teacher of TM and 3 follow up sessions to verify correct practice and to give further instructions.

New meditators are encouraged to get their meditation checked once a week for the first month and once a month there after. There are special subsequent training programmes for those who wish to become teachers of T. M. SCI or M.I.U. courses. Many Videotapes of Maharishi are used in these various modes of instructions.

## EFFECTS :

The physiological and psychological correlates of T. M. have aroused considerable interest and have been described in detail by Wallace and Benson (1972), Banquet (1973) and Seeman et al (1972).

It is reported that during T. M., the respiration becomes shallow. Both oxygen consumption and carbon dioxide production decrease markedly. There is no change in respiratory quotient. Arterial pH and base excess decrease slightly. Blood lactate falls.

Wallace and Benson (1972) and Banquet (1973) have shown qualitative and quantitative changes in E. E. G. during T. M. Of special interest is the apparent non-pathological increase in inter-hemispherical synchronization or coherence, which occurs at different, regular frequency bands during various stages of meditation. Banquet reported 20 and 40 Hz activity during the deepest portion of T. M.



which corresponds with previous studies on accomplished yogis and Zen masters of Japan. However, the T. M. subjects have been meditating for only 5 years and were otherwise leading an ordinary life; they thus bear little resemblance to those devoted to the discipline and austerity of Yogic practices or of Zen monasteries in Japan.

TM appears to be acceptable to many persons who were once much involved in drug abuse. Benson and Wallace showed that the use of all forms of drugs including tobacco, alcohol, barbiturates and psychotropic agents decreased rather markedly, if one meditated regularly. Preliminary studies have shown that TM may prove to have value as a treatment modality for alcohol addicts and others with volitional disorders, such as heavy smokers and obese. Several recent articles by Honsberger and Wilson (1973) relate the practice of T. M. to reduced nervousness or anxiety and increased self actualization. Experimental clinical studies also suggest the potential usefulness of TM in bronchial asthma and other disorders having psychosomatic components.

Psychology Today (April 1974) published a 3 part article evaluating TM. The writers concluded that TM helps many people relax and is valuable to others. Researcher GARY Schwartz warned that too much meditation may interfere with logical thought process, because the whole technique is geared to take one beyond reason and thinking.

#### CONCLUSION :

In the history of movements for human self-improvement, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and his followers in T. M. have already earned

a significant place. Of course TM, having gone through the institutional developments described above, may, like so many others before it, shortly reach a peak and thus gradually decline. Factors involved in this common sequence of events include the loss of novelty, a potent factor in the appeal of any remedial programme, saturation of the natural market; disappointment with inevitable failure of the programme to fulfil expectations, many of them quite unrealistic; and the inexorable changes of fashion in healing as in everything else, that cause one method soon to become old hat and a newer one to draw the restless and fickle attention of the public that is itself in a constant state of flux.

Already, many brands of encounter groups so much in vogue 1960's, are rapidly dwindling away. New varieties, each seeming to offer something a little different are still appearing, which suggests that this approach has still not lost its drawing power. These modalities appeal to self-improvement motivations, scientific explanation drawn from popular psychology, and a desire to be associated with a procedure or an organization, that has both power and inevitable mystery.

In the fore-going respects, there is a certain similarity of TM to many of the other contemporary non-professional psychotherapies and to those of the past. If TM really provides what its followers claim for it, it will endure where others have not. Meanwhile TM appears to have a good deal more to be said for it than do most of its current rivals among the non-professional psychotherapies. If for no other reason, this is true because TM appears to be much less likely than most of such enterprises to do any harm.

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