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T. M.

( TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION )

Every day before breakfast and again before dinner, one-half million Americans sit in comfortable chairs and close their eyes. Effortlessly they settle into deeper and deeper states of relaxation while their minds remain alert with enjoyment. Their numbers include students and professors, business men and women, housewives, doctors, lawyers -- practically all walks of life.

The title of this paper is T.M., which is an abbreviation for Transcendental Meditation. Although T.M. is presented usually in its modern scientific format, the technique has ancient roots, having been practiced in India for many generations.

According to monastic tradition, about 2500 years ago, an enlightened prodigy named Shankara originated a philosophy <sup>and</sup> established ~~ed~~ four seats of learning, in the four geographic corners of India. In accordance with Shankara's plan, the teaching was kept widely available and was maintained accurately for several centuries. In time, however, the teaching became obscured and misunderstood. By the mid-twentieth century, the northern and principal seat of knowledge had been vacant for over one hundred ~~fifty~~ years due to the lack of anyone's capability of filling it.

Officials approached Guru Dev to fill the seat. In 1941, at the age of seventy-two, he accepted the post and became the leader of the Shankara tradition. To all who came to him for guidance, he taught the ancient meditation technique, making it available to persons leading active lives in the world, and to recluses alike. He, thereby, established the basis for the present world-wide practice of T.M.

Maharishi, who introduced T. M. to the United States, ascribes his personal development to the inspiration he found in Guru Dev's unbounded and perfect nature. Maharishi, a multi-talented young man, obtained a degree in physics from the University of Allahabad, but abandoned a career in science for the spiritual quest of a yogi. During his twelve years of study under Guru Dev, he became the swami's favorite student.

After the death of Guru Dev in 1953, Maharishi undertook a reclusive life in the Himalayas. After two years of virtual silence, he went to a town in southern India. A librarian there asked him if he had come from the Himalayas and if he spoke.

"Yes," he replied, "I come from Uttar Kashi, but I do not lecture." Nevertheless, the man found Maharishi the next day, and announced that he had arranged a series of seven public lectures, one for each night of the forthcoming week. He asked Maharishi to give the titles of his talks for newspaper publicity. Though surprised by the man's audacity, Maharishi improvised seven topics.

After the lectures, which had attracted growing crowds each night, Maharishi found that the man had arranged another series in a nearby town and had submitted the same topics to its newspaper. Although planning to return to Uttar Kashi, Maharishi found himself traveling from one town to another, as lectures were set up throughout southern and central India. He spoke always about humanity's potential for realizing its true nature by allowing awareness to be drawn into the inner resources of creative intelligence. After each series of talks, Maharishi taught the technique of T.M. to all who wanted to learn it. As the response grew, Maharishi became increasingly engrossed in teaching.

He went to Madras in 1958 to celebrate "in memoriam" Guru Dev's eighty-ninth birthday. While delivering a eulogy to several thousand listeners, Maharishi announced a plan to spread the benefits of T.M. all over the world. After traveling widely, teaching the technique, however, he realized he would need to continue for hundreds of years at this rate to reach the world. He then thought that if he went to the most progressive nations and taught them to meditate, the rest of the world would follow.

He traveled first to Burma, then to Luala Lumpur, Singapore, and Hongkong, and arrived in Hawaii in the spring of 1959. Hundreds began meditating. He stayed there for two months before going to San Francisco in April. Maharishi received a hearty reception in America, and later in Europe. Many thousands of Western people began the practice of T.M. After his first world tour, Maharishi realized that the only way to reach the entire world population would be by "multiplying himself."

He planned and conducted the first T.M. teacher training course in India in 1961, with sixteen persons becoming teachers, including Mrs. Beulah Smith of San Diego. She was the only teacher in the United States until 1965.

In that year, students at U.C.L. A. responded enthusiastically to courses in T.M. and arranged for the first course on a college campus. As a result, the Students International Meditation Society was founded.

The second International Teacher Training course was conducted in 1966 in the newly completed Academy of Meditation, in Rishikesh in the foothills of the Himalayas, and about thirty more Americans became teachers. In 1967 Maharishi lectured at Berkley, U.C.L.A., Harvard, and Yale. As a result, college students across the country requested courses in T.M. and chapters of Students International Meditation Society were formed all across the

country. As the years passed, interest extended outside of the student community, and a variety of other organizations were formed to fill the needs of specialized groups. By the end of 1970 about 35,000 Americans had learned T.M. Three years later, some eight ~~to ten~~ times that number had become meditators.

Meanwhile, teachers' training courses were continued. The first one outside India took place in Estes Park, Colorado, where 350 teachers were graduated in December 1970. Maharishi International University was established in Fairfield, Iowa in 1972. By 1975 nearly half-million Americans were practicing T.M., and twenty-eight cities scattered over the United States had teaching centers.

Neither a religion nor a philosophy, nor a way of life, Transcendental Meditation is a natural technique for reducing stress and expanding conscious awareness. The authors of the Book T.M., namely, Harold H. Bloomfield, M.D., Michael Peter Cain, and Dennis T. Jaffe, write that this technique can be learned in only a few training sessions. However, the more that it is practiced, the more proficient one becomes, and the greater depths he reaches.

They further state that at these great depths, the meditator experiences a state in which the mind becomes very quiet, but extremely alert. Though impressions, feelings, or thoughts may be present during this time, he experiences brief, or sometimes extended periods of "blank awareness" -- of "being awake inside with nothing going on; not being asleep, but not being aware of anything in particular."

Our daily experiences are made up of an unending chain of thoughts, emotions, sensations, and perceptions. T.M. creates an opportunity for

two brief, daily periods of effortless disengagement from these continuous impressions. When a meditator allows his attention to shift inward, he experiences quiet levels of the mind in which he becomes increasingly aware of the unbounded nature of his awareness. This state, which is termed "pure awareness" is described as nothing more than being wide awake inside without being aware of anything except awareness itself.

Despite the fascinating nature of this experience, people do not practice T.M. for pleasure or self-knowledge alone, but also for significant improvement in the quality of their lives, having positive effects on physical health and psychological well-being.

To explain how T.M. works, it is helpful to begin with an analogy. Maharishi describes the mind as similar to an ocean, with wave activity on its surface but profound stillness at its depths. Conscious activities, such as thoughts, emotions, and perceptions are similar to waves on the surface of an ocean; the quiet depths of the mind are similar to the silent depths of the ocean.

Maharishi includes another element in his comparison of the mind to an ocean. He says that thought originates in the ~~most~~ quiet depths of the mind, just as a bubble might rise from the ocean floor. Compressed by the great weight at the ocean bottom, a bubble would be quite small, but would grow in size as it rose toward the surface. Similarly, an impulse of thought originates in the silent regions of the mind and develops and becomes clear as it moves upward to the fully conscious mind.

So the process of T.M. consists of letting one's attention settle from the active surface level to the mind's quiet depths where thinking begins. Though the process of thinking generally stimulates the mind toward increasing activity, T.M. makes use of the thinking process to lessen mental activity.

The key to T.M.'s effectiveness in minimizing mental activity lies in the technique's ability to redirect the attention of the mind from its involvement with fully developed thought, to engagement in less and less elaborated levels of thought. The attention is given an inward turn by thinking a single thought. In this way the mind remains active, but it is left undirected and begins to seek the increasing satisfaction available at quieter levels.

Certain sounds may be connected with the single thought. These thought sounds used in T.M. are called "mantras". Mantra is a Sanskrit term which is chosen not on its level of meaning, but on the level of vibratory effect. A mantra, which has no literal meaning, is selected for each individual who receives instruction in T.M.

Once learned, the mantra is confidential, and is used for only one purpose -- to effect the spontaneous process of reducing mental activity during the meditation.

Learning T.M. consists not only of learning the right mantra, but also of learning how to correctly use it. To insure correctness in every aspect of these fundamentals, personal instruction in the technique by a qualified teacher is necessary. The technique can not be learned second-hand, from a book or from another meditator. Extensive preparation is required to qualify a teacher to guide a novice through all possible variations of personal experience. For example, the popular mantra "Om" has been described as a universal sound having good effects for anyone who chants it aloud or uses it silently.

We are all familiar with two states of consciousness, namely, those of being awake and asleep. T.M. creates a third state called pure awareness or pure creative intelligence. The fundamental premise of the psychology of fulfillment is that within every person there is a seemingly inexhaustible center of energy and intelligence. Because this center is the

origin of all thinking and acting, but is not bounded by them, it has been identified as pure creative intelligence. To the extent that our behavior depends on the degree of our energy and intelligence, this center may be described as that resource which gives direction to all that we experience, think and do.

Unless we investigate this concept closely, we might dismiss it as pure speculation. However, close observation of the thinking process reveals that we cannot try to think. Thought arises spontaneously from some center within us. Further observation reveals that energy and intelligence increase as we experience quieter levels of thinking. Our best ideas come to us when the mind is quiet. A person may struggle with a problem for days until finally he sits down to relax and the proper solution bubbles up as a thought.

Many students give T.M. credit for marked improvement in their grades; lawyers, doctors, business men, and people in various other walks of life have given it credit for improvement in their careers. Regardless of the argument concerning improvement in creative intelligence, there is no doubt that T.M. is very effective in reducing stress. There are numerous testimonials from practitioners of T.M. concerning the relaxation from stress and the increase in energy they received from meditation.

An article in the March, 1976 issue of Ladies Home Journal entitled T.M. vs. Relaxation Response relates the experience of the author, Phyllis Batt elle. After having practiced T.M. for approximately six months, she was informed of a best selling book stating that one can get the same benefits by following a few simple rules. A Harvard doctor, Herbert Benson, in his book The Relaxation Response, claims that it is not necessary to

use the specific method and personal sound taught in T.M. in order to meditate beneficially. He states that the same physiological results can be achieved with his "Relaxation Response", a non-cultic technique, as with T.M. Dr. Benson and his staff had done research on T.M. and decided that it led to impressive physiological benefits. Benson measured heart beats, oxygen intake, blood circulation, altered brain wave patterns, and carbon dioxide emission -- and concluded that T.M. led to a rest deeper than sleep, lowering of tensions and blood pressure, increased energy and other pleasant benefits. However, Dr. Benson concluded that T.M. is not unique in eliciting the meditative state, and that one doesn't have to use a secret personal sound or mantra. He states that a word, a prayer, or a phrase may be used to produce the same physiological results.

Simply find a quiet place and closing your eyes, and relaxing your muscles, beginning at the feet and working up to your face, concentrate on your breathing -- inhale, exhale, think of your ~~word, prayer, phrase~~ <sup>word</sup> --  
 BREATH In...out...think. If distracting thoughts come to mind, try to forget them and concentrate on your chosen word. Be passive. Continue for ten or twenty minutes and then end the meditation, taking several minutes before you stand up.

Phyllis Battelle decided to try the much simpler technique. In her words, "I crossed my legs, folded my hands in my lap, checked the clock and closed my eyes. The muscles took no coaxing to relax after my months of meditating, and I began the breathing: In...out...think... In...out... think... (Thinking about my breathing was distracting at first. It was different from T.M. in which you are invited to relax and think of your mantra and when your mind wanders, let it drift, the mantra coming back without effort.)



~~However,~~ It didn't take long to establish a rhythm and feel myself slowly slipping into that old, comfortable mode of body slow-down the meditators come to know and love. As in T.M. my breathing became slow and shallow. I was utterly at rest, physically, but now I realized that my mind was bounding with intrusive thoughts because 'in... out...think..! had slowed along with my breathing. Unlike the T.M. technique in which you repeat your mantra at whatever pace seems natural at the moment, Relaxation Response is timed to breaths, and in good meditation, there are long periods, sometimes up to almost a minute between inhalations. After 19 minutes I intuitively opened my eyes and looked at the clock, and gradually roused myself back to the world of reality.

"I realized it had indeed offered me the deep physiological rest that Dr. Benson had promised. There was, however, an ~~essen~~ essential difference. After the Relaxation Response meditation, I arose from the sofa pleasantly drowsy. After most T.M. meditations, I feel a surge of energy and purposefulness. I thought I knew why: in this initial effort, my mind had not reached that sometimes elusive level of consciousness which we meditators call the Transcendental State. It is the point in a twenty-minute meditation when the mind is free, not only of all conscious thought, but of the mantra as well. Maharishi calls it the level of 'pure creative intelligence.' The T.M. teachers call it the state of 'restful alertness', when ideas are conceived unknowingly. Dr. Benson himself, when testing T.M., called it a 'wakeful hypometabolic physiologic state, knowing high alpha and occasional theta wave patterns. I call it that delicious moment when the hands and feet suddenly seem to float while the body is non-existent. When you click into this condition, you rise from the experience with a super charge of energy and ideas. This sensation was missing from the

Relaxation Response meditation."

A T.M. teacher explained it as follows: you can learn how to relax from a book, but not how to meditate deeply and transcendently. The difference between Benson's system and ~~ours~~, is that his meditation is oriented to rest. T.M. is oriented toward dynamic activity and creativity.

Phyllis says in conclusion, "This extra dimension -- the expansion of the minds resources -- is difficult for me to comprehend and impossible to explain. I can report only its results -- a tide of energy, ambition, tolerance, and inner peace, which are by-products of the ~~physiological~~ <sup>EXPERIENCE</sup> ~~changes~~."

Daniel Cohen devotes a brief chapter to T.M. in his book New Believers published in 1975. He said Maharishi became a missionary whose aim was nothing less than the spiritual regeneration of all mankind. Maharishi's message, like that of most mystics, does not come across well in print, but instead, sounds rather murky or pretentious. The following paragraph was taken at random from Maharishi's writings: "Contemplation on the inner-value of life eventually reveals to the aspirant that the ever-changing world is based on a never-changing element of no form and no phenomena. All forms and phenomena belong to the relative field of existence, whereas that which lies beyond all form and phenomena necessarily belongs to the field that is out of relativity."

Maharishi realized that his message was not going to be easily grasped by Westerners. He, consequently, refined the technique in order that it might be taught quickly and simply in a technological society. Maharishi's fame in the West grew when he picked up some famous followers. The first were the Beatles, particularly George Harrison.

The Beatles had moved from psychedelics to meditation. Their infatuation with the Maharishi, however, did not last. Some of the Beatles were rather bitter about their experience with him, describing it as "a bad trip." But by that time he was well known. Among other famous converts was actress Mia Farrow. In early 1974 Maharishi's organization in Los Angeles estimated that some 300,000 Americans had learned T.M. and about 15,000 more enrolled every month.

Robert Wallace, in the March 1970 issue of Science Magazine reiterates the positive effects of T.M., but suggests that the technique alone may not account for all the results. Instead, he concludes that the atmosphere of the experiment within the company of like-minded individuals helps to produce the more dramatic results. At any rate, this investigation tended to de-mystify the subject to an extent.

Leon S. Otis and his associates at Stanford Research Institute divided a group of sixty-two volunteers into meditators and controls. The meditators learned T.M. Some of the controls just sat quietly for two periods each day; others sat quietly and repeated a "mock mantra", while a fourth group made no change in their daily routine. After three months, the meditators reported significant improvement in their lives; everything from more restful sleep to greater creativity. The results were so convincing that most of the controls took up T.M. after the experiment. However, a long psychological questionnaire indicated that T.M. did not produce any basic alteration in the personality of the meditators. Otis reported also that the controls who simply relaxed twice a day for fifteen to twenty minutes using no mantra or mock mantra found comforts in the experience that did not differ significantly from what the meditators found.

If the actual experience of meditation did not make one feel significantly different from one simply sitting quietly, why had the meditators believed that their lives had improved while the non-meditators, who merely sat, had no such belief? Otis believes the answer lies in the fact that those who took the T.M. training expected more from it than did the controls; that a person's beliefs can be crucial to his experience.

Not everyone finds the experience a pleasant one. In the Stanford study a substantial number of people abandoned it. Otis states that those who quit meditating seem to fall into two categories; those with problems too serious to respond to a technique as mild as T.M. and people whose personalities are already too well-integrated. The extremely anxious individuals found that the deep calm of mantra meditation liberated nothing but problems.

Most of the people who take up T.M. today tend to look upon it as a relaxing interlude in a busy day. Only a small percentage have chosen to pursue it further.

The periodical Psychology Today reports a study dealing with the discontinuance of T.M., comparing those who have meditated six months or less with those who have experienced it for several years. The report reveals that those who have meditated the shorter length of time experienced little or no reaction to discontinuance. Thirty<sup>1</sup>to forty percent of those who have continued three years or longer experienced headaches, nervousness, and other symptoms of distress after quitting, but these cleared in a few weeks. The other sixty percent reported no problems.

T.M. reached the peak of its popularity in 1975 and 1976. After that its growth rate dropped drastically. Time Magazine states that in 1975 forty thousand people a month were enrolling in T.M. classes. A year later, the number had dropped to four thousand a month. The number enrolling in the program evidently has continued to decline since I have been unable to find any ~~fe~~reference to it in current literature.