

Transcendental Meditation

Peace-of mind and happiness Transcendental Meditation promises all that and more. It claims that its meditation technique is relaxing and an effective drug abuse-control measure, creates better physical and mental health, improved memory, can mend broken marriages and gives a nation military Invincibility.

TM is one of the more popular new cults with a world-wide following. In the small Dutch village Laag-Soeren near Apeldoorn, a gigantic 2 million guilder estate was purchased for the movement. In 1975 a Danish Conference on Transcendental Meditation was held. About 10,000 Danes were believed to have enrolled In courses meant to teach meditation. TM's computer headquarters are at Seellsberg, high in the Swiss mountains. In the Philippines TM has found support among many leaders of society and signed endorsements have been given by influential people and heads of schools. There are now TM centres in some 90 countries, with 400 centres in the U.S. From 1970 to 1975 the TM organization collected over \$60 million in the U.S. alone.

A science or a religion?

TM has been a subject of fierce controversy. Is TM a science or a religion? TM practitioners insist that it is not a religion. They claim that it is a simple yoga meditation technique developed by Mahariahl Mahesh Yogi, a recognized Hindu yogi. In the U.S. public schools TM was Introduced as a simple progressive technique with no harmful side effects having as ultimate goal a "greater field of happiness". TM leaders emphasize that they do not espouse a philosophy or a religion or offer something to believe in or accept by faith. TM as practical technique is based on verifiable, scientific validated principles. An excerpt of a letter sent by the Barkley Student International Meditation Society (SIMS) to the parents of students in area high schools states: "TM is a natural, easy, systematic and scientifically verifiable technique. It is not a religion or philosophy, nor does it Involve withdrawal from life."

On the basis of this secular claim SIMS has been permitted to teach the integrated SCI (The Science of Creation Intelligence)/TM course in public high schools across the country. TM has received U.S. federal government grants for some of its research projects. It has also been introduced in U.S. prisons and the military. The Maharishi has addressed the legislatures of Illinois, Michigan, New Hampshire and Iowa.

Is TM a science? TM has a prophet. The Maharishi is a Hindu mystic. It is this man's teachings that is being offered in the whole process of TM. To say that TM is not a religion is purposeful deception of the public. The Maharishi himself is not above disguising the nature of his teaching.

He said: "Whenever and wherever religion dominates the mass consciousness, transcendental deep meditation should be taught in terms of religion ... Today, when politics is guiding the destiny of man, the teaching should be primarily based on the field of politics and secondly on the plan of economics.... It seems for the present, that this

transcendental deep meditation should be made available to the people through the agencies of government." TM's very name indicates its religious nature. Transcending means going beyond the limits of something. The Maharishi intends to get people to experience his Hindu concept of God'..

In *Meditations of Maharishi Yogi*, the Maharishi says: "Transcendental meditation is a path to God." In answer to a direct question referred to in the same book, "Is this meditative prayer?", the Maharishi answers, "A very good form of prayer is the meditation that leads us to the field of the Creator, to the source of Creation, the field of God."

The Maharishi has described TM as "the fulfillment of every religion" and as a way to bring "faith to the faithless". Faith in whom? The Maharishi states that "the Lord (Krishna) names faith as a prerequisite to knowledge". TM is a means to attain conscious experience of the union with the Absolute or "God-consciousness".

TM is a challenge to the church. TM is not open to other faiths, despite its claim to the contrary. The Maharishi says that "the Lord (Krishna) declares that realization of the state of all knowledge is the only way to salvation and success in life; there is no other way"

The Maharishi has been talking about the day when man is forced to develop his pure consciousness by law. He says about those who reject his movement and the practice of TM: "There has not been and there will not be a place for the unfit ... In the age of Enlightenment there is no place for ignorant people. The ignorant will be made enlightened by a few orderly, enlightened people moving around."

The U.S. Court of Appeals ruled recently that the teaching of TM in public schools represented a violation of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution as TM is considered primarily a religious organization.

The Maharishi

:Who is the Maharishi ? He was born as Mahesh Brasad Warna in India's Central province around 1918 (he refuses to give his age) into the Kshatriya or warrior caste. He has a degree in physics from the Alahabad University. After his graduation in 1940 he spent 13 years with one of India's leading Hindu swamis, known as Guru Dev. This guru had revived a little-known technique of meditation that originated in the Vedas, part of Hindu scriptures.

In 1953 Guru Dev died. Before his death he charged the Maharishi to develop a technique to enable masses to meditate and spread the art to the West. From 1953 to 1955 Mahesh withdrew into a cave in the Himalayan mountains. When he emerged he had a yoga technique which he called Transcendental Meditation.

In 1956 he called himself Maharishi ("Great Sage"). In 1959 he traveled to the U.S. to found the Spiritual Regeneration movement. "Life can be bliss", Maharishi taught. "It can be easy. You don't have to deprive yourself of wanting things." He promised health and world peace. If young people would accept my mind, the hospitals would be emptied." The hope of the Maharishi is that if as few as 10 per cent of the world's population would practice TM, war would be eliminated for generations to come.

TM became a hit when the Beatles took up TM. Ringo Starr testified: "Since meeting His Holiness, I feel great." John Lennon said that "This the biggest thing in our lives." Mia Farrow and The Rolling Stones and a host of other famous people became attracted to TM,

Initiation

How does one become initiated in TM? What is this meditation all about? TM demands that its practitioners sit still for 20 minutes twice daily and silently repeat their specially assigned mantra. The only one who doesn't have to meditate is the Maharishi. One of his followers said: "He long ago achieved a perpetual fourth state of consciousness. The clarity of his mind is awesome."

The candidate for initiation is led into an incense-permeated room and invited to kneel before a picture of Guru Dev. The initiator presents an offering of flowers and fruit (which were brought by the candidate) and sings a song in Sanskrit called "the Puja", in honour of the departed masters of the Shankara tradition of Hinduism. The prayer reads in Part: "To Lord Narayana, to lotus-born Brahma, the Creator, to Vashishta, to Shakti, and to his son, Parashar, to Vyasa, to Shukadeva...I bow down... At whose door the whole galaxy of gods pray for perfection day and night, adorned with immeasurable glory, preceptor of the whole world, having bowed down to him. we gain fulfillment."

Since nothing comes for nothing, there is a fee structure of \$35, \$45 and \$75 respectively for high school, college and adult initiates. Yet the TM movement is listed as a non-profit tax-exempt educational organization incorporated in California. A candidate can become a meditator by attending three public lectures and receiving a mantra.

A mantra is described as a Sanskrit word or phrase invoking a Hindu deity. The mantra is repeated silently to oneself (in TM) or chanted aloud (in Hare Krishna) until awareness of the external world is shut out. The mantra is then continued to eliminate all thought. The alteration of consciousness that results from suppressing both outward perception and inward thought will eventually bring a striking experience of unity in which the self seems to merge with the universe."

The knowledge of the mantras is secret, and a prospective meditator can receive his own individual mantra, which he may share with anyone, from a SIMS initiator. Actually there are only 17 principle mantras, dispensed by age categories. Each meditator is on

a mailing list and repeatedly receives a newsletter advertising more activities and giving special messages from the Maharishi.

May Christians become TM practitioner? I think the answer is obvious. TM gives physical rest for a moment, but it cannot give the spiritual rest and peace the Bible mentions. It does not demand anything from the practitioner. No changed life is needed. Dr. Kumar Pal, secretary of the Yoga Institute of Psychology and Physical Therapy in New Delhi, remarked: "It is merely a technique, a very limited technique, and it is not yoga because it lacks the prerequisites of yoga meditation. A moral life is the sine qua non of yoga practice. The students and admirers of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi have no need to give up sex, liquor and other immoral habits. They are reveling in immoral habits at the cost of basic moral values."

The required worship ceremony for all TM initiates is idolatrous and clearly in violation of God's law: "thou shalt have no other gods before me." Meditating on a mantra is contradictory to our Lord's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount: "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do." (Matt. 6:7) TM leads to spiritual darkness. The apostle Paul points to a better way to spiritual rest, peace and happiness. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith" (Gal 5:22).

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