

Unit 23

Transcendental Meditation

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Learning Objectives

After you have studied this Unit you should be able to:

- outline the world plan for TM;
- describe the relation between TM and religion;
- understand TM and scientific validation;
- define enlightenment and Natural Law;
- list some of Maharishi's writings on TM; and
- provide the various benefits accruing from the regular practice of TM.

23.1 Introduction

Transcendental Meditation is more popularly referred to as TM and is a form of meditation that has been taught and popularized by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. TM practitioners claim it to be of great benefit to them in every way physical or mental. It is described as a natural easy to practice type of meditation. TM it is believed has cumulative benefits and the greater the duration that the practitioner has meditated over the years the greater are the benefits to the individual and society. The origin of the TM Movement began in 1957 when at the end of a festival of spiritual luminaries to celebrate Sankaracharya Brahmanand Sarasvati, The Maharishi his foremost disciple announced and inaugurated a movement to regenerate and reinaugurate spirituality and spiritual accession the world. This may be considered to be the formal beginnings of TM. When the movement began in 1957 we find that the Maharishi underlined the religious aspects of TM. At first TM was subsumed under an organization called "Spiritual Regeneration Movement". This was however, was felt to be too loaded spiritually for a good foray into meditation. The need of the western environment was not that of another eastern ideology concerned with religion. What was required was a system of meditation that was secular in approach and skirted the question of religion and religious values to

some extent. This was because the 70's were a liberal decade in which the world-ethos was value -neutral so far as religion is concerned and the Maharishi did not want TM to be seen as a Eastern transplant onto western culture. He then began to focus on the scientific approach to meditation making it available and accessible to laboratory testing so far as, its efficacy was concerned. The idea in doing this was to show "theoretical parallels" with his ideology and also practical verification of the phenomena of TM. What was going to be verified was in fact the effect of TM on various stress related problems and increase in interactional skills.

23.2 The World Plan for TM

In the 70's itself Maharishi put forward that he called "The World plan" in which the idea was to have a TM centre for each million of the world population. In the early 1970's this proposal would mean that there should be at least 3,600 TM centres to be able to cater to the world population. This plan did take off but ultimately it was not very effective in terms of numbers. Further several of the TM centres that were opened did not remain functional beyond a certain point of time. In the contemporary world we find that TM centres exist all around the globe and it is estimated that over 5 million people have learned the technique. Further, since 1990 Maharishi has made Holland the area from which he coordinates his global programmes.

TM itself is to be practiced for two twenty minute sessions once in the morning and once in the evening while sitting with eyes closed. The TM technique has been described as comprising the "silent mental repetition" of a Sanskrit sound called a mantra. The mantra has to be repeated silently in the mind until the mind becomes more and more quiet. Only consciousness and the absence of thought define this meditative state.

This is the aim of the state of meditation and is called pure consciousness or Samadhi. Not only does the mind settle down and mental activity recede but it also has a profound impact upon the physical metabolism itself making it move into a very relaxed mode of being in consciousness. That is the body "settles" into deep relaxation. The tension from the body is released and then after a period of rest thoughts return to the body. This is known as the "outward stroke" of meditation. Following this stress releasing stroke the "inward stroke" starts again. This cycle is continued for the duration of the 20 minute meditation and is repeated many times. In other words, the mantra is used to silence the mind focusing on the inward breath and the outgoing breath while silently repeating the mantra. This causes the mind and the body to become very quiet and still and to reach a state of deep rest that is superconsciousness. The meditation has remarkable effects on the meditators as we shall see when we talk of the effects of TM. It has been proved by scientific laboratory tests that the TM form of meditation is scientifically valid. In the language of TM stress is described as "structural or material impurities resulting from overload on the physiology", which is psychosomatic- that is it involves both body and mind. The philosophy behind this is that total purification of the physiological is possible and that this leads to enlightenment itself. This needs a few words to explain and we will do so for the learner. Through the yoga of the body, which involves physical postures (Hathya yoga) it is possible to cleanse the body of impurities. Yet again through the meditation of mind or Rajya yoga it is possible to purify the mind. It is only when the body and mind are both purified that does it become possible to gain a state of enlightenment. In the case of TM both the positive and cleansing effects of Rajya and Hathya yoga are realised and a psychosomatic distressing and rejuvenation of mind is realised.

One of the central features of TM is the mantra itself. Mantra is a pattern of sound that has a particular resonant vibrant strong quality which can be and has been traditionally used. Thus, mantra becomes very important in the case of meditation since it must be a sound, that too a traditional sound that creates strength and goodness in the meditation. The TM practitioners however, simply maintain that mantras comprise meaningless sounds. These sounds which may or may not have a specific meaning outside a context are chosen especially for each and every meditator so that they may have beneficial effect upon the meditator. The TM mantras are chosen especially to have a soothing effect upon the nervous system of the meditator. In the entire list of mantras that have been used for meditators it was found that each mantra is the name of a Hindu god. This could be a problem for a meditator who is not a Hindu and professes another religion. TM sources however, claim that the mantras are not a religious adjunct and that meditation on any of them is not going to change anyone's religion.

23.3 TM and Religion

Then there is the question whether TM itself is actually a religion, a cult, a business organization, or a group that is teaching meditation to people of all religions. TM can be considered a religion since it involves spiritual changes and improvements in all participants. On the other hand, there are very few rituals and standardized worship involved in it. So there is no question of having faith in the mantra or Maharishi and again there is no question of worshipping the guru. However, it can be noted here that when a person is practicing TM meditation it is being done with the full authority of Maharishi. Further when good results of meditation begin to appear the meditator is grateful to the guru which is Maharishi. So, it must be noted that the Maharishi is a guru who popularized and taught TM.

Box 23.1 The TM Mantra

The TM practitioners have to keep their mantra a secret and not to divulge it to anyone and not to repeat it aloud because the mantra must be kept silent so that it can be more towards the inner spheres of the mind. The method for choosing mantra often depends on the age of a person at the time of the initiation and so the age is what decides a mantra will be. If a person gets initiated into TM at the age of 25 and then drops the practice for a few years, and then decides to take an initiation again the mantra will accordingly change. This is possibly because as the age of a person changes so does the spiritual vibration. As such to suit the vibrations of spirituality over the years the mantra to would have to be changed.

The question comes up again and again—is TM a religion? The Maharishi is quite clear on this. He feels that

TM and religion are wholly compatible, they are both necessary and in fact he has gone to the extent of saying about religion and meditation that “one without the other will not survive”. This is clarified immediately by another statement, viz;

TM practitioners should follow their own religion. This goes to show that TM is religion neutral so far as its beneficial results are concerned and no one is asked to change his religion to become a practitioner of TM. Thus TM does not interfere with the practice and faith of any religion.

A third caveat in this line of reasoning is in the form of an unsubstantiated belief that religion at its outset, no matter which religion had TM at its

core. This is more in the realm of faith for this is almost impossible to prove. However, this is an important belief for TM. Following from this belief we come to the next one which is

The religions of today no longer even remember that once TM was their core and they have hence been regarded as a body from which the soul has departed. These statements of Maharishi make it amply clear that although TM is not a religion it is apparently the heart of all religion.

What does TM do? What are its effects? TM claims to destress individuals and make them more efficient in dealing with life-situations. It is not a programme to create recluses but is in the realm of karma yoga or the path of works. In the initial stages of research into TM many claims were made. Some of these claims seemed spectacular but nevertheless possible. For example it was claimed that if a minimum of 1 percent of the population of a town did TM its accident rates would drop dramatically and so would crime rates drop greatly. These were questioned. However, there is no denying the more major claims of lowering blood pressure, reducing cholesterol and the right way of reacting to stress have all been confirmed. Thus, TM aims to get closer to the higher consciousness through the practice of meditation. Transcendental Meditation is very much about reducing levels of stress and anxiety. That TM in fact does do this has been demonstrated by modern scientific laboratory research into the effects of the technique. Thus scientific research has proved and demonstrated that one of the most beneficial meditation techniques is TM. It was found that extreme reduction of stress and tension and anxiety made possible by TM is 3 to 4 times more effective than the same effect caused by other competing modes of meditation and stress reduction techniques which were examined. This is a remarkable finding for it provides for the first time scientific evidence for what is otherwise an uncollated TM experience. Also relevant is the fact that the Maharishi did not shy away from scientific examination and evaluation of his meditation technique. This bold new move by a contemporary guru is to be lauded as an all time achievement in the field of spirituality and meditation. No other meditation type apart from TM has had such rigorous tests done in the laboratory and none has succeeded like TM in spreading meditation. It takes great confidence and courage to subject what is essentially an area of inner consciousness to the anodes and cathodes of science to measure the effect. The remarkable fact is that the TM group passed these, scientific tests with flying colours. Some further remarks about science and TM. We find that TM has been taught by Maharishi and his authorized teachers since 1957. However, it took more than a decade before TM began to get a validation from scientific research. The initial articles about the "wonder" of TM were published circa 1970 in scientific journals and popular magazines including "Science" (167, 1970) "American Journal of Physiology" (221, 1971) and also the "Scientific American" (226, 1972). The research into TM was pioneered by two medicos from Harvard called Benson and Wallace and was made on "dozens" of TM practitioners. Further researches followed and articles appeared in "*International Journal of Neuroscience*"; "*Psychosomatic Medicine*"; "*Electroencephalography and Clinical Neurophysiology*"; "*Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*"; "*Journal of Clinical Psychology*" and so on.

23.4 The Practice of TM

At this point we may turn briefly to one of the problems with the marketing of TM in that it is very expensive and the price of TM is prohibitive and is more than most people can afford. At this point it is important to consider whether there is an 'elitist bias' in the marketing of TM. Now this can be

for many reasons including the scarcity of teachers relative to the demand. However, whatsoever the reason might be this economic factor in initiation into TM creates several effects. First only those who have the financial means and also a deep commitment would go in for TM. Secondly, we find that TM is more popular in the North Block of countries, US, UK, Europe, where the economic standards are higher than in the South including India, Afghanistan, Burma, Pakistan and so on. Thirdly and finally TM is inaccessible once again to the poor. They simply cannot afford it.

Let us turn now to some of the organizational facts of TM. This will take us inevitably to some of the remarkable achievements of Maharishi himself. We need to point out here that TM cannot be divorced from the ideas of Mahesh yogi because TM has been his brain child. Mahesh yogi the founder of TM is not simply a dreamer or visionary but a man of action. In the past 50 years of its existence over 5-6 million people have learned to do TM and are trying to improve their lives by doing 20 minutes of meditation morning and evening.

Mahesh yogi organization has trained about 40,000 TM teachers who function as initiators all over the world. He has opened thousands of teaching centres where TM is taught. He has also founded many schools, opened and inaugurated many of colleges and universities world wide. Further, there are meditation packages called Maharishi Vedic Science programs which are being extensively used and applied in the public organizations and institutions world-wide. As we have mentioned earlier Maharishi launched TM in 1957 and since then it gradually became a world wide, 'global organization'.

The role of Maharishi himself has been that of an ideator and facilitator. He has criss-crossed and circled the globe many times over teaching and preaching TM technique, writing books on TM, having consultations with government leaders and trying to see how TM movement could solve political problems national and international. He has also addressed many conferences of scientists, and people in the field of education, music and literature. It was in the year of 1961 when Mahesh yogi put into action his plan to teach trainers for his TM program. The training as conceived then has stood the test of time and remains a seven-step course. This is what is taught by the trainers to the initiates of TM.

In 1964 Maharishi's first book "Science of Being and Art of Living" was put into print. This book proved to be most popular and successful and has acquired the status of a classic. It has sold in millions in 15 different languages. The book remains as relevant today to seekers as ever and has been recently reprinted and reissued by Penguin Putnam. Two thousand teachers were trained in 1971 in the TM programme and a world plan was inaugurated to spread the programmes to every possible corner of the world. Here, again we witness the zeal of the Maharishi to bring enlightenment to all aspects of the functioning of global society in order to bring in and usher in the Age of Enlightenment. At present the TM organization is building Maharishi Peace Palaces in 3000 major cities to create more TM and to provide a means of peace in the world. Such palaces are meant to create a "general influence of peace" on a community and global basis.

23.5 TM: Scientific Validation

One of the major areas where Maharishi literally risked his well earned reputation was to go in for scientific validation of the feelings and experiences of peace and bliss of the meditators. He felt that these meditational experiences of peace, bliss, deep rest and reduction of tension

and anxiety in meditators could be and should be scientifically proven or backed up, with scientific research. The initial results of this approach were first published in *Scientific American* in 1970, which is over a decade after the movement had started. Beginning with the 1970 research results TM has become the most scientifically probed meditation. It has become most thoroughly scrutinized by scientists, more so than any other single technique. As a matter of fact till date more than 600 studies have been researched in over 200 countries around the world. Over 30 research institutions in 30 countries have published a total of over 100 research articles in scholarly journals. These studies have been by and large positive and shown TM to be appropriate for ameliorating the ills and negative condition of many parts of the world.

Box 23.2 TM and Science

TM is perhaps the only program to have received such a great deal of scientific attention. In an age where science rules supreme such validation can be most crucial for the spread, popularity and authenticity of a programme. Has this validation been not forthcoming or had the results been negative then the TM programme would have been invalidated. However, the results were in fact so positive that TM got a thorough boost and those interested in it included scientists, doctors and laymen.

Let us now talk about a related finding in TM, which is that of the Maharishi effect. This effect proposes that if just one percent of a society does TM it creates a profoundly positive impact on the community. Further, the Extended Maharishi Effect the same solidarity is produced by “the Square root of one percent of the population” which are doing and practicing the TM Sidhi Yogic Flying programme. This programme has come in for adverse comments especially the claim to levitation and yogic flying.

In this section we finally turn to the efforts of Maharishi in the fields of Vedic science. That is to say that apart from TM specifically the Maharishi has revived the ancient knowledge of the Vedic tradition much of which is or was lying dormant. The Vedas scripted some 5000 years ago from an oral tradition were written down in Sanskrit and dealt with all the aspects of man’s life on earth and the beyond. As the TM literature points out Veda means the complete knowledge of Natural Law. We may then say the Maharishi Vedic Science is aimed at the “Science and technology of consciousness”. These programs are thus “consciousness based” and have as their goal the awakening of the full potential of the consciousness of human beings. This would help in making the world a better place and help man avoid mistakes at a personal level (conflict, divorce, violence, inequalities) and also at a global level which is economic caploitation and war. The way Maharishi looks at Vedic Science is that it would help everyone on earth achieve their right to being a fully enlightened efficiently functioning human being. The full use of body mind and soul would result from an application of Maharishi Vedic Science.

Thus the practical Vedic technologies of Maharishi are designed to reduce or eliminate the problems that are faced in day to day life. There are several areas which were taken up on priority basis:

- i) Vedic health is a consciousness based area which involves the intelligence of the body and mind to create better health through various means including exercising with yoga and eating the right kind of diet. This area of endeavor is called Maharishi consciousness based health care.

- ii) Vedic Education, in this Maharishi Consciousness Based Education is used to getting a holistic education in which there is awareness of a high order and that of a good order of morality. It teaches to share and care for others and to give back to the earth/environment more than you take from it.

These and other such programmes like that on Vedic agriculture (organically grown food); Vedic astrology which provides future trends in life through jyotish and finally Vedic music from the Maharishi Gandharva Veda music. In this way Maharishi has spanned a vast spectrum of vital concern.

Till now we have been discussing about and prescribing TM as a meditational technique or method. However, it is time that we introduce into our discourse some of the spiritual ideas of TM since we are now in danger of presenting TM simply as a kind of spiritual exercise that helps in controlling stress and tension and thereby leading to better efficiency in life and work. However, TM is more than an exercise of 20 minutes meditation in the morning and evening. To get an idea about the spiritual ideology of TM we turn to an explication of the same in an interview that Maharishi gave Rachel Kelly of UCLA. In this exchange of questions and answers Kelley talks of various aspects of social process including the role of students and the question of enlightenment.

23.6 Maharishi on Enlightenment

At the outset of the interview Maharishi tells Kelley that TM is a phenomena that has been around for many years and therefore Kelley should ask some new questions so that new areas could be explored. It was in this context that Kelley broached the topic of “enlightenment” which is an experience and a concept which is in fact at the centre of spirituality and is mentioned in scriptural traditions most especially the Vedic Tradition. On being questioned about what enlightenment is the Maharishi points out succinctly that is it being in accordance with the natural law. Enlightenment the Maharishi points out means “absence of darkness”. This in itself implies a perfect life in which everything falls into place and there is no conflict and mistake. It is pointed out that such a state implies that there is “no weakness” or any kind of shortfall in life. In everything an enlightened man does there is success and the fulfillment of all desire. That is to say we are living in accord with the natural law. Everything is therefore easy and gets completed without undue duress on the person. It was in this sense that Buddha was Enlightened. It is also the sense in which the Maharishi is an Enlightened man. In accordance with his own definition of enlightenment the Maharishi his story is a story about enlightenment and what it means. Maharishi has certainly clear touch with the Natural Law and has therefore been able to accomplish so much that it is difficult to imagine that one man could be behind the vast TM empire that teaches enlightenment and promises a total life. The Maharishi points out that the enlightened man is not in the ‘dark’ about anything. In other words TM is not simply or only about stress busting techniques but a spiritual path which shows ready results and which have been verified by research.

At this juncture in the UCLA interview the questioner asks about TM. It is asked whether anyone is capable of assimilating and using TM and what are the basic prerequisites for this endeavor.

Action and Reflection 23.1

Meet some practitioners of TM and ask them to relate how they have benefited. Note down your findings in your notebook.

Maharishi is very candid in his reply. He says TM simply requires that the student has a desire to learn it through a teacher. This is a very important statement and very revolutionary because in the Vedic tradition the qualification of a disciple and the requirements of discipline, commitment, authority and so on are very great. Maharishi by opening up Vedic knowledge, and making it benefit of the stringent requirements of studentship under a master has opened up this treasure house to all those who simply have a desire to learn from a teacher. At this point a few words about faith in the teacher need to be discussed. In the Vedic system we find that the guru is the ultimate authority. The Vedic system is about the faith in the authority and words of the guru. In the case of TM Maharishi has not put on the trappings of the guru so far as ideology is concerned. TM can be learned practiced and benefited from even if there is little faith in the guru. However, unless there is respect for the teacher there will be hardly any inspiration to go on with the technique. It is here that Mahesh yogi has made such a difference in the field of spirituality. He has very clearly substituted faith in the guru with proof of the working of the technique. When there is scientific evidence about the TM benefits and effects which student will not have faith in the master who is propagating and teaching this meditation method? Thus, in the system of Maharishi Vedic Science it is laboratory proof that matters and things do not have to be taken on trust or belief. This has been a modernization of Indian tradition in a basic way.

Maharishi points out that meditation is taught by the teacher and learned by the disciple. He notes that all the 5 million or so people who do TM, and those who have been meditating for the last 40-50 years are all on the path of enlightenment. Not only these meditators are actually 'gaining enlightenment'. This of course implies again that they are coming in accord with natural Law and ceasing to be confused, miserable and depressed. They are reaching the stage when there are "no mistakes in life" and also become non-violent and peaceful. This is the path of TM. It is therefore a cult which has kept the ideology of the movement in the background while the practice of meditation has been put to the fore. Usually, it is the ideology of cult which is eulogized and used as a point of reference to attract students, but in the case of TM the ideology comes through only after you are already on the path. It becomes gradually clear to the meditation that far from simply overcoming stress he or she is on a endless path and is becoming ever more attuned to the flow of Nature's way and is in fact embarked upon a spiritual adventure.

At this point in time Kelley asks Maharishi what is the value of students meditating according to the TM way? The Maharishi is very clear about his answer and points out that the student life is to gain knowledge, if possible to gain total knowledge. Then if the TM method is used the students are striving towards total knowledge. Now, this needs a little explanation in that the TM method though based around a mantra is basically a sit down type of meditation and the meditator observes the working of the mind through the various thoughts, ideas, problems that go through his or her consciousness. Thus apart from the destressing effect of the meditation there is also unleashed a tremendous amount of information about the thinking and desiring process. Facts that were buried in the unconscious come up and demand attention. As such the meditator is geared to solving the problems on the one hand and destressing gives him the time to formulate a strategy. Very often this could be precisely how to improve the performance in meditation. Then, alone is total knowledge possible. It cannot be that a person sits down, does a mantra, and becomes enlightened. Meditation the TM way therefore is much more than meets the eye and its secrets have to be unraveled.

Maharishi then goes on to clarify in this interview that the consciousness of the transcendental is “the unified field of all the laws of nature”. He compares this to the findings of the unified field theory of physics which tries to put all scientific knowledge under one umbrella. This is at the basis of all intelligence and to get to the natural law means getting into the field of Total Intelligence, in which all and everything is known. This is another name for Enlightenment. In this state Maharishi reiterates that all goes well and all goes according to plan. In the student life the aim is to develop knowledge to the greatest possible degree and to thereby set the foundation for the rest of the life. This is the time not simply for activities of rote or memorizing but creativity, so far as student meditators are concerned. This is really very important because Intelligence implies creativity. Thus, TM is believed to be a fountain head of creativity, so far as student meditators are concerned. Without a clear headed appreciation of life as it faces a student it would not be possible to face and to understand complex life-situations. Nothing can be approached mechanically in life as life-situations keep on changing and only through meditation can they be controlled. Further we must realize as Maharishi points out that spiritually is an “unfolding”. It doesn’t happen all at once or suddenly. It happens bit by bit and accumulates slowly but surely. Thus when Maharishi says that students should gain total knowledge we take it that this applies to all students of TM and not to those who are at the universally alone. So, the goal of TM meditators is total knowledge, Intelligence, and to get in flow with the laws of nature. However, Maharishi has also pointed out in this interview that TM students and University TM students can together “recreate” the whole social structure of society and make it a better place. This is a highly idealistic stand. unlikely Till now 5-6 million TM meditators exist but the population of the world is about 5 billions of individuals. Here, of course the idea of a percentage of meditators calming down the world does help us to view facts in better perspective. However it cannot be denied if everyone began to do TM the problems of the world would certainly ameliorate.

Kelley now asks whether the “ease” with which one reaches the Natural Law is not exaggerated? How can something which is very natural and easy also be effective? It is asked by Kelley to the Maharishi that how does this contradiction get resolved?

23.7 TM and Natural Law

The Maharishi explains that TM creates a condition of great relaxation in the mind. TM makes the mind spontaneously quiet and the silence that comes from meditation persists in active life. TM is thus a reservoir for energy to be drawn out from the “bank” of consciousness. In the manner a man withdraws money from bank and then has no worries of expense similarly in TM the energy fields within the body are lighted up and there is an abundance of energy after a session of TM. Since, TM attunes to the field of Total knowledge, Intelligence and Natural Law the TM technique is one which combines ease with effectiveness. There is no struggle, no nightmares, no disappointments only greater energy to be used for the greater good and for the betterment of life for everyone around us. Maharishi insists that TM is effortless and does not involve hard labour or demand impossible concentration etc. According to Maharishi it is very important to economise on the effort. He believes in: do less and accomplish more. Obviously, what is being implied is an intelligent application of energy by the disciple rather than mechanical effort. According to Maharishi success is not an achievement which has resulted from desperate efforts, titanic struggle and at the cost of one’s health. Success is instead achieved by aligning oneself with the ease and flow of

the Natural Law. Maharishi also suggests that it is in the consciousness that the desires get fulfilled and that these should be examined closely. All pros and cons seen clearly in meditation and basing oneself upon Natural Law the TM meditator would live a moral purposeful life. Thus as the meditates twice daily he comes closer and closer in time with the Natural Law and this makes everything easy to accomplish.

Kelley then asks the Maharishi about those would be meditators who are afraid to go into a deep rest state? Kelley points out such deep rest states are not known to the would be students and they can find them frightening. Maharishi clarifies this doubt by pointing out that these fears are unfounded and that TM creates relaxation as natural as sleep. He points out that TM is not at all forced and is a natural and creative process. He also points out to Kelley's question that if there were a large number of TM students at UCLA they would create great scientists and geniuses who could alter the face of the earth with their inventions and discoveries. He cites Keith Wallace as one such pioneer who gave the world the first research into TM and published his most positive findings.

Further Maharishi has indicated by his demeanour that life that that life is to be enjoyed and should be a lot of fun. Maharishi is sometimes known as the "giggling guru" because he laughs and enjoys what he is doing very much.

The whole gist of the teachings of Maharishi centre down to the consideration of what he terms a "lack of proper education". This is what the Maharishi holds responsible for the ills of the world, and surely according to this approach a lack of knowledge of TM would constitute a kind of lack of understanding, sharing and caring for the world. The Maharishi reiterates that the central feature of any society or civilization depends on education. So, we might as well ask what does the Maharishi mean by education itself? The Maharishi is referring here obviously to the awakening of intelligence in the life of the disciples, devotees, students and others so that they can function according to Natural Law. Maharishi points out very pertinently that it is the intelligence in the physiology that makes it move or drives it ahead. Without that intelligence education would be incomplete. The emphasis then must focus out he awakening of intelligence and this is one thing which TM also attempts to do through its meditation techniques of sitting 20 minutes twice a day, morning and evening.

Box 23.3 Aspects of Learning

Maharishi points out that education is oriented all over the world towards the physical when actually it should be geared towards the force that drives the physical that is the world of consciousness. This would be a revolutionary step as it would instill in the students a new set of morals and values. Maharishi gives a graphic example when he points out that although it is the hand that commits the act of violence, it is the mind which is ultimately responsible. It is clear it is education which should culture the life and the mind. Culture of the mind is that in which a higher intelligence operates and not a lower one. It is this higher intelligence in life operations and activities which TM seeks to activate. Once the intelligence is awakened through TM practices then the student has come in accordance to the natural law and life will become a wonderful journey. However, if the education is unable to see the fact of the necessity of creating a centre of higher intelligence in the physiology then education will not be education for humanitarian purposes of peace and goodwill.

As such it would be defective and harmful. Through what type of education can we raise the intelligence in man, and make it active in life? Maharishi's

answer is the necessity of Vedas, knowledge that is practical and total and covers every aspect of life in the world. It is a knowledge that was perfected and put into script about 5000 years ago in the Sanskrit script. We do not stop simply at literary or mathematical exercises but include Vedic Health or Ayurveda which has itself developed a complex theory of humours and phlegms in the body and requires a skilled practitioners to administer the various medicines. Thus again it is intelligence that is guiding the doctor from a higher source which helps in the diagnosis of cure or containment. Ayurveda in its practice takes great care of dietary provisions and even uses precious metals and stones in the preparation of its *bhasms* or medicine compounds. It has no known side effects and derives directly from the vedas. The medicine available today is very advanced relatively but it has many side effects. Similarly, Maharishi points out that what is needed further is Vedic (organic) agriculture and what he calls Vedic Defence. Vedic defence is a very interesting idea in that it means to “prevent the birth of an enemy”. This is itself a pacifist philosophy in which the idea is a lifestyle that does not breed enmity and hatred. It is also realistic in recognizing the need to defend oneself and this means an intelligent way of living. One of the most important requirements for intelligence to flourish is a clear mind and sufficient reserves of energy. With a clear mind and sufficient reserves of energy it is possible to live intelligently peacefully and with balanced desires. Thus the attitude of Vedic Defence is not simply be strong enough to push back the enemy but to live life in such a way as to have no enemies. When we ask how this is to be accomplished the answer is TM. In attempting this Vedic method of approaching education, health, defence and so on Maharishi assures a happy and peaceful life.

Action and Reflection 23.2

Reflect upon and discuss the “Natural Law of Living with TM practitioners. Note down your findings in your notebook.

In relation to Vedic defence how does it stand in relation to the war crime and violence all over the world. The endeavour of each generation has been to wipe out the crime and war but it has not been able to succeed. In fact, there have been two world wars and endless regional and local conflicts as well as international conflagrations. One explanation that has been given for war and violence is high testosterone levels in the males which make them aggressive and violent and therefore they indulge in the territorial imperative of war and violence. While this explanation is fine what is missing from this theory is how to end this aggressive streak in man and make him peaceful and peace-loving. The method that Maharishi would like to use to tame all the aggression and violence is to do group practice of TM and TM-Sidhi program produced in a group of about 200 people will create peaceful vibrations that eradicate crime and create peace. Maharishi is doing this through the Peace Palace initiatives where 200 TM-Sidhi Experts will live and meditate together for world peace.

23.8 Maharishi's Writings on TM

Let us now look at some of the books which the Maharishi has published since his has been a multimedia approach to the popularization of TM. These books deal with different areas of endeavour and outline the various dynamics of the problem. As always the solution that lurks at the back of the discourse is TM or TM-Sidhi programs.

The first book that Maharishi published in 1963 was called “Science of Being and Art of Living— Transcendental Meditation”. This book explained in detail all about TM and the Art of Living. No, doubt the concept of

spontaneous living and coming in accordance with the Natural Law are very important concepts here. It was a path breaking book that reached many millions of people and not only pointed out the desired paradise but also how to get to it through the simple technique of TM. It was a book with a vision for a “new humanity”.

Mahesh Yogi then gave his insights into the Bhagavad Gita. Maharishi's commentary is profuse and incisive and he praises the Gita as the book in which all practical wisdom is enshrined. The Gita is a book which has inspired the Bhakti Saints and the Sufis alike. Where does that leave us? What has the Gita got to do with TM? At first glance not much perhaps but on deep consideration the Gita is very definitely the very source of the TM technique as it is taught in the Gita itself. That is to say there is a mantra (Om) and there is a guru (Krishna). Krishna asks Arjun in the Gita to sit down in a comfortable place, free from vermin, and then to focus between the eyebrows, eyes closed and then to inhale and exhale keeping the mantra flowing in and out of the nostrils in proper rhythm. In the case of TM the mantras given are many and individual but the practice of meditation is very similar as prescribed in the Gita. However, this is the Vedic Science and sources and similarities are not being hidden. In fact its consonance with Gita meditation gives TM even more authenticity.

Box 23.4 Maharishi and Vedic Education

Maharishi feels a study of his first book would be most valuable. As is known Vedic Education divided life into various stages in which the early age was to be devoted to celibacy and studentship. However, these steps are not easy to follow for everybody and Maharishi once again points out that the kind of meditation he is advocating (TM) fulfills the Vedic dream of students living peacefully and improving the world. The educators would have to be TM trained and these are the people who will impart education about being happy in the here and now through meditation and the alignment that it brings to natural law and the creativity that follows. The goal of students should be total knowledge. As noted the Maharishi feels the students and teachers of premier institutions of learning can change the face of the world and can be at the vanguard of a new world.

Some of the other books that Maharishi has penned include

- a) Maharishi speaks to students
- b) Celebrating perfection in Education
- c) Maharishis Absolute Theory of Government – Automation in Administration
- d) Maharishi Forum for Natural Law and National Law for Doctors
- e) Ideal India
- f) Constitution of India Fulfilled through Maharishis Transcendental Meditation

As can be seen from a sampling of what Maharishi has written his concern clearly is to bring the higher or transcendental consciousness into every heart and into every aspect of every nation. His agenda is to change the world for the better and for this he has theorized and practiced unified consciousness of the Natural Law in the fields of religion, education, Defence, Administration, Natural Law and even the Constitution of India. Maharishis has been a fruitful and useful publishing career.

All these books can be rightly seen as part of Maharishis peace initiatives for the world. Maharishi is a person centred teacher who believes that

each human being should have the 'deep rest' of the TM experience to guide and recharge him. Having transformed himself then the individual becomes himself a centre of peace, love, bliss and contentment. To bring peace to humanity Maharishi has taken many initiatives. In 1957 he stated that if one percent of the world's people practiced TM there would be an end to war. In 1963 during the Cuban Missile Crisis Maharishi counselled meditators to extend their period of meditation as this would avert the crisis. In 1974 the 'one percent theory' of crime reduction got scientific proof of crime reduction in such cities and areas. From 1978 to 1984 Maharishi sent thousands of "Yogic Flyers" to trouble spots around the world.

23.9 Benefits of TM

We have dealt with various different aspects of TM so far including its history, philosophy, and methodologies. In this concluding section we talk of the all around benefits of TM as recorded by scientists and social scientists. The TM literature points out that TM is the key to:

- clearer thinking
- better health
- fulfilling relationship
- a peaceful world

Thus in terms of clearer thinking we find that the TM practitioner begins to find it relatively easy to solve problems and to feel fresh and alert most of the time. There is a feeling of hope and transcendence. This is often noticed by people around the TM practitioner who is relatively "distressed" and more relaxed, since he has been doing his or her meditation. These benefits are practical and real and have been verified by around 600 scientific studies at different centres all over the world numbering some 200 independent research institutions spread over 35 countries. Such research indicates that the benefits of TM to body mind and brain are measurable and have a scientific basis to them. It is one thing to claim benefits but another when there is scientific finding and proofs.

These benefits are now being experienced all around the world for the last five decades. In fact, it is often pointed out that the TM is an ancient Vedic technique which is modified for contemporary usage. This was done by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi to make the technique suitable and effective for the modern age.

Thus the saying that we need proof to believe is amply borne out by people enjoying benefits in various fields. The mind-benefits, or benefits to the mind include various factors including a more efficient memory bank; clearer and logical way of thinking. There is also a capacity for clearer creativity and the ability to concentrate and focus on a problem is greatly enhanced. The brain potential is also realized greatly. The effect on the intellect is to make it much sharper. The IQ becomes higher and there is generally a greater degree of awareness and consciousness in perception and apprehension of life-situations.

As regards the benefits to the body are concerned they are very many and include the reduction of stress. There is also a greater degree of energy feelings in the organism. Here is better health which means medical expenses are reduced. The body also feels younger and energetic. The body also experiences better and deeper and restful sleep. The TM practitioner's blood pressure is lower and if it is high it will come down.

There is also a tendency for the meditator to reduce his alcohol usage and this is also beneficial in itself. Meditators also develop the ability and the will power to stop smoking. There is also a great reduction in the tension of the body and there is also a recorded relief from asthma. The practice of TM also reduces and lowers cholesterol which is an agent which excess of is bad for health and heart function. Further, the body being alert the person is able to react aptly to a situation quickly and efficiently. That is the reaction time for response to a challenge is much less and much more efficient. Practicing TM prolongs life apart from making it healthier. Thus, the benefits for mind and body are extensive and are like a cleansing of the chakras in conventional yoga so that primordial energy flows can go on in the body unimpeded by energy blocks.

There are benefits for relationship through the practice of TM. Thus friendship becomes fulfilling. The person develops a feeling of inner calmness and peace and tranquility. There is also a greater feeling of self confidence and the ability and capacity to tackle relationships.

23.10 Conclusion

Through TM the capacity to see as a 'whole' also develops by first making the perspective on the world bigger, and then holistic. The meditator also develops a great deal of tolerance and patience which are essential in relationships. Further there is a capacity to appreciate others which develops with the practice of TM. Behaviour of the meditator becomes in tune with the other people and they exhibit harmonious living within the environment. All this also has the effect of making the meditators life more enjoyable and happy. Anxiety levels experience a drop and there is a tremendous reduction in abreactions such as anger. Further even depression is reduced and finally eliminated by meditating the TM way. As such there is an explosive input all around the social sphere of the TM practitioner.

There are also practical benefits for professional life of the meditators. Initially the professional develops a stronger and positive self image and his concept of himself becomes clear. Further the meditator develops the knack of making the right decisions and make them with less reaction time and deliberation. The meditator is able to do his job in a more efficient and productive manner. He is also able to quickly solve problems and to enjoy the work and have greater job satisfaction. Another benefit is that the practitioners create effective leadership with democratic norms. The meditators are able to accomplish great tasks with relatively less effort.

Thus we may say TM is beneficial for the world at large and creates through the mind waves that make the city life better by reducing crime, and reducing the levels of traffic accidents and injuries. The rate of homicide goes down, terrorism declines and international conflict is contained and what ensues is a peaceful world. Thus the potential of TM is revolutionary and it is being further realized in the postmodern world on a daily basis.

Further Reading

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