

Scientific articles about Transcendental Meditation have been appearing in learned journals all over the world in the past few years; among them are Scientific American, Lancet (British Medical Journal), Journal of the American Medical Association, Science Digest and the Hospital Times (London, England). Other magazines have been consistently running more popular coverage: Time, Psychology Today, Today's Health and Penthouse.

Scientists are becoming intrigued with T.M. as evidence builds up that the technique effects a fourth state of consciousness quite distinct from the other three: waking, sleeping and dreaming.

To be specific: the state of Transcendental Meditation has a number of proven physiological characteristics: reduction in oxygen consumption, carbon-dioxide elimination and the rate and volume of respiration, a marked decrease in blood lactate level; a slowing of the heart beat, great increases in electrical skin resistance, and a consistent electroencephalogram pattern of slow alpha waves with occasional theta wave activity, distinct from that normally present in waking, sleeping and dreaming.

An Article in Scientific American (Feb. 72) states that a physiological state of rest is achieved in T.M. of a depth comparable to that reached by Zen Monks practising 15 to 20 years.

In this article Dr. R. Keith Wallace — now an independent researcher who did his Ph.D. thesis in physiology at UCLA on T.M. (1970) and Herbert Benson, assistant professor of medicine at Harvard, specifically enumerated the effects of the T.M. technique in an experiment using 36 veteran meditators. They found that the average reduction in oxygen intake was about 20 percent. This compared to an average maximum decrease of 8 percent over a nights sleep. The authors state that these figures indicate a remarkably deep state of rest physiologically in terms of the fact that rate of carbon dioxide elimination decreased proportionately. This indicates a slowing of the breathing process as a whole, not just deprivation of oxygen. Allison writing in Lancet (1970) said that using less cumbersome apparatus on meditators (thermistors instead of oxygen mask and flow meter) recorded oxygen decreases of up to 80 percent — a rate usually regarded as "incompatible with life". One subject's rate of breathing decreased from 12 to 4 breaths per minute.

Galvanic skin resistance — a factor used in polygraphic lie detector tests as an indicator of stress and anxiety (as stress increases G.S.R. decreases) — was found to increase on the average 400 percent. Blood lactate level (lactate level being associated with anxiety and high blood pressure) was found to decrease markedly (40 percent approximately). Pulse was found to decrease an average of four beats a minute. "Lactate level normally falls in a subject at rest, but the rate of decline during meditation proved to be more than three times faster than the normal rate." Base metabolic rates decreased 20 percent.

To learn T.M. costs money — \$35 for students — and \$75 for working adults. The money is essential to the continuing teaching of the technique says Daley. It covers expenses incurred in teaching, such as paper, video tapes, projectors, films, audio tapes and postage. All monies collected go to the national body (S.I.M.S.) in Ottawa. Each teacher is allowed a budget proportionate to the number of people being taught. Daley says that he isn't making any money. "If no one were paying initiation fees our international operations would fizzle out in six months". He stresses that there is only one donation given: "one shot and you're good for your whole life". The initial fee also pays for continued lectures, and films about Transcendental Meditation. These lectures are usually held twice a month here.

The initial training goes as follows: an introductory lecture — two weeks intervening to decide whether or not to go through with it and to eliminate foreign chemicals from the body. Drugs. Daley stresses the importance of having the nervous system as close to normal as possible. It takes about 14 days for THC for example (active ingredient in cannabis) to leave the body. That means no toking or tripping for two weeks prior to the second lecture. Apparently alcohol, nicotine and caffeine are OK.

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among inmates. A high penitentiary official says that "If the trial has favourable results we will extend it to other institutions."

Daley says that "T.M. originates from the ancient Vedic traditions in India. The system has been taught there off and on for over 5000 years." Maharishi, a student of Guru Dev, a highly respected force in Eastern thought who died in 1953, started teaching Transcendental Meditation in North America about 14 years ago. "North America has the world's best system of communication and is therefore very influential," says Daley.

Daley stresses that although T.M. originates in the East, it is not an "Eastern" technique as such in that it is natural to all men. Some people tend to relate Transcendental Meditation to the Eastern way of life. In T.M. there is NO stress in changing life style, there is no faith involved — it is a purely mechanical technique that merely requires the doing."

The Maharishi is a graduate physicist, trained at Allahbad University in India. He is 63. He talks very little about himself apparently, but it has been learned that he started studies with Guru Dev almost immediately after university. He has written many books, about T.M., and commentaries on the Vedas, Brahma Sutras, and the Bhagavad Gita. He now resides at the present site of his T.M. teacher instruction school in Seelburg, Switzerland.

The Maharishi's move to the U.S. is part of a move to teach T.M. all over the world. At present 90,000 people meditate in the U.S., and about 20,000 in Canada. The U.S. figure includes 10 percent of the total university student population. The Science of Creative Intelligence (S.C.I.) the theory behind the practise of Transcendental Meditation, is now offered as accredited university credit in 10 major universities there, including Harvard, Stanford and U.C.L.A. Lab work consists of daily Transcendental Meditation.

At present, Daley says, England, Germany and the U.S. are the "top countries in terms of per capita spread of T.M. In Scandinavia there not enough teachers of T.M. to keep up with the demand". People are being put on waiting lists by necessity. Haile Selassie, emperor of Ethiopia, integrated SCI into the entire Ethiopian School system a few months ago.

Daley runs about one course a month in Fredericton. "There are many more people starting here than ever before. Word about T.M. seems to be going the rounds he says. "I'm very optimistic about what's happening in Fredericton now. Meditators in Fredericton tend to be a very together group. People are becoming more and more involved". He thinks that he could teach full time here — if he had the time. The next course is Nov. 8, Room 139 at Carleton Hall, 9 p.m.

Ken points out that T.M. is not a retreat from reality, but rather a preparation for activity. Meditation without activity is like cement without water, and vice-versa. "If you want more effective action you need rest — the deeper the rest the better preparation for activity it is." "Stresses strains and anxieties accumulated from day to day life through T.M. are alleviated."

He talks about Cosmic Consciousness as "The state in which mind and body are free of stress and tension. It's just something that happens automatically."

Daley emphasizes that T.M. is not a form of self hypnosis as some writers have claims. "No suggestion is planted in the mind". The state of meditation is quite different in terms of physiological effect from the state of hypnosis, as noted in the Wallace-Benson article. Isolated similarities to the T.M. effect have been recorded in bio-feedback experiments in one indicator. Alpha waves of a similar type occur. Bio-feedback is not however an integrated change in consciousness as T.M. is, says Daley.

The technique is quite distinct from other forms of meditation e.g. Yogic, and Zen meditation in that the process is effortless. "A common goal of most systems of meditation is the realization of the essential constitution of creation". Although this goal has many names it takes years of difficult discipline and training to attain this goal. Maharishi states however that the attainment of this goal is easy, natural and accomplished automatically with the practise of Transcendental Meditation. He says that in T.M. as the awareness goes to finer and finer aspects of thought until it transcends the finest aspect and arrives at the state of absolute awareness, the experienter realizes the essential constituent of creation — which is the experienter's own self. Maharishi calls this state the transcendental state of existence. He holds that in gaining this state the experienter used subtler aspects of his nervous system.

Ken describes the Maharishi as a "very loving, practical and intelligent man, a man that has something that can be of benefit to all mankind, not to a select few, but to all". He does not ascribe the Maharishi anything but human status. Apparently the Maharishi does not teach about anything but Transcendental Meditation — a subject in which he is THE authority. Anything else is as Daley says "one man's opinion".

Commenting on John Lennon's negative remarks on the Maharishi in a book called "Lennon Remembers": "Personality clashes are bound to occur at times, the point is the process does work. The best answer I can offer is a quote from Donovan: "forget the man, but don't forget the flower he carries".

Here is an example of one local meditator's experience with Transcendental Meditation: "I usually meditate on a couch made of foam rubber strips covered with fabric, laid on the floor by a big window upstairs. Sometimes I finish meditating — slowly opening my eyes I sit up and look out the window feeling very warm inside...and I see the trees. The sun-lit green of the leaves have a natural brightness and vibrancy that I'd never noticed before. The trunks root down in the ground and the tops reach up, alive, as if they feel as far-out as I do. I feel as a part of it all, a part that belongs. I feel as alive and beautiful as the trees outside look; and I want to hold somebody close to me."

Nervous as normal as possible, prescribed drugs can be used. Two days after the second lecture (at which a personal questionnaire is filled out) the actual personal instruction in the technique is given. Initiation is followed by three consecutive nights of "Checking" to ensure that the technique is being followed correctly. Further instruction in the Mechanics of T.M. is also given. It is recommended that meditators get themselves "checked" once a month after instruction.

Ken hopes that there will be residence courses in SCI theory in Fredericton next term. They will likely be held in a church retreat near the city. He says however that knowledge of SCI beyond the initial course is not essential to the successful practice of T.M.

People stop meditation for two main reasons says Daley: because they are concentrating or using force which is "contrary to the process" or because they feel they can't spare the time. Meditation should be practised twice a day for 15 to 20 minutes, — before breakfast and before supper. Meditating with food in the stomach is impossible as the system is speeded up too much to relax fully as a result of food digestion.

Paul Le Chambré stopped meditation after seven months because he felt that he was becoming "too content." He learned meditation about two and a half years ago. He says that after a while things were "just too tranquil, I didn't feel anger as much when someone shut me down or when I had had a bad day.

"I didn't seem to feel extremes in happiness either. I found that I could keep myself amused too easily, I could just tool around — doing things I felt like doing quite contentedly." He mentioned that he had not been checked in this time period. He also said he is starting to meditate again, although not regularly. He is planning to be checked again soon.

Although the process itself is effortless, keeping it up does at times require persistence. Notwithstanding the time factor, sometimes the subjective experience of meditation can be mildly unpleasurable. These times apparently are distinctly in the minority if the technique is practised properly. "We don't meditate for its own sake, or to change mood per se, but rather for permanent change", says Daley. Dr. Wallace's studies show no correlation between depth of physiological rest achieved and level of subjective perception of the meditation experience.

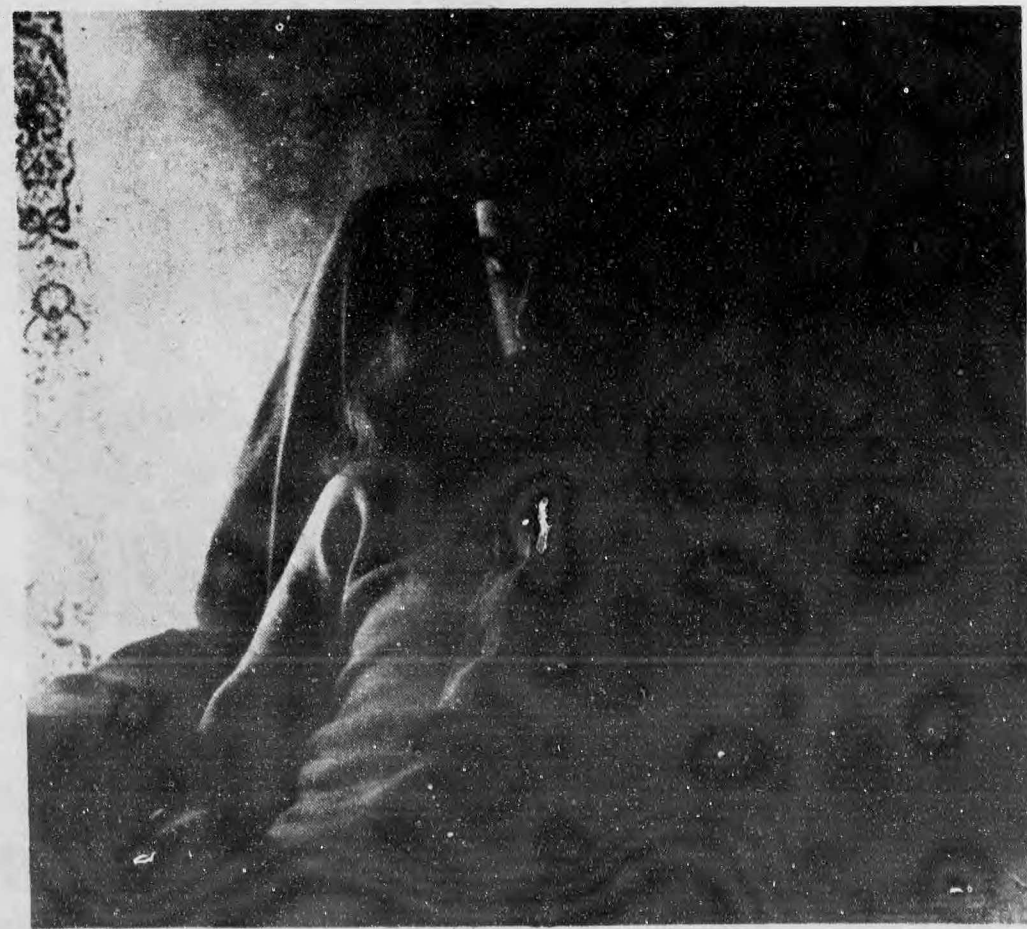


Photo by Stephen Homer