



## Eileen Barker, 'Transcendental Meditation (TM)'

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### Transcendental meditation (TM)

Transcendental Meditation is a technique for deep relaxation and revitalization which develops the inner potential of energy and intelligence that form the basis of all success in life. TM is practised for twenty minutes morning and evening whilst sitting comfortably in a chair with the eyes closed ... [TM] is practised by people of every age, education, culture and religion. TM requires no belief or any great commitment. More than three million people all over the world practise TM.

*[From Corporate Development Programme: An Introduction to Transcendental Meditation, leaflet distributed by Maharishi Corporate Development International, London]*

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1911–) graduated in physics from Allahabad University in 1940 before studying for thirteen years with his spiritual master, Guru Dev (1869–1953), who had rediscovered, from Hindu Scriptures, the technique that is known as transcendental meditation. In 1958 Maharishi brought TM to the West.

To be taught the basic technique, which involves concentration on a mantra, costs £165. This covers an introductory presentation, an hourlong personal instruction and three further instruction meetings that last one and a half hours. Those who go on to the more advanced TM–Sidhi course pay about £1,200 for a weekend course, two weeks of evening courses and, later, a two-week course at one of the movements Academies, when they can be taught the widely publicised levitation or 'flying' technique during which the person, cross-legged, hops about and, if successful, manages to jump onto a pile of mattresses.

The movement produces an abundance of literature describing both the achievements of TM and Vedic Science 'the science of life according to pure knowledge', and the movement's plans for implementing such ambitious projects as world peace, the reduction of world poverty and the achievement of perfect health. Associated with TM are numerous other organisations promoting various ventures. Maharishi Corporate Development International provides not only courses for business executives, but also a number of in-company programmes. In the United States, Maharishi International University, founded in 1971, offers over a thousand students undergraduate, master's and doctoral programmes.

[...] most meditators continue with 'ordinary lives'. There have, however, been negative reports in the media about the dependency that some people are said to develop on either the techniques or the movement itself. Other reports have questioned some of the claims that scientists have made about the efficacy of the techniques.

From E. Barker (1989) *New Religious Movements: A Practical Introduction*, London, HMSO, pp.213–14, footnotes omitted.