Personal Development through Transcendence¹

A Research Study

by Dr. Anil Maheshwari

1. Wholeness

Everyone wants to enjoy life, free from pain and entanglements. Everyone wants to develop to his or her highest state of development. Intellectual development through traditional education is not enough to reach there. Transcendence is an orthogonal dimension to intellect. It leads to a different dimension of personal development. By regularly transcending, one can go beyond the surface reality, connect with one’s unbounded unmanifest creative potential, and enjoy a persistent sense of stability and productivity. Anyone who has ever accomplished anything of significance in any field or era has transcended his or her usual boundaries (Pearson, 2014). The global celebrity Oprah Winfrey says that she feels ‘1000%’ when she transcends to her own center and operates from there (Winfrey, 2013).

2. Personal case study

I have personally benefitted immensely from regularly transcending. I learned Transcendental Meditation (TM) over 30 years ago while still a graduate student at IIM Ahmedabad, a prestigious business school in India. TM is an effortless technique popularized globally by an Indian saint, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. However, I practiced TM only sporadically for a few years. Then I came to the US for my doctoral studies at a top university. I then taught at a couple of well-known universities in the US. However, I could not publish much and did not succeed in academia. I returned to the IT industry, first to a start-up, and then to a giant IT company. I tried to blog all these years, but was unable to write anything of significance.

¹ This is based on a talk given at IIM-A Global Alumni meeting, at the VFIM 2014 conference, and other places.
A couple of years ago, I decided to pursue my own spiritual development and joined Maharishi University of Management. Daily practice of TM is an integral part of the teaching routine here. I learned the advanced TM-Sidhi techniques one year later. I began to transcend for long periods daily. My personal evolution accelerated. Within a few months I published my first long story on my blog; it was very well received. I continue to blog actively. Six months later I published a book on Data Mining (Maheshwari, 2014), which has received strong positive reviews. I realize that one writes from one’s heart and not from the mind. Practicing TM and TM-Sidhi practices regularly helped release my stresses and I felt less worried about being unfairly judged.

I have delivered this personal story of transcendence at many professional conferences to help others similarly realize their creative potential. It has been received very well. I encourage everyone to learn to transcend and connect with a deeper creative space. I have tried other meditation techniques over the years, and have found TM to be the most effective in transcending and releasing my creative potential. I have learned that this simple technique, if practiced regularly, can make a big difference in the quality of professional and personal life. This paper is a refined version of that presentation.

3. What is Self-development

The popular self-development message is that one should control one’s mind and harness it in the direction of achieving one’s deepest desires. “Whatever the mind can conceive and believe, the mind can achieve,” said Napoleon Hill (2013). According to this view, we are naturally blessed with full control over our mind. Thus, we should take possession of our mind, and always keep a positive mental attitude. Viewing our mind as both broadcasting and receiving station, we should also set up a master mind composed of many minds working in a spirit of harmony and synergy.

What constrains anyone from tapping into his or her true creative self? It could be that we have not learned how to turn our attention to the unmanifest creative
source within. Scientific knowledge and society assert the primacy of objective external world as perceived through the sense organs and supporting instruments. The development of intellect is considered to be an externally oriented capability to solve problems and achieve results. On the other hand, tapping into this unmanifest creative source requires one to go within. It requires deeply resting the conscious rational mind, and dissolving the stress and fatigue that can get in the way of connecting with the real self.

4. What Transcending Is

‘Know thyself’ is a time-honored advice from the world’s greatest philosophers and thinkers. However, how can the self truly know itself? Alternatively, what is the mirroring mechanism through which one can see one’s self? Methodologically speaking, one would have to recursively abstract the self ad infinitum to reach the true self. To know itself, consciousness has to transcend thought. The mind has to gradually quieten itself by transcending the sensory experiences and surface level thoughts. Then it can become gradually aware of its true nature. By direct unmediated experience one can ‘see’ the true self as beyond time and form, liberated from objects and concrete thoughts.
Knowing oneself cannot be a purely intellectual process. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi says: “Since the mind ordinarily remains attuned to the senses, projecting outwards towards the manifested realms of creation, it misses or fails to appreciate its own essential nature, just as the eyes are unable to see themselves” (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1963, p. 50).

What are we? Are we the mind, the body or the spirit? From an engineering perspective, are we the bulb, or the electricity that lights up the bulb? Or are we the generator that produces the electricity in the first places? We are simultaneously all of the above, the bulb, the electricity, and its generator. The bulb serves as the visible instrument of manifesting the invisible electric energy into light. The same electric energy can manifest itself using different instruments, e.g. in the spinning of a fan, and in the heat of a cooking stove. All the generators are integrated into a grid to provide stable energy across all the devices and instruments.

Maharishi gives the example of sap and the rose. The same colorless sap flowing through the rose can manifest itself in the form of a hard brown thorn, and also a soft beautiful pink flower. It is the nature of the sap to manifest itself into any number of visible things. Maharishi also gives the example of the seed and the tree. The potential for the tree lies in the tiny seed. The seed of a banyan tree is very small and completely hollow. It is the unmanifest potential in the seed that can manifest itself into a huge tree.
Transcending the intellectual mind is achieved through meditative practice. Meditation is different from contemplation or thinking. Meditation can lead to complete control over the mind. Whereas some meditation practices focus attention on being mindful of the objects of awareness, the Transcendental Meditation technique is described as going beyond thinking so that pure consciousness becomes conscious only of itself. “It is a blissful state that encompasses elements of serenity, peace and acceptance, but also exhilaration and a sense of possibilities, both for now and for the future” (Rosenthal, 2009, p. 8).

5. Transcendental Meditation

Transcendental Meditation (Roth, 1987; Rosenthal 2009; Shear 2006) is a mantra-based meditation based on the ancient Vedic tradition. TM is a gift to the world by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, a disciple of the Swami Brahmananda Saraswati, Shankaracharya of Jyotir Math, the highest spiritual seat of Vedic tradition in India. Maharishi has taught the Science and Technology of Consciousness: Vedas and Vedic Literature are foundation of the Science of Consciousness, while TM and advanced TM-Sidhi techniques are the Technology of Consciousness. More than six million people in the world have learned the TM technique.

The TM technique is easy to learn and requires no change in life-style or beliefs (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1963; Roth, 1987). It is normally practiced for 20 minutes twice daily sitting quietly with the eyes closed. In this technique a specific sound or mantra is repeated to bring the attention inwards and effortless transcend thought. A trained TM teacher according to a prescribed process carefully chooses the mantra. One gradually drops down from the surface level of thoughts to a deeper quieter absolute state where the mind is totally at rest. At this bottom layer the mind is Pure Consciousness, the transcendent state — “a state of inner wakefulness with no object of thought or perception, just pure consciousness aware of its own unbounded nature” (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1976, p. 123). There is no intellectual effort involved in transcending. When Consciousness is left free to experience itself that is transcendence. It is distinct from and beyond
6. Benefits of Transcendental Meditation

Imagine the mind and body free from any external pushes and pulls. It is completely relaxed and living in a state of harmony with nature all around it. The quality of perception becomes finer and finer till one is able to directly experience the subtle elements around oneself. The mind resonates with the nature all around it, and conceives new creative formulations that are completely aligned with nature. These ideas and concepts will have complete support of nature and will have a high probability of success. One can live in harmony with nature and enjoy effortless success. With TM, it is as if the mind regroups and awakens to the power of one’s true nature. It is as if a light switch has been turned on. One can effectively control one’s mind and experience one’s infinite potential and power.

TM is a general-purpose technique for solving many problems. Research has shown benefits from TM at every level of body and mind. Over 700 research studies have been published documenting the many health and social benefits of practicing TM and advanced techniques. There are significant positive changes in physiology and psychology at the individual level. The use of TM significantly reduces psychological stress and anxiety compared with other techniques (Alexander, Rainforth, & Gelderloos, 1993; Eppley, Abrams & Shear 1989; Orme-Johnson & Barnes 2013). In a longitudinal study over 10 years, the rate of human development reached post-conventional levels associated with self-development (Chandler, Alexander & Heaton 2005). The heart’s pulse and blood pressure become normal. TM is being used successfully to treat intense situations such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) syndrome. Regular practice of TM has been shown to help with total brain integration (Travis, 2011), improvement in cardiac health (Schneider, Staggers, et al., 1995), reduction in stress and anxiety (Orme-Johnson & Barnes 2013), and reduction in negativity in society (Orme-Johnson et al., 1988).

After examining the research accumulated for over 40 years, the American Heart
Association (AHA) recommended specifically only TM as a way to control blood pressure.

“Because of many negative studies or mixed results and a paucity of available trials, all other meditation techniques [including Mindfulness] received a ‘Class III, no benefit, Level of Evidence C’ recommendation. Thus, other meditation techniques are not recommended in clinical practice to lower BP at this time.” (Brook et al., 2013)

In addition, there are social benefits when a number of people meditate together. The combined effect of many people meditating together on the environment creates a powerful force. Oprah Winfrey says that the practice of TM in her whole office has not only benefitted the employees, but that there is better harmony and productivity in the office (Winfrey, 2013). Regular practice of TM leads to greater work performance in business (Herriott, 2000; Herriott, 2014).

Published research studies have shown evidence that if the square root of one percent of the world’s population practices advanced TM practices together, it generates a significant coherence in the world that can disrupt any negative tendencies. Crime drops, killings stop, war stops, and geo-political acrimony can die down in the face of such a force (Orme-Johnson, Alexander, Davies, Chandler, & Larimore, 1988). This is called the Super-radiance effect or the Maharishi Effect.

7. Conclusion

Everyone wants to live a happy and blissful life. For bright professionals, further intellectual development will only lead to limited marginal benefits. Transcendence is distinct from Intellect. Real development in adulthood requires the individual to transcend to a different source beyond one’s normal boundaries. By regularly transcending through the practice of TM, these same professionals can develop their consciousness, release stress, and improve creativity and health tremendously.
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About The Author

Dr. Anil Maheshwari is a Professor of Management Information Systems, and the Director of Center for Data Analytics, at the Maharishi University of Management in Fairfield, IA. He has taught at business schools in City University of New York, University of Cincinnati and others before joining MUM. He has also worked in the IT industry for over 20 years, including many years of leadership positions at IBM in Austin TX, and a couple of years at fast-paced start-ups. He earned a B.Tech. in Electrical Engineering degree from IIT Delhi, an MBA from IIM Ahmedabad, and a Ph.D. from Case Western Reserve University. He is an expert in data mining and has written a well-regarded book on this topic, now available on Amazon.com.

Anil is a practitioner of the Transcendental Meditation (TM) and TM-Sidhi programs. He ran a marathon in Austin. He blogs on Enlightenment, Information Technology, and more at anilmah.com