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Developing the "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" through Maharishi's Transcendental Meditation Programme

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Transcendental Meditation (TM) is a simple, natural, effortless mental technique practised twenty minutes twice daily, sitting comfortably with eyes closed. During this procedure the individual's awareness settles down to experience a unique state of restful alertness: as the body becomes deeply relaxed, the mind transcends all mental activity to experience the simplest form of human awareness, Transcendental Consciousness. In this silent field of consciousness the mind is fully awake in its total creative potential. This experience of unbounded awareness awakens the total potential of Natural Law in all aspects of individual thought and action while dissolving accumulated stress and fatigue. The results are enjoyed as increasing effectiveness, success, and happiness in daily life.

A friend of mine recently told me a story about some Indian businessmen who flew to the United States to attend a seminar taught by Steven R. Covey, the author of the celebrated book, **The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People**. When they finally met Mr. Covey, he told them "Why did you come all this way to study with me? The lessons I teach basically come from India!"

Indians often forget that the deepest knowledge in life finds its source in the soil of India, and management and personal leadership are no exception. This article attempts to show how each of the seven habits of highly effective people, identified by Mr. Covey, can be achieved through the application of a technology of ancient Vedic Science—specifically, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's Transcendental Meditation Programme.

WHAT IS TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION ?

Transcendental Meditation (TM) is a simple, natural, effortless mental technique practised twenty minutes twice daily, sitting

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comfortably with eyes closed. During this procedure the individual's awareness settles down to experience a unique state of restful alertness: as the body becomes deeply relaxed, the mind transcends all mental activity to experience the simplest form of human awareness, Transcendental Consciousness. In this silent field of consciousness the mind is fully awake in its total creative potential. This experience of unbounded awareness awakens the total potential of Natural Law in all aspects of individual thought and action while dissolving accumulated stress and fatigue. The results are enjoyed as increasing effectiveness, success, and happiness in daily life.

Even though TM is a simple and easy-to-do technique, it produces a remarkable array of benefits. In fact, TM is the most thoroughly researched technique for self-development, the benefits for the mind, health, personality and society. Studies have been conducted at Harvard Medical School, Cornell University, Stanford University, University of Chicago, etc. These studies have been published in top journals such as Science, Hypertension, Academy of Management Journal, Psychosomatic Medicine and American Journal of Managed Care.

Health benefits from the practice of TM include reduced hypertension, reduced stress cardiovascular disease, reduced use of cigarettes and alcohol and increased energy.

Benefits for the mind include improved decision making, increased creativity and intelligence, better memory, reduced anxiety and greater inner peace.

Improved development of personality includes better marital and family life, more happiness, tolerance, and friendliness; increased self-confidence and leadership ability, Improved moral reasoning, and increased job satisfaction.

Benefits for society include reduced crime, sickness and violence, greater harmony and cooperation, greater orderliness and progress.

How can TM Help to Develop the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People ?

In order to understand how TM can help develop the seven habits of highly effective people, it is important to realize two things :

1. TM is a technology of consciousness; that is, it is a technology to develop and unfold the deeper level of our own consciousness - the source of creativity, intelligence, energy, health and happiness deep within us; and-
2. The development of consciousness is primary to each of the seven habits of highly effective people.

Covey writes that "there are principles that govern human effectiveness - natural laws in the human dimension that are just as real, just as unchanging and unarguably there as laws of gravity are in the physical dimension." He identifies some of these principles, namely integrity, honesty, human dignity, service, quality, excellence, potential, growth, patience, nurturance and encouragement. Covey states that developing a character ethic that embodies these principles is the basis of the seven habits of highly effective people.

Covey's insights are very profound, his identification of basic principles that govern human effectiveness as natural laws in the human dimension provides an excellent paradigm for us to explore the relationship of these basic principles to the field of consciousness itself.

NATURAL LAW AND THE UNIFIED FIELD

Physics attempts to describe the functioning of our universe by identifying fundamental principles (laws of nature) that govern all activity in the universe. Recent discoveries in modern quantum physics have led to the understanding that there is one field underlying all the diverse force and matter fields in nature. Modern scientists call this the unified field of natural law.

Commenting on these discoveries Maharishi writes, "In recent decades modern science has revealed progressively deeper layers of order in Nature, from the atomic to the nuclear and sub-nuclear levels of Nature's functioning. This progressive exploration has culminated in the recent discovery of the Unified Field of all the Laws of Nature, the ultimate source of order in the universe. The self-referral dynamism of the Unified Field has been identified as the field of consciousness-self-referral Transcendental Consciousness-which is easily accessed through my Transcendental Meditation."²

In other words, the deepest level of nature's functioning and the deepest level of human functioning are one and the same— a field of pure intelligence or consciousness. Just as the unified field discovered by modern physics is fundamental to all the expressed laws of nature (gravity, electromagnetism etc.), this same field of consciousness is fundamental to the principles (laws of nature) identified by Covey as the basis of effective human functioning.

TAP THE SAP

Whereas Covey refers to these basic principles of human nature as the "roots" of effective human behavior, we can now say that more fundamental than the roots is the "sap" that nourishes the root - the field of pure consciousness which structures and finds expression in these basic principles. This understanding parallels the understanding in modern physics that the Unified Field of Natural Law is basic to and finds expression in the different laws of nature governing all activity in the universe. Like a wise gardener, if we could operate on the level of the sap and provide nourishment to the root, we could strengthen the whole tree.

According to Covey, the seven habits of highly effective people are based on the principles that govern human effectiveness. That is the more that these principles are part and parcel of one's character, the more these seven habits will manifest. Now we can go one step further and say that the more of one's own pure consciousness an individual experiences and unfolds, the more these basic principles will be strengthened and developed. Maharishi's Transcendental Meditation is a proven technology to unfold this most basic field of life—one's own unbounded consciousness.

Let's take a brief look at each of the seven habits of highly effective people and see how the application of TM - the technology of consciousness - can help to naturally develop these habits in the individual.

Habit One : Be Proactive - Covey writes, "Between freedom and response, man has the freedom to choose."³ Covey identifies four qualities self-awareness, imagination, conscience, and independent will as fundamental to the proactive model. A proactive person is self-motivated and not caught in old patterns of thought and behaviour.

But when we are tired and stressed, it is not possible to be proactive. We become reactive: someone "pushes our button" and we react with the same old unproductive pattern of behaviour. We lack the will power to break out of unhealthy patterns. One of the fundamental benefits of TM is to reduce stress, tension, and fatigue. Our mind becomes more settled and our thinking becomes more clear. We have more vitality, more energy, and greater will power. Furthermore, TM provides greater self-awareness, improves creativity and imagination, improves moral reasoning, and develops greater independence of will. These form the basis of proactive behavior as well as the reduction of counter-productive (reactive) behavior. This is why TM has been shown to be very effective in increasing positive personality traits and in reducing negative behavior, including decreased cigarette, alcohol, and drug abuse.

Habit Two : Begin With an End in Mind: Start with a clear destination to understand what we value most and what we want to accomplish.

To begin with a proper end in mind, it is important to understand what we value most in life, what we want to accomplish in life, as well as practice of TM, we experience the fullest value of our own Self. Day by day, we become more in touch with our own deepest thoughts and feelings, and what is most important to us in life. As this becomes deeply structured in our awareness, we develop a fundamental set of goals that in turn structures our activities. This allows each project we undertake to be maximally fulfilling to ourselves personally as well as professionally. And, as we have discussed, the deepest level of our own Self is also the deepest level of nature's functioning - the unified field of natural law. As we gain contact with this field, our own desires and goals become in harmony with natural law, so even when we act locally, we spontaneously think globally — for the good of every one.

Habit Three: Put First Things First: Manage yourself, organise and execute around priorities.

It is often tempting to engage in crisis management - to attend to only those things that seem to require our immediate attention. However, it is important to give due time to activities that are more beneficial in the long range; activities more in tune with what we really want to accomplish, and which would prevent the next crisis from occurring. This habit requires broad comprehension and the ability to focus: we want to keep the big picture in mind, as well as focus on the details, so that we know where we are and where we are going. Psychological research on TM shows that it develops both broad comprehension and the ability to focus simultaneously. Psychologists call this combination "field independence".

Habit Four : Think Win/Win : See life as a co-operative endeavour, where success is not achieved at the expense or exclusion of the success of others.

The world is as we are. Our perception of life is based on our own inner experience. If we are stressed, fatigued, and using only a small portion of our full potential, we tend to adopt a win/lose model - us against them. But when we are energetic, relaxed, and confident in our own abilities, we naturally think win/win. TM expands the mind, refreshes the body, and dissolves stress and fatigue. We experience a state of inner happiness. With such a state of well-being, win/win, which is a higher model of behaviour than win/lose (or lose/lose for that matter !), becomes our natural attitude. We don't have to adopt it. We simply reflect what we are experiencing inside.

Habit Five: Seek First to Understand: Understand, then be understood; build the skill of empathetic listening that inspires openness and trust.

Empathetic listening can be challenging. Maybe at the office a subordinate comes to tell us he has not completed an assignment that we gave him to do. How should we respond ? Do we give him a stern lecture ? Covey suggests that we listen in such a way as to really understand him first. Empathetic listening guides the speaker to unfold his thoughts and feelings in a non-threatening atmosphere. But if we are irritable, or prone to dominating others, they will never open up to us, and we may never really understand a given person or situation. Psychological research shows that TM reduces irritability and decreases the tendency to dominate, while improving interpersonal relationships. This forms the basis for successful empathetic listening.

Habit Six: Synergize: Apply the principle of co-operative creativity and value differences.

The world is a beautiful mosaic of different values, different cultures, different modes of thought and behaviour, It is the unity within this diversity that makes it a whole - that is why the world is a mosaic rather than just a collection of discordant fragments. It is astonishing what people can create when they think holistically and co-operate synergistically. One of the most profound effects of Transcendental Meditation is the development of holistic functioning of the brain-what scientists refer to as brain-wave coherence. This means that the different parts of the brain (left and right hemispheres, frontal and occipital lobes) function in an increasingly harmonious way. This facilitates holistic and synergetic thinking. Moreover, TM has been shown to create coherence not only within the individual, but among individuals as well. That is, when a group of people (like a management team) practice TM as a group, the creativity and co-operation among the members of the group is much greater than if separate individuals practice TM alone. This is because consciousness is a field. "No man is an island" is a popular expression. Through every thought, word, and action we influence those around us. When we are more creative, energetic, orderly in our thinking, and harmonious in our behaviour, this creates a positive influence in our environment. And when a group practices TM together, the whole is indeed greater than the sum of the parts. This is why over 100 companies in India alone have introduced the TM technique for their top level managers, and well as for their staff and even line workers.

Habit Seven: Renewal: Preserve and enhance your greatest asset, yourself, by renewing the physical, spiritual, mental and social/emotional dimensions of your life.

The TM technique is a technology to experience and unfold our full potential. Each sitting of TM renews mind, body, emotions, and spirit. This is the basis of effective management.

If you want to manage others, first you must manage yourself properly. By contacting and unfolding our own inner reservoir of creativity and intelligence through the TM technique, we enhance our ability to make good, life-supporting decisions. By dissolving stress and fatigue, we improve our health, and increase our energy, alertness, and effectiveness. More tender qualities of heart and mind naturally develop, and a deeper vision of life emerges. As managers, we can steer a more successful course, and accomplish maximum for ourselves while enhancing the quality of life of those around us. The Transcendental Meditation technique is a very practical, powerful tool indeed for effective, successful management.

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