

Dismantling Decades of Disastrous Decisions

Maharishi's Analysis of His Life's Work
Conveyed August 23rd – September 12th, 2015

December 25, 2015

After reviewing my life, under Guru Dev's kind and loving guidance, I find myself torn between letting go and interfering. But I can't help myself. While I can live with the long-term effects on my personality of similarly disastrous decisions I made in the past, I do find it very difficult to leave so many devotees adrift, all muddled up as they try hard to reinterpret everything I did, in whatever creative ways they can, and to obey everything I said, even when I contradicted myself, just so they can maintain the illusion that I lived infallibly and was therefore worthy of their devotion. And so I remain concerned that hundreds of my teachers continue to support decisions they dislike, or even abhor, just because they believe, for some reason, that is what I want them to do.

I would hope, by the time you have finished thinking about my analysis of my life's work which follows, that you will conclude instead that I didn't need to be perfect in order to be your valuable friend, and that our future together should be even more enjoyable when we live it on that basis.

Analysis of My Life's Work

I feel I achieved three **Unqualified Successes** during my life:

- 1) My unshakeable confidence in my conclusion that it is the natural tendency of the mind to turn within, which led to my successful rebellion against the accepted wisdom of the ages on this crucial point about how to meditate most effectively. The result, within a relatively short period of time after coming to that conclusion, was the creation of the Transcendental Meditation technique to harness that natural tendency.
- 2) My choice of Guru Dev to be my teacher. His wisdom and love have never failed me.
- 3) My decision to revive and clarify the spiritual wisdom in ancient Vedic texts in light of my conclusion that it is the natural tendency of the mind to turn within.

My **Qualified Successes** I'd list as:

- 1) The development of advanced rounding courses, which proved very good for many, but too intense for some.
- 2) The TM-Sidhi program's experimentation with the Yoga Sutras to release spiritual energy, which also proved very good for many, but not for some. I regret deeply that I did not react faster to the obvious evidence that knowing oneself too clearly too quickly was too much too soon for them.
- 3) Holding onto my light-hearted sense of humor for as long as I did. I only wish it could have been longer.
- 4) Having thousands of personal friendships, and sharing Guru Dev's wisdom with them individually. But I was not able to maintain that pace as I aged.

I feel that several of my decisions **Muddied the Clear Water**:

- 1) I was so delighted with the success of TM that I overemphasized its importance. I should have made it much clearer that the TM technique, like any spiritual technique, is only a means to an end, as Guru Dev taught and as I explained in my commentary ***On The Bhagavad Gita***, particularly Chapter Six, Verse 5. In TM's case, it is a very simple end: the ability to turn within at will.
- 2) I also overemphasized advanced techniques. While it is useful to develop flexibility while turned within, that comes naturally with experience. By using advanced techniques as lures to ever-increasing one's speed of development, I gave the impression there is always more to learn, and always a reliance on techniques, instead of clearly emphasizing that turning within does not depend on any technique. And even though I remain convinced that almost everyone would find TM useful for establishing a habit of turning within easily, stating it that simply would have been enough.
- 3) Although I followed the members of the Holy Tradition in focusing on higher states of consciousness as the end goal of human life, it is quite clear to us now that the experience of unusual spiritual experiences may be interpreted differently by each mind, and may be used in human life just like any other experience: as something to share, as something to keep private, as something to get elated about, as something to overemphasize, or as something to take in stride as a normal part of a successful life. And now that Guru Dev, the other members of the Holy Tradition and I are focused on the eternal nature of

individual life itself, it is also quite clear to us that a permanently relevant goal for life would have to be implicit in individual daily life, because otherwise individual life would have no further purpose once you reached its experiential goal, such as a higher state of consciousness. This subtle shift in goals, from particular experiences in higher states of consciousness to life's implicit goal: happiness, has such far-reaching implications we will probably be uncovering them for centuries.

- 4) I also carried the importance of effective spiritual wisdom too far in education. It seemed to me, and still does seem to me, more important to gain spiritual wisdom than to develop academic, intellectual skills. But both are highly valuable, and mixing them together in the same institution, where one is considered superior to the other, can quickly lead to demands to subordinate intellectual freedom to whatever is considered the spiritual wisdom of the moment. This eliminates intellectual independence and that has diminished the academic reputation of MIU/MUM for many. Since universities succeed to the extent they remain open to all intellectual inquiry, I should have kept the ashram atmosphere separate from MIU/MUM, and I apologize to all the professors who served my goals handicapped by this muddying of clear waters.
- 5) I concluded, and often joked, that paying attention to past lives is for the ignorant. This conclusion was based on the Holy Tradition's previous idea that enlightenment dissolves all or at least most cause-and-effect relationships. Guru Dev and Shankara have recently persuaded me, by helping me recover my own memories, that our personalities are the continuing result of the many decisions of our daily lives, wherever lived. And that being aware of oneself as a being of light, and recognizing that similar beings of light abound, and that similar light pervades the universe does not change the crucial role personality plays in the pursuit of happiness. It is also clear to me now that knowing oneself, and understanding the deep roots of our desires and motives, is very valuable in that pursuit.
- 6) Now that I have stepped back, and can remember many lives lived outside Vedic culture, I feel my attempts to revitalize that culture, based on my own ancient emotional attachments to it, fall among those decisions that made some of my TM teachers very happy and others miserable. It is also distressing to me that for many that revitalization merely reinforced their ancient superstitions. Vedic culture, like any other human culture, was itself only a qualified success, and compared to many 21st century human cultures its disadvantages outweigh its advantages. One fundamental reason for that is that a more democratic alternative is now strongly preferred. I don't have the heart to try to prevent any of my TM teachers from individually indulging in Vedic culture all they want, but I realize now it would have been much better for the TM organization to have stayed focused on simply teaching TM.

When all is said and done, I feel the following were **Disastrous Decisions**:

- 1) My decision to use fear to motivate total dedication to the TM movement and its goal of World Peace. I sincerely hoped that assembling large groups together in various places in the world could avert what I felt was an impending disaster, and I also felt I needed to force my devotees to take it seriously. At that time my dreams were haunted by a man whose extremely destructive desires died with him at Amritsar in June 1984. But my concerns did not subside as quickly, proving all too clearly my own maxim that “fear is ignorance”.
- 2) My related decision to rely on the Indian pundit program instead, after repeated failures to gather together sufficient numbers to create World Peace. When Guru Dev and I started to review this decision, he said to me very gently, *“Pundits? What were you thinking, Mahesh? You and I don’t respond well to someone continuously singing our praises. Why would the gods? And certainly not Brahman? I know you tried almost anything to bring about World Peace. But in doing so you forgot what I said so often: peace will not be achieved unless fear, anger, jealousy, selfishness, greed and lust are first conquered within themselves by the leaders of nations. So forget about World Peace for now. Just forget about it. We can revisit that goal in a thousand years.”* I have taken this advice, including Guru Dev’s final insight for me on this issue, which was that greed comes in many guises, and that being emotionally greedy for spiritual experiences is essentially the same as being greedy for gold.
- 3) Allowing financial shenanigans. This was motivated by my “the needs of the movement come first” attitude. But in the end, the end did not justify the means. It was just too easy for me to forget that in the heat of the moment.
- 4) Putting the movement’s needs ahead of my personal relationships. The same “needs of the movement” attitude often took precedence over the demands of friendship, to my dismay.
- 5) Eliminating from the movement personally popular leaders and encouraging uncritical support of my own and other leaders’ decisions. Guru Dev showed me that these disastrous decisions were unconsciously caused by my past life experiences with other spiritual leaders who had taken over similar movements I had founded.
- 6) Allowing the admiration of my followers to develop into the trappings of worship. Guru Dev showed me that my early resistance to this eroded over time due to my unresolved feelings that my efforts in previous lives to help humanity lacked sufficient appreciation.

- 7) All attempts to influence politics or gain political power. Guru Dev showed me that my creation of a court around me, with monarchical-style hierarchies and titles, was motivated by unfulfilled desires from my previous life as a shah. He told me that in many ways I began behaving like a shah again, instead of a spiritual leader, and that I should guard against this streak of political authoritarianism.
- 8) Trusting members of my family more than those who were trustworthy. This dynastic tendency extended beyond my actual relatives to those who had been my sons in other lives. And it is very clear, and painful, to me to see that indulging them as I did was not only a problem for the TM movement, but also a problem for them.
- 9) Playing at science. I have a disturbing image in my mind of guards bullying little old lady governors in their Dome when they get tired during their programs. That is the sad result, Guru Dev told me, of believing in the Maharishi Effect, which he dismissed as an illusion, because the evidence of the ages is clear that although creating a nicer atmosphere may cause people to relax, it does not really change them. Otherwise resting in heaven between lives would fundamentally change every personality. And that does not happen. Only individuals making decisions about how to pursue their own desires, based on their own wisdom about life, can shift their own personalities over time. That is why Guru Dev assumes that any evidence that appears to validate the Maharishi Effect will prove over time to be inadequate and will never be scientifically persuasive.
- 10) Not saying “No” more often. At times I was begged over and over again to make some change or another in the TM movement against my better judgment, such as separating the genders organizationally. And sometimes, even though I felt the requested change was not really good for you or the movement, I gave in. Next time I will be a better parent and just say “No”.

The Future

Funnily enough, when Guru Dev and I first started thinking about the future of the TM movement, he asked a surprising question: who should “own” the TM movement? I had never thought of it that way before. We discussed the possibilities and settled on the TM teachers: those who not only enjoyed TM themselves but also wanted to share it with others.

All the assets of the TM movement are a means to that end, and have been held in trust to serve their desire to share TM freely with others. Vedic culture praises those who are not too attached to assets. So do not imagine that I would want you to hold onto any particular asset owned by the TM movement. Nothing is sacred, not even my gilded prison in Vlodrop.

My TM teachers should feel free to independently consider what changes might be made to better serve our desire to share TM freely with others, to recapture the fort we all focused on so effectively for the first two decades, in order to transform the TM movement into an enthusiastic, dynamic, effective and loved organization again.

It is never too late to reverse course, to refocus on the main goal, as I demonstrated during my life many times. But Guru Dev and I understand that might prove easier for the next generation of TM movement leaders, who have never met me personally or worked with me directly, and it is my hope they too will listen to my explanations of how and why the history of the TM movement took the path it did, and accept my admission of fallibility, of letting my own personal fears and unfulfilled desires shape the final decades of the TM movement in ways which would have been almost unimaginable prior to 1975. If they do listen, I know they will be comfortable making whatever changes to the TM movement are needed over time to continue to serve its only goal: to teach TM to as many people as possible.

I know it is not easy to free yourself from excessive emotional attachments to a culture you thoroughly enjoyed in the past. But, as Guru Dev recently showed me, those attachments are almost never due to clear thinking about that culture's merits. Rather, they are mostly due to vague feelings that your happiness is dependent on that culture's continuance.

So instead of holding onto the past, Guru Dev and I are looking to the future. And we see that a worldwide human culture, incorporating the best of each nation's cultural accomplishments, is in its infancy. We dearly hope that TM, our pristine version of turning within, stripped of all unnecessary cultural baggage from the past, becomes an integral part of Vedic culture's lasting contribution to human civilization.

Final Thoughts

Shankara's intellect has convinced the members of the Holy Tradition that it was a mistake of the heart for us to be afraid of the mistake of the intellect. An even more beautiful explanation of life has resulted from a rigorous analysis of its inherent patterns, and we are all supporting the changes in emphasis and tone that result.

Two of the main shifts in emphasis for us are to transform the guru-disciple relationship into one based on friendship and to focus on realistic appraisals of how pursuing enlightenment affects our personalities. So I have created this public record of what are usually private analyses of why I did what I did in order to help each of you engage in a similar analysis of your own life's work and personality.

At the very least, I want to free as many of my TM teachers as I can from those elements of my personality which have entangled them due to their devotion to me. And I can assure you that repeating such mistakes over and over again, as I have done in the past as Jewish, Vedic and Muslim spiritual and political leaders, gets a bit tiresome. So Guru Dev advised me to be this candid to help all of us avoid future repetitions.

That is why I am asking those of you who truly love me to no longer obey my every expressed whim, to honor my most profound contributions to human culture by rescuing them from the unnecessary accretions which are hindering their effectiveness, and to reinforce my own desire to stay focused on what really matters: our pursuit of our own and humanity's happiness. I do not know if I deserve to have my legacy purified and strengthened in this way by you, but I do know the best of you are quite capable of accomplishing that feat if you draw deeply upon your own abundant inner spiritual courage.

Jai Guru Dev

Maharishi