

'A fascinating book. Absolutely authentic and vividly told. As if you had been there yourself. I couldn't stop reading.'

Michael Rabben

What is the inner makeup of a person who feels the urgent need to serve his spiritual master? When Hans Vater met Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in person, he soon was so attracted to his charisma that he did everything he could to follow him and be close to him. With relentless openness he describes his spiritual ups and downs from his time with Maharishi, how a very personal relationship with him developed, how he climbed up the stepladder to be Maharishi's personal secretary and finally said farewell lovingly, so that he felt free to go his own way again.



Hans Vater received his Ph.D. under Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker with a thesis on Plato's dialogue 'Parmenides'. In 1972, he was trained as a teacher of Transcendental Meditation by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. From 1978 to 1981, he was Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's personal secretary. After a serious illness, he joined the 'Thousand Headed Purusha', a group of advanced TM practitioners. Since 2019, he lives in the spiritual community 'Yoga Vidya' in Bad Meinberg, Germany.

Hans Vater

At the Feet of Maharishi

My Time with the Master

Alfa-Veda

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Prologue

It was on the morning of 31 October 2004. I slammed the trunk of my green Honda Civic, which, as always, rattled slightly. I got into the car and slowly drove past the entrance of the Ilse-Eickhoff-Academy in Bremen, where I had spent the last four and a half years.

No one was there to be seen; they were probably all ‘in the program’, as they said there, that is, in meditation. I looked at the dashboard: 10:04 AM. Actually it was only 9:04 AM, because last night the winter time had begun. My car was loaded with about half of my possessions. I had already brought a first load to my new domicile in Hamburg three days ago.

So, this was, I thought, the final farewell to the TM Movement to which I had dedicated my whole life since 1971. A period of about 33 years had come to an end.

I had learned TM, Transcendental Meditation, in November 1967, when I was studying philosophy in Hamburg with my supervisor Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker. The encounter with TM at that time had initiated another farewell, namely the departure from a normal bourgeois academic career. For after a period of regular morning and evening meditations, I simply could no longer imagine spending my life with the theoretical analyses of old philosophical texts and academic debates.

So, soon after finishing my doctorate on Plato’s ‘Parmenides’, I flew to Mallorca in the summer of 1971 to take a seven-month intensive course to become a Transcendental Meditation teacher. Meditation then determined my life for over 30 years. I became director of the TM Center in Munich, then regional coordinator and later director of the German TM Movement. Then I spent years in Seelisberg, Switzerland, in the international headquarters, at the feet of Maharishi, who had introduced Transcendental Meditation to the West.

The absolute highlight of my career was my two and a half years as a Personal Secretary to Maharishi. After that I was, for 17 years, a member

of a group of Vedic¹ monks called 'Purusha',² which Maharishi had founded. After I had left this monastic group in January 1999, I looked for a job in active life. By some coincidence I ended up as the administrative director of a small Ayurvedic³ chronic disease clinic that belonged to the TM movement.

This time also came to an end. The clinic was closed and I ended up in the Meditation Academy in Bremen. There I started to publish my esoteric knowledge and spiritual insights in book form. My first book was published in April 2003, the second one I had finished two weeks ago and sent out to publishers, just in time before my move.

It had been clear to me for some time that I no longer belonged to the Meditation Academy and the TM movement, and now an opportunity had arisen to move to Hamburg, only about 30 kilometers away from my birthplace Reinbek. Not that I was disappointed in TM. Not at all. I still consider this meditation a very, very good technique and feel deep gratitude towards Maharishi, who has supported me endlessly on my spiritual path.

Meeting with the Master

The first time I saw Maharishi was in autumn 1970 in Kössen, Tyrol, where he led a large course, a pre-teacher training. I arrived one day after the beginning of the course and parked my car on the square in front of the assembly hall, which was already full with about 1,500 people. At the far other end, on a stage, Maharishi was sitting, dressed in white, on a sofa covered in the same white. At that time, I knew nothing at all about how to behave towards an Indian master. I looked at him, certainly not very respectfully. Today it almost seems to me as if he had interrupted his speech for a second and looked at me briefly, like, 'Aha, he's here'. Nevertheless, I didn't become aware of that, if it was true at all at the time. I sat down in the back row and listened to his lecture.

In the following days, I learned that before each lecture there was a kind of welcome ritual, which I had missed on the first day, but which might have repulsed me a bit, especially since it was probably especially pronounced at the beginning of the course. Maharishi always arrived with a clear delay and was driven by a devotee to the back of the building, the stage entrance. In front of this entrance a long alley of devotees had formed, all with a flower or even a bouquet in their hands. For those who had experienced this before, they knew what happiness one felt when one could hand a flower to Maharishi and perhaps even receive a blessing, a look, or in exceptional cases, he even received a short greeting from him.

In the hall, the followers probably waited an hour or more. At some point, someone usually suggested that it was best to meditate now, and so there was an expectant yet peaceful silence. When Maharishi had finally made his way through the people waiting outside and entered the stage, everyone rose. Maharishi stood before the crowd, hands folded in greeting, and looked across the rows. In a flash, his eyes glided across all the faces. Then he said 'Jai Guru Dev',¹⁴ which was answered by everyone with 'Jai Guru Dev'. the standard greeting in the TM movement.

He then sat down on the sofa, cross-legged under his white Indian dhoti,⁵ which always took some time. Meanwhile, some personal secretary or 'boy' pushed the low table in front of him, on which, besides flowers, there was usually a clock, which he apparently didn't pay much attention to. That's roughly how the greeting went several times a day, before each lecture. Later I realized that waiting for the Master was an important part of his training: focusing attention on him was supposed to raise the student's consciousness and help it to align with the enlightened consciousness of the Master.

In those early days, I watched Maharishi with interest. I had already noticed what a wonderful effect the mantra⁶ meditation he taught had. I thought, 'Whoever is able to teach such an amazing technique, he must have something special.' But now, that I experienced Maharishi live, my respect grew even more; I began to admire him more and more, even to love him.

One time, when the meeting was dissolved and he had asked everyone to leave, probably because he wanted to talk to some of them in person, I stood a bit cheeky, right in front of the stage and watched him from close up, watching the movements in the hall with a serious, almost stern look. What big eyes he had, infinitely intense and deep! For a fraction of a second, his gaze fell on me too, completely neutral, but then I knew that I shouldn't stand there and that my staring was not respectful.

What particularly impressed me, even inspired me when he spoke, was his quick-wittedness, especially when journalists came by and interviewed him. Maharishi seemed to have unlimited creativity. He could always give the question and the subject a completely unexpected twist that I would never have thought of, so that even the most aggressive questioners were disarmed. He also seemed to take pleasure in raising critical and stubborn questions from the ranks of the students. I remember that the owner of the satirical magazine 'Pardon', Johannes Nikel, who was himself a course participant, wanted to point out a weakness in his teaching. It was about the asanas, the yoga postures that were usually taught on the weekend residence courses as a support for meditation. Maharishi had a little brochure with asana instructions. In this brochure, it was recommended

to say a short prayer before starting the exercises, which was also printed there. Nikel argued that TM was a purely scientific method and its whole teaching approach was purely factual; it was not appropriate for a prayer to be taught in a TM booklet. Maharishi just said, 'Oh, such a short prayer, only ten seconds!' Of course, that was not a counter-argument at all. Nikel replied that it was a matter of principle. However, Maharishi said after each argument, only, 'Ten seconds...ten seconds!' and almost dismissed the question. Nikel got more and more excited but Maharishi remained calm and repeated these two words each time.

Maharishi made a point of ensuring that his teachers had a dignified and correct appearance. He wanted to reach the ordinary people with his teaching. Since the Kössen course was a preparation for teacher training, he also mentioned a few times that the male teachers should not wear long hair. He did not want hippies in his movement. On this Course, there were indeed many of such styled young people, including me. Many were quite annoyed by the imposition of having to cut off their hair to become TM teachers. But since only a few had already decided to attend the actual teacher training course, they had not yet had to cut their hair, and the overall picture remained largely unchanged.

A little anecdote from those days illustrates the quick-wittedness of Maharishi's 'educational methods.' At that time, he sometimes gave advice about diet – later he avoided such things more and more in order not to distract from the core of his teaching. Among other things, he once said that brown, i. e. unpeeled rice would not be good, and one should eat white rice. Brown rice would be something for pigs. There was also opposition to this view. A long-haired boy stood up and argued that all the vitamins were in the husk and so on. Maharishi sat there for a while as if thinking. Then he said, 'Maybe it's also good for hippies.'

Before I came to Kössen, I had not yet had the intention of becoming a TM teacher. TM had proven to be very valuable for me – but that was it. In the course of the Course, however, I got more and more attuned to the path of Maharishi, found myself aligning to his teaching and becoming enthusiastic about it. Then there was a certain moment when Maharishi grabbed me (in my subjective feeling, I really felt this has happened). It

was a full moon day. Maharishi had scheduled a moonlight ride with all the participants to a nearby small mountain. I knew this and had parked my VW right at the entrance of the parking lot to be able to drive directly behind Maharishi's car.

Nevertheless, when I waited there, my friend, Signe, who wanted to join me, was not there. I had to let almost all cars pass me. Finally, Signe came. We drove off, but were now, of course, far back in a long, long queue that almost reached from the valley to the top of the hill. At some point, halfway up the hill, we could not go on at all; we stood there, with cars behind us and in front of us. Very gradually, we reached the top of the hill, which was full of cars. Everything was quiet. Obviously, Maharishi had ordered that everyone should meditate. I leaned against a tire of my car to meditate, but then the meditation ended and the departure for the return journey began.

At one point, an alley of people had formed, several people deep, and the Bentley in which Maharishi was sitting slowly drove through these rows. I remember very clearly: Maharishi was sitting in the passenger seat and had rolled down the window. I stood in the second or third row and could hardly see him in the semi-darkness, only noticing him waving a flower back and forth to greet the row of people out of the window. As Maharishi passed by right at my height, I was suddenly gripped by such a feeling of happiness that I immediately knew, 'This is it; this is what I want to have always; I want to serve him, and that also means: I want to become a TM Teacher.' That was the turning point in my life.

It occurs to me at that moment that this situation was in some ways parallel to the situation in which Maharishi himself first met his Master, whom he called Guru Dev, and was 'grabbed' by him: Maharishi told on several occasions that in his youth he had always been in search of saints. Once he had heard about a very special saint, who was in the nearby mountain forests at the time. With a friend, he had hiked there in the dark night, found the house and had actually been admitted to the roof of the house where Guru Dev was apparently sitting in the dark. There was nothing to see, everyone was in meditation. Suddenly, for a short moment, a flash of light, like from a car far away fell on a figure sitting

in an armchair: Guru Dev. At that moment, Maharishi knew, 'This is it, my search is over.' Not long ago, a friend told me that he heard Maharishi say in a small circle, 'There were no roads in the area, and therefore no cars. The short flash of light on Guru Dev must have had another source. Maybe the light came from inside him.'

So, when the Kössen course ended, I was determined to become a TM teacher. A girl I had met there urged me to sign up right away, just like she did herself. We were so enthusiastic! However, I thought that it would be better to finish my doctoral thesis first. Moreover, that was right. Otherwise, I would never have been able to do it again; and the doctor title later did me a lot of good in teaching.

On the last day of the course it was a sunny October day, there were moving farewell scenes. It seemed to me as if I had completed a whole life in that one month. And I guess it was. What had changed in me! Not only that I had fallen unhappily in love again from afar – with an English woman – no, my thinking and consciousness had become something completely different. I was a different person. My soul had gone through so many ups and downs, it was completely turned upside down.

When Maharishi was driven off by a devotee in his Mercedes, I tried to keep up a little bit more. However, apparently there was a flight to catch or another important appointment to keep. In any case, I could not keep up. Furthermore, I noticed that I had left my coat in my accommodation, a farm. I had to go back. I walked around the outskirts of the village, agitated and for a short time suffering from a severe depression.

At home, I then set about finishing my dissertation thesis. It was no longer important to me. But I thought, 'Just write down what you know now. It can't be more than rejected.'

My father died. I passed my doctorate. And a year later, I went back to Kössen for a similar course. This time I already volunteered as a helper. I arrived the day before the course started and helped check in. During the course I was then part of the 'Security' detail. I had to take turns standing at the door with others and make sure that only people with a badge⁷ came in, even if they were well-known meditators. In return, our security team always kept the first row directly at the feet of the Master

free, a huge reward for such an easy job. At the beginning of the course, I still had long hair and my Che Guevara beard. I was still quite critical, no longer left wing, but still intellectual and scientific. Again, and again I stepped up to the microphone that was set up for the questioners in the front part of the central aisle. The old TM teachers who sat on stage with Maharishi probably already knew, 'Now it's that wild guy again with the long brown suede coat (it was just an imitation!), the hippie mane and the heady questions.' Nevertheless, Maharishi remained completely patient with me, even though he did not go to my level.

For example, once I asked him, 'You say that humanity is as old as creation. Yet geological and archaeological surveys have proven that humans have only existed for a few hundred thousand years.' – 'Oh!' Maharishi said. 'You find a bone every now and then, and then the bill is off by 50,000 years.' Of course, that was again no argument, but so the master let me run into the wall with my scientific head.

Once a special meeting was scheduled where everyone from his field of knowledge was to present parallels to Transcendental Meditation. I reported on Plato, with his term 'nous' – the direct insight in contrast to the insight of the mind. Maharishi praised me: 'You have a very good understanding of Transcendental Meditation.' I was surprised; I hadn't realized it at all.

Towards the end of the course I registered for TTC.⁸ In a special session, in front of the entire audience, each applicant had to hand in a written paper about any topic connected with Transcendental Meditation. Each one stepped onto the stage one by one. Maharishi sat on his sofa, looked at everyone with serious, inquiring but completely calm eyes and took notes. Afterwards, the others who had also been in front reported that it was impossible to look in Maharishi's eyes at that moment. Moreover, the same happened to me. We speculated that Maharishi might have looked at the aura and thus tested his eligibility for becoming a TM Teacher. In addition, indeed, at the end of the action, he mentioned that he had shortened a long procedure in this way. Nothing more, he said.

One day later, my friend Signe cut off my long hair.

Meditation Teacher Course

In October 1971, I took a flight, together with Rosita Wolf, the daughter of an older TM teacher, to Mallorca to do the TTC. Until the last moment, I could not believe it. In the airport bus on the runway in Mallorca Roswitha nudged me, 'Hans, we are here! We have made it!' After a longer taxi ride, we arrived in Cala Antena, at the south end of the island. We were actually there! The sun was warm; we waded in the shallow waters of the Mediterranean – pure bliss. Everything was lying in front of us.

In the Hotel Eugenia, everyone was allowed to request a room according to one's desire. I chose the number 723 on the seventh floor, with a balcony on the narrow side, facing the sea. I actually got it and during the next weeks was able to enjoy the sun rising above the sea every morning – for five months. It was an especially large room with a spacious bathroom that even had a window to the east. Unfortunately, due to its corner location and size, it was also very cold and draughty, only marble tiles, no carpet – and that was wintertime!

Below my room lived Christa L., whom I already knew from Munich. During the day, she heard me repeatedly as I moved and turned my meditation chair on the stone floor between 'rounds' (the individual meditation sections interrupted by asanas). Crazy and fanatical as I was then, I had the idea that I should always sit facing the sun when I meditated, because the master had once said that it was best to meditate facing East in the morning. So I concluded that I should follow the moving sun. Christa, below me, took the hourly disturbance with humor and patience.

That was not the only fanatical madness. I wanted to get the maximum out of it, to be enlightened by the end of the course if possible. For this, according to the theory, as much stress as possible had to be released, i. e., all the inner burdens of the psyche and thus of the nervous system. How to do that? By deep silence! That would regenerate and purify the nervous system.

The 'stress' – this word encompassed all genetically and biographically determined hardening of the psyche and the nervous system – was to dissolve as a result. So 'as much deep rest as possible' was the motto for me, and the deepest peace is achieved through Transcendental Meditation. This was proven by measurements of skin resistance, metabolic parameters and others. So, I decided to 'round' – to meditate – as much as I could in terms of time. Early in the morning, I got myself in my chair before the sun rose. I had given the armchair the right slant by placing a board, which I had picked up on the beach, under the front legs of the chair. This device made the moving of the chair, about every hour, even louder – I could not lift the chair because I would have lost the board.

The entire daily routine consisted, at least in the first months, almost only of 'rounds,' interrupted by lunch and a short walk afterwards. Then it went on until dinner. After this, there was a 'lecture' by Maharishi in the great hall. But instead of sitting as far forward as possible to catch everything, I sat down in the last row, a thick blanket wrapped around me, and meditated even during the lecture.⁹ When the lecture or question time was over, I sat down again in my room in the meditation chair and continued meditating until I was to the point of exhaustion that put me to bed. But at dawn I was up again and meditated in the direction of the rising sun.

Already towards the end of the course, it became apparent that this strategy of fighting for quick enlightenment was not entirely without a downside. I felt I was losing the ground under my feet. I tried to counteract, but it was already too late. After the course, I noticed this. The stress release that had been set in motion by the intense meditation could not be stopped. This went on for several years. I found myself in a constant emotional turmoil: fears, anger, worries... the thoughts were constantly rattling. It was only by working very hard and meditating little – only ten minutes at a time – that I gradually got a grip on myself. But on the other hand, I realized: 'I am transformed. I am no longer the same as I was before. I am a new, softer, freer, more relaxed and loving person.' Many hardenings of the soul had been softened; knots had loosened. The purification had been worthwhile.

When I met my doctoral supervisor Weizsäcker again after the course, he no longer recognized me, even after I had already spoken a few sentences to him. He grabbed his head and thought hard. An assistant standing next to him jumped in and said, 'Yes, I didn't recognize Vater at first either.' Moreover, that was certainly not only because I had cut off my long hair.

Yes, it was a wild course and a wild experiment. I don't think even Maharishi had anticipated exactly how much 'stress' we still had inside of us. Even a highly enlightened master does not know everything and cannot foresee everything. Nevertheless, at that time, we believed that.

What made it difficult for me was that I was doing more than was 'allowed'. For example, Maharishi did not want us to fast. I did it anyway, secretly – because I wanted to purify myself even more. But that went very wrong. I had actually been aware of the risk: In fasting it is important is to return to normal diet very slowly. So, after a week of fasting I started to eat again, very carefully. However, I could not put together my diet freely; I had to eat what was offered. After three days, I had cucumber salad with grated hazelnuts. I thought, now, after three days, something like that should be okay again.

Nevertheless, that was a mistake. I got a terrible stomachache and it lasted for many weeks. Every little bit of food increased the pain. So I was forced to keep on dieting, and as a result, my system purified itself more and more. This in turn led to an increase in my appetite. This was not without unpleasant consequences. I developed an almost unbearable craving to eat. There was a constant inner struggle. On the one hand, there was this constant mental anguish, mostly in the heart area, which was only temporarily alleviated when something was running down my throat. On the other hand my reason, which said, 'Too much food is not good, pull yourself together!'

So, I tormented myself all the time and fought against myself all the time. It just got worse and worse. One day I went to Angelica. Angelica was almost something like Maharishi's secretary then. I asked her to give me the 'eating technique'. This was a special technique that Maharishi had developed for those who could not cope with their 'table-tendency', as he

called it. Angelica instructed me in this technique. I felt a little bit guilty because neither she nor I had asked Maharishi if I could have it.

Anyway, I got this technique and I noticed how I relaxed during the instruction. I felt a great relief. Nevertheless, the effect in the next days, weeks and months was completely absurd: I could no longer fight my eating addiction. Almost without willpower, I gave in to my eating urge from then on. The stress really came out now. The agony in the heart area remained. The agony that was only masked in those moments when something viscous or mushy ran down my throat. Once I had started eating, I could not stop. The mental pain was just too strong. The consequence was that I always ate until I felt sick. It was a horrible time.

For my meditation, this was a catastrophe. Sitting upright with a proper meditation posture was out of the question. Most of the time I sat down on my bed, the pillow behind my back, leaning diagonally against the wall, my legs stretched out. I had once seen a picture of the fairy tale of the land of milk and honey, where people were completely overweight, obese, legs stretched out beside the rice mountain. I felt like that.

When I was once again completely desperate, an opportunity arose to tell Maharishi about my terrible situation. In the morning, I had eaten myself completely sick. In the evening, as usual, there was a lecture in the large cinema hall of Fiuggi Fonte.^{*10} The hall was a little outside the village. The students, about 2,000 of them, were taken there by bus. They all sat in the endless rows of chairs, Maharishi, in white, on top of the stage.

As usual, he first asked for experiences. But this time, unlike as usual, he did not want to know the best experiences, but the worst. I recognized the opportunity; and although I was terribly embarrassed, I went forward to the microphone that was set up in front of the stage. I told him about my craving for food and that I no longer had the strength to resist it.

Somehow at that moment, probably because of Maharishi's presence, some distance from my suffering arose, and I said that it was probably 'unstressing'.^{*11} He laughed and confirmed it. I felt better after that. On the way back, somebody offered me cookies, and again I could not say no, even though the stomachache from the morning was not over yet. So, those were the side effects of the course. I thought, 'Silly – this way I am

going to screw up the whole course.’ But it wasn’t like that. The ‘unstressing’ was obviously the most important thing for Maharishi at first. He wanted our nervous system to cleanse and refine itself so that knowledge could flow through us more easily. So, I was just right with my ‘stress release’; this was in alignment with the purpose of the course.

Maharishi spent very little time on knowledge in the first few months, and as I said, we met only once in the evening. If I had expected to gain deep insights from these lectures, I was disappointed. It was always about one topic: stress release, stress release and stress release again – and that was really not very interesting to me.

Maharishi usually began the lectures by asking about experiences in meditation. Many reported the most wonderful light appearances, infinity and eternity, absolute silence and so on, which made me feel envious. In most cases, however, Maharishi reacted with a wink, ‘Yes, another such experience’, everything was always just ‘stress release’. It was almost tiring.

Probably Maharishi wanted us not to lose ourselves in experiences. We should come to know the ‘Self’, which is known to be beyond all experience, the basis of all experience. On the other hand, he also wanted to show us how we should later deal with any experience of meditation students. We should always look at the mechanism of stress release: Meditation gives deep peace; in this peace, the nervous system regenerates; and this in turn manifests itself on the mental level as thoughts, feelings, visions and the like.

Of course, there were also more interesting ‘meetings’ in between. After a few months, I got the courage to go to the microphone in front of the room and ask questions. Mostly they were quite critical. It seemed to me that the lesson we would later teach our students was not always completely honest. However, since I could not imagine that Maharishi could be dishonest at all, I thought it must be my fault that I did not understand the matter properly.

For example, Maharishi taught that in meditation the mind traces thoughts back to their source and then experiences them in pure form. Nevertheless, first of all, I had never had this experience myself, and

secondly, it did not seem correct. In meditation, we might experience pure consciousness, but we did not experience it as the source of thought! As soon as we experienced a thought, it was always there! We never experienced its origin as pure Being, pure consciousness!

I don't remember how Maharishi reacted, but apparently he quickly grasped the pattern in my 'objections.' The pattern was, 'Can we honestly say that?' I remember a situation towards the end of the course when I noticed an ambiguity in a meeting and asked about it. Maharishi said to me, 'You always ask the same questions!' I said, 'No, I just thought of that.' Later I realized that he was right: It was again about honesty! At least he seemed to know me, despite the many other participants!

Actually, I had not only visited one TTC, but three TTCs in a row. Each course lasted ten weeks. You could, if you wanted, book several courses directly after each other. Then you did not take part in the actual meditation teacher training at the end of the first courses. One just 'rounded' while the others studied the teaching procedures. During the first course, all participants were concentrated in Cala Antena. During the second course, there were more students and at the same time, there was an advanced training course for people who were already TM teachers. So additional course hotels had to be opened in Cala Millor, about 20-30 kilometers away.

Those who had already taken part in the first course and wanted to continue were to move to the new course location, including me. I was very sorry about this, as I had such a nice room. All the 'movers' met in the lobby of the hotel. Maharishi himself was there and spoke to all those who were supposed to leave during the night. Someone regretted the move. Maharishi tried to make the new place palatable: It would be much quieter. I had to mention, at our current hotel, they had started to build a supermarket. However, since I lived at the front of the hotel, not directly across from the construction site, I thought that I would not be bothered that much. Finally, Maharishi asked, 'Who would like to stay here desperately?' I got up. When I looked around, I realized that I was the only one. Thereupon, I was allowed to stay in the old hotel I had stayed in, went up to my room and unpacked again.

I remember having a kind of waking sleep that night – maybe because I was a bit wired because of the ‘move’ and didn’t sleep very deeply. I was sleeping, but I was conscious and saw a bright light in front of me all the time. Awake sleep was considered among us to be a good sign of approaching ‘cosmic consciousness’, a state in which one stays awake under all circumstances and watches oneself as a ‘witness’, even in deep sleep. Unfortunately, this did not happen to me again as clearly and for as long as that night. In the weeks that followed, Maharishi came to us only every second evening, the other evenings he was in Cala Millor. By the way, I heard that the students there were given earplugs on the second day because they were building there as well!

The building site in front of our hotel expanded more and more, also towards my end of the hotel and then became visible from my window. Especially the excavation of the foundation made a hellish noise, which was always repeated in three phases: First, holes were drilled into the limestone with pneumatic drills. Then the explosive charges that had been put in were detonated, and then the gravel loosened by the blasting was pushed away with huge bulldozers. After that, they drilled again, blasted and pushed it away and so on.

I also meditated with earplugs. Other students retreated to their inwardly located bathrooms. This was the way it was for these courses, if you wanted to save money and use the summer resorts in winter. Soon I regretted not having gone to Cala Millor. I spoke to a responsible person and asked if I could move after all. He said, ‘What? You were the one who desperately wanted to stay here!’ I had to surrender to my fate.

This second phase was a little lonelier, even sadder than the first one: Maharishi, as I said, did not come every day anymore. Christa no longer lived below me. Outside it was cold, and there was the somewhat bleak atmosphere of off-season resorts.

On 12 January 1972, there was a special festival. I hadn’t noticed any preparations, but suddenly there were many more people there than usual and some of them came from far away. Many hundreds waited in the hall for Maharishi. However, I, along with many others, had placed myself in front of the hall, holding a flower in my hand, which I had picked in

the field to hand to the Master. We formed a kind of disordered trellis. Maharishi arrived quite late as usual, walked through the line of people and received the flowers.

The unusual thing that happened to me was when he accepted my flower. He touched my hands slightly. Such a thing was considered a special blessing among the devotees; and I actually felt the loving energy of the Master flowing over me at the moment of touching. I was so happy that I did not mind not being let into the hall, which was completely overcrowded, waiting outside together with many others. However, we could listen to Maharishi's prodigious speech over loudspeakers. It was about the ceremonial Inauguration of the 'World Plan', according to which 3,600 'World Plan Centers' were to be established to teach TM. The new year – from 12 January to the next – was declared the '1st year of the World Plan' This started a tradition of having a special theme each year on January 12. The 12th of January became a kind of New Year celebration.

Only years later I learned that this day actually was Maharishi's birthday. He himself never spoke about it, but those who were close to him knew. As a monk he avoided as much as possible any reference to his biography – as it was the tradition of the Vedic¹ culture: The enlightened one has no more history, because he is not an ego, he is only the all-encompassing cosmic consciousness. Biographical facts are irrelevant because they only refer to the person who turned out to be Maya – illusion. That is why no one ever knew Maharishi's age or details of his origin. Only the closest associates, who sometimes had to take his passport to the authorities, for example, knew the relevant facts.

After the second ten-week block of teacher training, we could not stay in Mallorca any longer, because the tourist season there was approaching. In a large meeting, we discussed together with Maharishi where we should go now. Many 'national leaders' praised holiday resorts in their countries, because everyone wanted to have the meeting in his home country. Everyone knew that a large group of TM meditators would bring an enormous Sattwa.¹² to the country: namely, harmony, order in the collective consciousness and other positive trends. Finally the contract was awarded (in a manner similar to an auction) to the National

Director of Italy, who made Fiuggi palatable for us, as it was situated in the mountains near Rome. He had taken a close look at the site and conducted preliminary negotiations. The place seemed ideal, secluded and quiet, with countless hotels and pensions among the trees. We asked, 'Do the hotel rooms have carpets?' He said, 'The ones I saw, yes. But I haven't seen them all.'

I had thought that Maharishi had already decided in favor of Fiuggi before the meeting. Perhaps this was the only place that offered the opportunity to find suitable accommodations and meeting rooms for 2,000 participants. He had kept our minds distracted so that later disappointment was not blamed on him, since we had apparently made our own decisions.

The relocation was carried out by chartered aircraft on a March night. During the flight, we all meditated, because we knew that such a move was not 'completely without' consequence. When one has meditated so intensively for weeks, the whole system is completely softened, every little excitement and activity can set in motion an 'unstressing' experience, with emotions, excitement and mental imbalance.

From Rome, we went up into the mountains by bus. While the weather had been relatively mild in Mallorca and in Rome, it got colder and colder the higher we went. After a few hours, we arrived in Fiuggi about 3 o'clock in the morning. Immediately we were taken to our hotels and rooms; we could not take our luggage that had been transported as a bulk shipment; it would have taken too long to sort it out.

I came to a small, very simple hotel on a slope, and experienced an absolutely dreadful night: My room was small and narrow, the floor tiled, and no carpet! In the corner was a tiny toilet and a shower over the toilet bowl. Everything was freezing cold! The hotel had been empty all winter long and was completely chilled. Surely, the temperature had been below zero degrees Celsius until recently.

There was a shabby woolen blanket. I acquired a second one; but even that was not enough by far to provide sufficient warmth. My luggage with warm clothes and blankets was not available. I had once read about soldiers who were in Siberia. If they had one coat and two blankets, they

did not put the coat on at night, but put it between the blankets, so that an insulating layer of air was created. Therefore, I did that with my thin imitation leather coat. I was too cold to meditate, and too cold to sleep; so, I lay on my back with my legs dressed, the two blankets plus the coat above me and trembled with cold and desolate misery. After the beautiful, big and relatively warm room in Mallorca and in my hypersensitive state, this situation was an absolute shock for me.

In addition, Fiuggi was obviously not at all secluded and quiet. It was a busy place. My hotel was located directly on the well-travelled road to Fiuggi Citta, the original mountain village above Fiuggi Fonte, as the spa was called, where we lived. The road was just a straight stretch of almost one-kilometer length, with a gradient of 8 to 10 percent.

Those who know the Italians will appreciate that they have a fondness for loud and fast cars. So, every quarter of an hour or more Italian sports cars thundered and roared up the hill, and even more often trucks that apparently supplied a construction site further up, noisily rumbled on. After my room in Mallorca with sea view and silence (at least at night), the new situation was hell for me. I decided, 'I can't stand it. I can't meditate here, I can't sleep and I can't live. I'll wait until morning, get my luggage and leave.'

However, when I searched and found my suitcases at the central place in front of the hotel where Maharishi lived, I had already calmed down a bit. Luckily, I hadn't found anyone to check out with that morning. I did not know how to get away from here. Finally, I found an official and at least told him that I wanted to move to another hotel. A week later, this wish was granted.

I was allowed to move to a hotel that was less noisy, but it was cold there too. My small electric heater – it was only a heating coil around a clay tube – didn't help much, because Italy had a different voltage than Spain. Besides, the fuses in the house blew at the slightest strain. (I heard that in other boarding houses students tried to warm their room by turning on their iron).

The last part of the course was about learning: what exactly to say in the information presentations and what to say during the actual TM course,

what to say during checking and so on. The entire teaching system was already perfectly structured at that time; and we had to learn most of the teaching steps by heart. This proved useful afterwards. My first student, an elderly lady, noticed in me the confidence and precision I radiated in my instructions. For her it was obvious that I had many years of experience. I did not tell her that she was my first student.

Signe had entered the course at Fiuggi, and right up to the last teaching block we had crammed the teaching steps together and passed the examinations at the same time. Now came the great moment that we had been working for, for so long. Now we were to be made TM teachers by Maharishi himself and thus become representatives of the Holy Tradition. It seemed to be only a formality.

But no. Maharishi also used this situation to get rid of a lot of stress in our lives: He kept us in torture for days, making us wait and wait and wait. For me, as for many others, this went to the limit. Some of us had already booked our flights or made appointments at home. Nevertheless, that did not move the Master.

Finally, our group at least got into the lobby of the hotel where Maharishi was ‘making teachers’ in the basement. Again, we waited for hours. Finally, it was midnight and the ‘initiation’/instruction was postponed to the next day. And the next day the same game started. Finally, our small group was let into the basement. We saw Maharishi on his sofa. We saw the small tables with the puja sets¹³ set up, where everyone would perform the small ceremony we had learned. This ceremony was performed before each TM instruction, and, according to the official version, was to remind the teacher that he always taught in the name and on behalf of the Holy Tradition. But, of course, it was more than just a reminder. It was a wonderful traditional ritual, during which, in front of the image of Guru Dev – Maharishi’s Master as the representative of the Vedic ‘Sacred Tradition’ – one could see the Holy Tradition in a very special way, offering gifts such as water, light, fruits, flowers, rice and so on. This symbolic thanksgiving ceremony and offering to the Masters placed one in the timeless sacred tradition. At the end of this ceremony, when one bowed to the image, one felt the overwhelming presence of sacred powers. One

actually felt like a representative of the tradition and was authorized to give the meditation mantra⁶ and the necessary meditation instructions. The instructions by the TM teacher, who was otherwise a very limited personality, gave a tremendous authority at that moment, providing the student a powerful impulse towards transcendence. This small Vedic¹ ceremony was also performed before other important spiritual events, to invoke the blessings of the Holy Tradition, so to speak, and to give meaning to the event; and of course, this was also performed before the solemn initiation into the status of TM Teacher.

We waited as we sat on our chairs in a side area of the hall to step up to the tables and perform the Puja. However, just at that moment another group came into the room who had to speak to Maharishi. They were the leaders of the German TM movement. They sat down directly in front of him and started talking to him. We sat there, could not hear what was being said, feeling an increasing impatience and worry if we would even get a chance to speak. The meeting dragged on – until finally it was too late again. We should come back tomorrow.

The next morning our small group gathered again at the hotel. Again, we waited. Then it was said, ‘Only those who had booked a very important appointment at home or already booked a flight could be made teachers that morning. The others should wait until the afternoon.’ That was a test I did not pass. Signe said she had to leave today; I thought it was wrong, but she obviously had no problem with it.

I did not actually have an appointment, but I felt encouraged by her to lie as well. So, we came into the room and all performed our puja at the same time in front of Maharishi. However, I was so nervous because of my insincerity towards him, that at one point I didn’t know what to do and I actually made a mistake. I hoped that Maharishi would not have noticed since everyone was singing and offering their gifts at the same time. However, after the puja Maharishi suddenly said that he would not continue until the afternoon and that we should come back then. I was so relieved; I went to him and gratefully gave him a flower.

In the afternoon the time had finally come. We did the puja in the presence of Maharishi, received the last, most important, very secret

instructions via headphones, then went to Maharishi one by one and could speak a few words with him. First, he asked me, 'Are you leaving today?' I said 'yes', and I thought, 'If everything's done today, I can actually go.' I already had the train picked out. But honestly, it was not, because I did not have to leave the same day. Then he asked me if I really felt safe in all the steps of the teaching. Obviously, he had noticed my mistake in the morning. Nevertheless, I could say 'yes' with a clear conscience, because I was sure.

He accepted it. He opened a folder in front of my eyes, in which there was the picture of his Master Guru Dev. He pointed to the picture with his eyes and looked at me with an expectant smile, like a grandfather unpacking a present in front of his excited grandson. His gesture implied, 'Do you see the Divine Master here? Are you aware that from now on you teach always in the name of Guru Dev and in front of his image and thus be in the Holy Tradition?'

I must confess that I was a little surprised and unfocused. There was the faint idea, 'It's only a picture.' Nevertheless, I think he 'charged' the painting for me at that moment. It has been with me ever since. For decades, I had it standing on a small altar in my room; and I have always performed the initiation ceremony that precedes the introduction to TM in front of this very picture, as it was expected. The picture is alive; it is not just a piece of printed-paper. Guru Dev is actually present in it, overlooking my life from his place. I always feel him – as Maharishi's Master – as my own Master (this was later also suggested to me specifically by Maharishi. I will talk about that later), although I have never seen him in person.

So now, I was a TM teacher. The excitement was over, the tension released. I could have been totally happy and relieved now. However, I was not. It weighed on me that I had lied to the master. Surely, he had felt that. Moreover, indeed, when he later saw me from a distance, he looked away – whether because of my actual mistake or because I had a bad conscience and therefore did not want to look him in the eye, I do not know. Probably the latter. I actually stayed there the whole day because we were supposed to get some follow-up instructions. Later one of the officials saw me: 'You are still here!' I referred to the fact that we

had to stay because of the additional instructions. That was accepted, but I was quite embarrassed. The next morning, I went down to Rome in a crammed train and then by express train to Munich.

Back in Germany

In Germany, like many others, I then began to put what I had learned into practice: I organized lectures, introductions, courses. In the beginning, I was not very successful. There were simply too many TM teachers and too few who wanted to learn TM.

I started my TM teaching work in my Reinbek home, where I visited my mother. Within a few weeks, I had only three initiations. Then the opportunity arose to move to the newly founded TM Center in Harlaching, one of the best residential areas in Munich. Here I was very happy, but even here the courses and introductions were not enough to keep me financially afloat. I was about to give up my dream of teaching TM full-time. I had this dream not only because the initiations and all the work teaching TM was connected with enormous feelings of happiness, but also because Maharishi had explained to us that it was best for one's own evolution and enlightenment to concentrate completely on teaching Transcendental Meditation.

After a few months in Harlaching, a further training course was announced, which all TM teachers should complete as soon as possible: The course in the 'Science of Creative Intelligence' – SCI. The SCI Course was to give TM a scientific basis to satisfy the intellect of the more western-minded people. It was an explanation of Transcendental Meditation in academic terms: 33 video lectures by Maharishi, coupled with written questions and answers.

Such a course was now supposed to be attended by everyone, both TM teachers and aspirants for later TTCs. Responsible as I was, I signed up immediately. The course for the Germans took place in Semmering in Austria. It was led by Peter H. Peter was a composer of electronic music, TM teacher and recently chairman of the youth organization WYMS (World Youth Meditation Society) which he founded. Peter was a very unusual and extreme personality. Until then I had never met anyone – except Maharishi himself – who had such nerves of steel and was so independent

of the opinions of others. He had no fear of rejection, embarrassment or the like. As a TM teacher he had already been extremely successful and had brought thousands of young people to meditate. (However, due to some reputation-damaging escapades, Maharishi soon revoked his TM teaching license and that of WYMS. His idiosyncratic style was permanently incompatible with the TM movement).

Peter had a staff of devoted young men around him. When he appeared in public, he walked like a power charge: usually two to four of his men walked diagonally behind him – slightly staged like an arrowhead. His face was by no means hard or aggressive, but quite natural and relaxed; but with a mine of a certain invincibility, so that one knew: If I resist him, he will finish me.

His people, most of whom were younger than him, obeyed him to the letter. He called them by their last names, and so they had to call him – and each other, by last names, although they lived together as a group in rooms with bunk beds for years. They always wore suits, usually dark blue with a red tie. Peter wanted his WYMS to be an established and reputable business organization, which in his opinion meant that the members had to be very formal with each other.

I felt somehow uneasy with Peter from the beginning. On the other hand, his course management was impeccable and very effective. I myself was, as always, one hundred percent on the job, and I even borrowed, after the SCI lessons, the written course materials from the course leader in order to study it more intensively.

I also offered to translate the texts into German to assimilate them even more. Peter liked this and after the first course, he invited me to stay for the second month, which followed on from the first, and to continue translating the materials for free board and lodging. And so, I stayed there during the second and also the third course. At the end of the series of three courses, I even moved with the WYMS to their headquarters in Kassel and became a recognized member of the staff.

But I never really felt at home. I was constantly afraid of doing something wrong or not quite on the ideological line. On the other hand, I benefited from Peter's leadership style. His main concern was to develop

the feeling in us that we could achieve anything. In addition, indeed, he gradually built me up into an effective leader. I am still grateful to him for that. How else could I have managed all the tasks ahead of me?

Soon after moving to Kassel, TM teachers were recruited for all cities to found a local WYMS-center together with young TM meditators. When I realized that this was also applicable for Munich, I applied for this job and got it.

Therefore, I became the director of the Munich TM Center and was able to put into practice what I had learned from Peter – but somewhat differently than Peter had imagined. In my new position, I could not achieve anything using power or authority, because all the helpers were volunteers. We could not pay salaries; there was no money for that. Everyone had to enjoy the job and feel that he was doing something meaningful for his own evolution and for the world. If someone felt he was pushed too hard, he just did not come back. This was a good lesson for me. Therefore, I had to learn to adjust to different personalities and gently channel their existing commitment into the right projects.

To my own surprise, I obviously had good organizational skills. That was amazing, since before I had only studied philosophy and worked on texts. Soon my TM Center was one of the most successful in Germany. This was mainly due to the fact that there was almost no rivalry between the TM-teachers regarding the initiations. Everyone got his share of initiations, even if he was not such a good speaker. The best speakers shared the initiations with them.

After some time, it happened that I also became the coordinator of Southern Germany, and now I had to visit other places in the area to get the Centers going. That was a strenuous phase. I got very little time to sleep. I meditated regularly, but only for a short time each time. My last thought in the evenings was 'What else can I do to keep our Center afloat and remain a full-time teacher?' And also, my first thought after a short sleep the next morning went again towards Center activities and TM advertising. Very soon, I was burnt-out and exhausted. I had probably neglected the balance between rest and activity mentioned in the SCI course too much.

Interlude in Seelisberg

One day I took the opportunity to go to Seelisberg, together with a friend, who was also a TM teacher. Seelisberg had our International Administration Center, where Maharishi lived at that time. Seelisberg is a small tourist town in Switzerland, situated about 800 meters above sea level, directly above the famous 'Rütli' at Lake Lucerne, where the Swiss Confederation had been founded some hundred years ago. The TM Movement had bought two old spa hotels, 'Sonnenberg' and 'Kulm', which were connected by an overhead walkway bridge over the road. When I arrived there, sniffing the light and fresh air and watching the busy back and forth movement of the many young TM people working there on the 'Staff'. I knew immediately: 'This is where I want to stay'. I wasn't even registered, but I decided to give it a try. I found someone in charge of the construction department, Bernd Metzner. Bernd knew me, and after some hesitation, he said, 'Okay, you can work with the painters.'

The Hotel Sonnenberg was just being completely renovated and rebuilt, and many meditators took the opportunity to help out, in order to be close to Maharishi. Painting was not really my thing, but I was glad to be able to stay. I got a small room and the next morning after meditation, I started to trowel off holes in the walls and paint them afterwards.

As I had already guessed, I did not enjoy this particular work, and after two days, I tried to get into the carpentry and joinery department. That suited me more, because my father had also done carpentry work as a glider pilot. He had even made some furniture for us. I could not do that, but my father had at least taught me how to hold a hammer properly and how to hammer in nails. I was actually assigned to the carpenters' foreman, Helmut. Over the next few weeks our group tore the connecting doors out of the suites in the Sonnenberg, closed the walls with sheet rock, and installed a shower in each room – not prefabricated, but properly with wooden walls and shower trays mounted on tar paper – many of which later leaked, as I heard.

I learned the job eagerly and quickly, as I had previous experience, and became one of Helmut's favorites; which proved useful as the staff was soon reduced and most carpenters, including skilled workers, were sent

home. But I was allowed to stay and could continue to hammer around the house.

This was a wonderful time, especially since Maharishi personally watched the progress of the work at irregular intervals. He enjoyed such activities. He sometimes stepped unexpectedly into a room where I was perhaps just lying under a shelf, hammering nails. I would jump up and put my hands together in greeting. Maharishi answered the greeting and smiled affectionately amused. That was a happy experience every time. In the evenings, we from the building staff were allowed to sit in the large, unfinished 'lecture hall' when Maharishi gave lectures or met with individual groups to plan the expansion of TM or to work through any texts. It was paradise for me.

One morning I had the opportunity to listen to a very interesting conversation between Maharishi and a guest he met in the empty lecture hall. I do not remember how it happened that I was allowed to hang around there during working hours. Anyway, from one of the back rows of chairs I could listen to Maharishi talking with a young TM teacher from France up on the stage. He had come to tell Maharishi about a project that he himself had started. He wanted to build a meditation academy in the south of France, discuss details with Maharishi, and get blessings for the project.

Surprisingly, Maharishi did not like the idea; he preferred to use the young man for another project abroad. The TM teacher could not understand this at all. Such good land! Such a building opportunity! This could only be useful to the TM Movement! However, Maharishi could not be convinced. After all, the man even argued that he knew that God wanted this project. Maharishi said in an ironic tone of voice, 'You know God. You know God.' Finally, the man left the hall unwillingly and defiantly.

I had not experienced anything like this in a long time. After all, we TM teachers had learned from our long association with Maharishi that it was best for one's own evolution – as one had an enlightened Master – to follow him in every detail, in order to adapt to his consciousness. This was the path of enlightenment that Maharishi himself had taken with his

Master Guru Dev and which was anchored in the Vedic¹ tradition. The young Frenchman had obviously not been aware of this. He had put his own small mind above the wisdom of the Master. That I was allowed to be present at this conversation had certainly been arranged from above so that I would receive a lesson.

As much as I enjoyed the work and the whole situation in Seelisberg, I suddenly decided one day to return to Munich. Moreover, this is what happened. Every morning there was a puja for the staff, the small ceremony that is usually done before the TM instruction. The few TM teachers in the staff took turns in this task. One day it was my turn. During the ceremony I was reminded from inside that my task was actually teaching TM and not doing carpentry. I also became aware that I was needed in the Munich Center, which would probably fail without me. An hour later I had signed off with Helmut – who of course wasn't too happy about that, he had just sent most of the other employees home – and I drove back to Munich. That was after almost exactly six weeks, the time normally taken for an ATR course.¹⁴ Back at the TM Center, I first had to get thing going again.

In autumn 1973, I took the chance to participate in the first regular ATR course, which however lasted only two weeks. It took place in Weggis at Lake Lucerne in Switzerland. I remember that during the video lessons I sat in the background of the room and stringed corals on gold wire to make a 'mala' (necklace). Otherwise, I did a lot of nonsense together with Reinhard B. (who was to replace me as Maharishi's secretary years later). The course was enormously relaxing.

Building up a new center

In those years, the center flourished more and more; the activities multiplied. One day one of the younger TM teachers came to me and said, 'Hans, our Center is too big and too expensive, we can't afford it anymore. We have to move to a smaller one.' I said to him, 'On the contrary, our center is too small; we need a bigger one!'

And so, that was the situation. We didn't have enough rooms. In a meeting I suggested to the other TM teachers, we were almost twenty at