

THE TEACHING OF MAHARISHI MAHESH YOGI
AS A NEO-HINDU VERSION OF ŚĀṆKARA'S
VEDĀNTA.

A Modern Stage in the Development of
Vedāntic Ideas.

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ABSTRACT

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi is an Indian spiritual teacher who has had a considerable influence in the West over the past twenty years. His teaching has two aspects, practical (the practice of Transcendental Meditation) and theoretical. As a philosopher, Maharishi claims to be an exponent of the Advaita Vedānta according to Śaṅkara, yet his presentation is modern and practical. This thesis examines the question how far Maharishi's claim to be an authentic exponent of Śaṅkara's Vedānta can be sustained, and concludes that although his teaching does essentially agree with that of Śaṅkara, it differs from this in emphasis; in addition Maharishi has introduced a number of apparent innovations, probably owing to modern Western influences. In this respect Maharishi's theoretical approach also differs from that of other neo-hindu movements in the West, most of which are either very traditional, or more overtly devotional and religious.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Quotations from Sanskrit sources, also my own use of Sanskrit terms, will be transliterated in the conventional way.

Proper names will be given in their prevalent form.

Ex. Maharishi, Maharshi, Ramakrishna, Rishikesh.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. Preface

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi describes himself to the West as an Indian "monk". He is the founder of the Spiritual Regeneration Movement and other allied organizations for the propagation of his meditation technique called transcendental meditation. Since the late 1970s he has become a leading "guru" in India and also particularly in the Western world.

Historically, his teaching is of interest for two reasons :

1) His approach to Western Society and his teaching methods are uniquely practical and "modern" and this lends his teaching a quality that is very different from that of other Indian teachers whether of the past or indeed the present time.

2) He claims to be an exponent of Advaita Vedānta philosophy in the tradition of Śāṅkara and in that respect his modern style is coupled with a characteristically Indian ideological conservatism.

These two elements seem to coexist in Maharishi's attitudes in an exceptional way, and in that sense his teaching is a landmark in the exposition of Śāṅkara's

Vedānta philosophy in the West.

Maharishi's teaching is twofold : Practical and theoretical. The practical aspect is the technique of transcendental meditation and the theoretical aspect is the philosophy behind it. In this thesis I will discuss the theoretical aspect of this teaching in connection with Śaṅkara's Advaita from which he claims it to stem.

First, however, I will give an outline of Maharishi's movement and of his approach to teaching and to Western values that has given it its strong atmosphere of modern practicality.

Following that, I will discuss Maharishi's philosophy in relation to Śaṅkara's Vedānta, in order to establish how far he is a strict exponent of Śaṅkara's theory and how far he is original.

This will lead to a conclusion on the effect, if any, that modern attitudes may have had on his presentation of the Advaita Vedānta.

Maharishi is the author of two books :

1. "The Science of Being and Art of Living" in which he explains what transcendental meditation is and gives a popularized version of the philosophy behind it.
2. "Bhagavad-Gītā, a New Translation and Commentary

Chapters 1-6" which is his interpretation of the first six chapters of the Bhagavad-Gītā.

He has also written an unpublished commentary on the Brahma Sūtra.

2. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi - A Biographical Sketch

Very little is known about Maharishi's early life and this is from his own accounts. He was a disciple of Svāmī Brahmānanda Sarasvatī (1869-1953) Śāṅkarācārya of Jyotir Math, himself a follower of Svāmī Kṛṣṇānanda Sarasvatī of Uttar Kashi. For most of his life Svāmī Brahmānanda was a strict recluse, first in the Himalaya and later in the Amarkantaka and Vindhyagiri mountains. For the last thirteen years of his life, however, he became the Śāṅkarācārya of Jyotir Math, a position to which he came in 1941 at the age of seventy-two.¹ He was considered to be a man of great authority and an exponent of Vedānta philosophy with a wide following, and was recognized as such by Radhakrishnan among others.²

According to his own account, Maharishi studied physics and chemistry at the University of Allahabad before joining the Śāṅkarācārya as a brahmacārin. He stayed with him for twelve years until the death of the Śāṅkarācārya in 1953, at which time he retired to a cave where he lived in silence and meditation for the next three years.

When Maharishi emerged from his cave, he went to Kerala where he lectured on his new meditation technique, the transcendental deep meditation as it was then called. It seems very likely that he evolved

this technique during his three years of silence. However, he claimed, this was not really a new technique at all but a very ancient one, which he had once more brought to light. This reflects a common Indian attitude according to which any theory with a claim to respectability ought to stem from the authority of ancient wisdom.

After leaving Kerala, Maharishi spent two years travelling and teaching throughout India and in 1958 he founded the Spiritual Regeneration Movement in Madras. Then, travelling east, he taught in Singapore and in Hawaii whence he came to California in 1959. California was then, as it is now, a place where spiritual movements flourished; Yogānanda had taught Kriya Yoga there. Maharishi stayed for some time and established an American centre for his movement. A first-hand account of his presence there, though personal and not very informed, is given by Helena Olson in her book "A Hermit in the House".³ From California, Maharishi moved on to New York and eventually to Europe.⁴ California remains the headquarters of the American chapter of his movement to this day.

Until this time, Maharishi both lectured and taught meditation himself. In order to propagate his teaching more widely, he eventually decided to train teachers of transcendental meditation, whom

at first he called "meditation guides".

During the next ten years he taught two three-monthly teacher training courses a year from September to March, and used the rest of the year for lecturing and teaching meditation in India and in the West. Teacher training courses were then held at his āsrama in the foothills of the Himalaya overlooking the small town of Rishikesh in Uttar Pradesh, on the bank of the Ganges. Rishikesh, situated as it is just upstream from the sacred town of Hardwar, near the source of the Ganges is an ideal spot for such a purpose and quite a few similar movements have āsramas there. Maharishi's āsrama, in the "monkey-leaped"⁵ jungle of the hills, offered rudimentary accommodation for courses, constructed on land especially donated for the purpose by the Indian government.

Thirty people took part in the first such course for Westerners, apparently a considerable feat on their part, as living conditions seem to have been quite uncomfortable at that time. Numbers steadily increased, however, and conditions gradually improved, until, by 1970, two hundred people per course enjoyed a pleasant, if simple stay, while learning to impart the technique of transcendental meditation.

As applicants for his courses continued to increase and Maharishi decided to throw open the doors so that more people would be able to train as teachers, the small āśrama near Rishikesh was no longer adequate. From 1970 onwards, he has preferred to hold such courses in Europe where facilities for greater numbers of participants are more easily available. By 1975 approximately ten thousand people had been trained to teach the technique, now widely known as transcendental meditation.

Gradually the original Spiritual Regeneration Movement branched out into a variety of sister organizations such as the Students International Meditation Society, the International Meditation Society, and others which will be discussed at greater length in the next section. As numbers grew, Maharishi relegated the teaching of the meditation to the teachers he had trained, while, since 1976, he has concentrated his own efforts to the advanced training of existing teachers, so that they would be capable of undertaking to teach teacher training courses themselves. Thus his activity is now almost exclusively restricted to conducting such "post-graduate type" courses. Consequently he leads a very secluded life far from the public eye and has become increasingly

inaccessible even to his own followers. He still travels, though he also spends long periods either at his Indian āsrama, or at the headquarters of his movement in Europe.

3. Śaṅkara - A Biographical Sketch

Śaṅkara is the main exponent of the Indian theory of non-duality or strict monism (Advaita) on which Maharishi bases the theoretical aspect of his teaching. Maharishi claims to belong to the Vedāntic tradition as expounded by Śaṅkara by virtue of his apprenticeship with the previous Śaṅkarācārya of Jyotir Math; he also claims, by virtue of the insight he has gained, to shed new light on Śaṅkara's pronouncements. My purpose is to examine the theoretical aspect of Maharishi's work to establish whether or not it agrees with Śaṅkara's teaching.

Very little is actually known concerning Śaṅkara's life. He is generally thought to have lived in the 8th century A.D. The Āryavidhyāsudhākara gives the following account of his birth :

"śaṅkarācāryaprādhurbhāvas tu vikramārkasamayād
atīte pañcācatvarīṃśadadhika aṣṭasatīmite
samvatsare keraladēse kālapīgrāme
śivaguruśarmano bhāryāyām samabhavat."

"The birth of Śaṅkara from the wife of
Śivaguruśarman occurred in the territory of

Kerala in the village of Kālapī after the 845th year of the Vikramārka (Vikramāditya) era had passed."⁶

The 845th year of the Vikramāditya era which is referred to here corresponds, according to the same text, with the year 3889 of the Kaliyuga which is traditionally said to have begun on 8th February 3102 B.C. thus giving 787 - 789 A.D. as the year of his birth. The text quotes a tradition according to which year 3889 of the Kaliyuga was called the year sea-elephant-mountain-beast-fire, in which Śaṅkara was born in the month of Mādhava, on the tenth day of the bright fortnight.

Western scholars such as Max Müller, A. Macdonnell and A. B. Keith follow this source.⁷ They hold that Śaṅkara was probably born in 788 A.D. and died in 820 A.D. Others have offered earlier dates but have not received much support. The little that is known about Śaṅkara's life is mostly from traditional material and not from reliable historical sources. A. B. Keith sums it up like this :

"The biographies alleged, absurdly, to be by Ānandagiri, his pupil, the Śaṅkaravijaya, and Mādhava's Śaṅkaradigvijaya are worthless, and

many works attributed to him are probably not his." ⁸

According to tradition, Śāṅkara was probably a Śaiva and a student of Govinda, himself a follower of Gaudapāda, from whom he must have learnt the main tenets of Advaita philosophy. He became a prominent spiritual teacher, wandering as far as Kaśmir in order to teach his version of Vedānta, and a sannyāsin.

At the time when Śāṅkara is thought to have lived the Pallava dynasty was in power in South India. A Brahmanical influence from the north had become strong, but was challenged by the idealistic attitudes of Buddhism and by the devotional popular cults. Theological debates abounded owing to the controversy between Buddhist and Hindu ideas.

Hindu colleges or ghaṭikās were attached to temples and in the eighth century there developed a new institution called a maṭha. The maṭha was a rest, food and education centre which upheld the theological views of the particular sect with which it was associated. Such centres soon existed all over the subcontinent, especially at places of

pilgrimage, where they could be more influential.

Thus Śaṅkara must have lived at a time of interesting theological developments. In order to further the cause of Brahmanism he strove to make it more understandable and more acceptable to the people at large. To him the Vedic tradition was sacred and not open to question but he opposed the obscurantism with which it had been enveloped. He also opposed the sometimes severe excesses that were indulged in by the popular devotional cults. To establish what he considered to be a clear and logical understanding of Hinduism, he set up his own maṭhas and founded an order of Hindu ascetics who travelled throughout India in order to propagate his teaching. The four main maṭhas were at Badrināth, Pūri, Dvārakā and Śrīṅgagiri, but there were soon branches elsewhere and his movement rapidly grew. The rapid spreading of Śaṅkara's teaching is taken as an indication of the increasing contact that existed among various Indian regions at this time.⁹

Śaṅkara is traditionally thought to have shown great enthusiasm and dialectic ability in discussion and theological debate and is considered to be one of India's most prominent spiritual teachers both on account of his teaching ability and the content of his philosophical system. His personal teaching

was of short duration, however; he is supposed to have died either at Kāncī or at Kedārnath at the age of thirty-two.

Many works have been ascribed to Śāṅkara, though it is doubtful whether they are all his. To quote Keith again :

"Many commentaries on the Upaniṣads, one on the Bhagavad-Gītā, and the Bhāṣya on the Brahma Sūtra are genuine, nor need we doubt the ascription to the Upadeśasahasrī, three chapters in prose and nineteen in verse, or various other works including lyrics of considerable power and the Ātmabodha in sixty-seven stanzas with commentary." ¹⁰

Śāṅkara's theory is an elaboration of the system of the Vedānta. The Vedānta attempts a synthesis of the teaching of Vedic writings on the supreme knowledge of Brahman. It is first expressed in the Vedānta or Brahma Sūtras traditionally attributed to Bādarāyaṇa who is occasionally identified with the legendary Vyāsa. The dates offered for this work vary, as Indian texts in general are notoriously difficult to date, but it is probably fair to say that it was composed around 200 A.D.

The earliest extant work derived from this is the Gaudapādīya Kārikā, 215 verses attributed to Gaudapāda. According to tradition, Gaudapāda was the teacher of Govinda, the teacher of Śaṅkara, and this would date him near the end of the 7th century and the beginning of the 8th century. Gaudapāda introduces the idea of the illusory character of empirical existence which was later to be more elaborated by Śaṅkara.

Śaṅkara's main contribution to the Vedānta was his insistence on the ultimate absence of duality, the theory of non-duality (Advaita) on which he based his philosophical outlook and which he expounds in great detail. This is the subject matter of most of his work, particularly the Brahma Sūtra commentary.

In this commentary Śaṅkara upholds the Vedic tradition and orthodox Brahmanical theology and considers Brahman as the supreme and ultimate reality superior to both the Vedic sacrifice and the objects of popular devotion such as Viṣṇu and Śiva. Though empirical existence is commonly perceived as being separate from Brahman, Brahman is in fact all-inclusive containing all existence and can ultimately be known as such.

Though this theory of Śaṅkara's has been challenged both by heterodox sects and by Vedāntists with less absolute views, it is still considered one of the most influential philosophical theories in India.

George Thibaut in his Vedānta Sūtras of Bādarāyana, expresses the view that no Indian system

"can be compared with the so-called orthodox Vedānta in boldness, depth, and subtlety of speculation" ¹¹

and he continues to say that :

"The Śaṅkara-bhāṣya further is the authority most generally deferred to in India as to the right understanding of the Vedānta Sūtras, and ever since Śaṅkara's time the majority of the best thinkers of India have been men belonging to his school." ¹²

4. Maharishi's Movement

a) A Short Introduction

Before I discuss the theoretical aspect of Maharishi's teaching in relation to the Advaita Vedānta, I will give a brief introductory outline of his movement with special reference to other Indian movements in the West, contemporary Western culture and modern religious thought.

A large number of Indian teachers and movements have come to the West since the Rāmakrishna movement was introduced by Svāmī Vivekānanda at the end of the nineteenth century, and Vedānta-orientated movements have played a leading part in introducing Indian philosophy to the West. More recently, many groups claiming to teach yoga have sprung up demonstrating haṭha yoga and breathing excercises, and many of these have included mental concentration and contemplation or various forms of psychotherapy among their practices.

Some of these philosophical systems or movements are not religions nor do they claim to be. However, in many cases they become a way of life to the people who follow them and provide some spiritual answers which, though not necessarily overtly religious, often seem to satisfy the intellectual and spiritual needs of their followers. Those groups which include forms

of meditation or contemplation in their teaching offer a potential spiritual or "mystical" experience which, in itself, holds a great fascination for modern Westerners.

It is unfortunately very difficult to find a neutral term to refer to this kind of experience. "Mysticism" is a notoriously vague term. In his *Vocabulaire de la Philosophie*, Lalande defines mysticism as a

"belief in the possibility of an intimate and direct union of the human spirit with the fundamental principle of being, a union which constitutes at once a mode of existence and a mode of knowledge different from and superior to normal existence and knowledge."¹³

However the term "mystical" is frequently pejorative outside religious circles and indeed within some of them, carrying overtones of mystification, mumbo-jumbo and obscurantism. It is therefore better avoided. Modern secular psychologists such as Tart, who have studied this realm of experience scientifically, have coined the term: altered states of consciousness. This has the advantage of being neutral as regards the origin and significance of experiences of this type.

There have been considerable differences in emphasis among Indian movements in the West; some have been primarily intellectual such as that of Aurobindo, others ecstatic and emotional such as the Divine Light Mission started by a 17 year old boy called Guru Maharaj, or the Radha Krishna Temple and Krishna Consciousness Society (Hare Krishna movement), while others have been primarily physical and mainly concerned with Hatha Yoga. Nearly all, however, have emphasized their Indian character though they have often adopted Western ideas of science and evolution.

The practical aspect of Maharishi's teaching is based on the application of a meditation technique and in this respect it does not at first glance differ from the majority of Indian movements in the West today, which make use of a variety of meditational practices. In fact, however, there are a number of important differences.

Although Maharishi has never minimized his Indian origins, his initial presentation of transcendental meditation to the West was as a practical technique free from religious overtones - primarily a method for alleviating the effects of stress. ¹⁴ This technique is also claimed to be completely effortless and suitable for every man

and women from all walks of life and children over four years of age. This comes as a surprise to many people who expect meditation to be a difficult and demanding mental exercise accompanied by strict regulations of behaviour in everyday life. Some other groups - though not all - suggest changes in behaviour and lifestyle and most base their meditations on contemplation or concentration techniques in which a degree of effort, in many cases a considerable one, is involved.

Maharishi claims that transcendental meditation is effortless because it is based on the principle of the attracted rather than the directed mind. He considers concentration to be a strenuous and unnecessary exercise because he believes that rather than directing the mind to the experience of certain states of awareness, it is more effective to allow it to be attracted by those states. He holds that through the process of transcendental meditation,

"...the mind finds the way increasingly attractive as it advances in the direction of bliss. A light becomes faint and dim as we move away from its source, and its intensity increases as we proceed towards its source. Similarly, when the mind goes in the direction of the absolute bliss of

transcendental Being, it finds increasing charm at every step of its march. The mind is charmed and so is led to experience transcendental Being.

This practice is pleasant for every mind. Whatever the state of evolution of the aspirant, whether he is emotionally developed or intellectually advanced, his mind, by its very tendency to go to a field of greater happiness, finds a way to transcend the subtlest state of thinking and arrive at the bliss of absolute Being. This practice is, therefore, not only simple but also automatic." ¹⁵

It is not possible to either prove or disprove this statement, which is merely included here for the purpose of illustrating what is meant by the principle of the attracted mind. From the practical point of view, however, meditators practising the technique unequivocally confirm that it is effortless and pleasant and a vast majority report that they find it beneficial. ¹⁶ It does not require or presuppose any change in lifestyle or the adoption of any particular belief on the part of beginners, who simply add the technique to their existing daily activities for one twenty minute period in the morning and one in the evening. In addition,

Maharishi claims that the technique produces quick results and is completely safe, unlike certain systems of inner development - Kundalinī Yoga is an example - which have been criticised as being physically or mentally dangerous unless they are preceded by years of preparation in other forms of Yoga and celibacy. ¹⁷

The theoretical aspect of Maharishi's teaching was and still is kept somewhat in the background, though it is always available to interested meditators. This is in accordance with Maharishi's claim that the effectiveness of the technique is totally independent of belief or even of knowledge of the philosophy behind it. For those who are interested however, there are weekly lectures, week-end courses or longer residence courses which combine both the theoretical and practical aspects of the teaching.

The theoretical aspect has an intellectual content which has attracted scientists and scholars from all academic disciplines, some of great eminence in their fields. In this Maharishi's differs from many movements of Indian origin, such as the Hare Krishna and the Divine Light Mission movements, which have no discernible intellectual content and are primarily emotional. Maharishi's movement is

neither emotional nor over-intellectual but offers a balance between emotional and intellectual attitudes.

An important difference between Maharishi and nearly all other Indian teachers is his insistence that meditation is the path to right action and not vice-versa. He holds that the more "orthodox" view that meditation presupposes right action is really a misunderstanding of the true position and come about as insight into the essence of meditation was lost.

"Really good behaviour between people will only be possible when their minds are broadened, when they are able to see the whole situation, to understand each other more thoroughly, to be aware of each other's need and attempt to fulfil that need. This naturally necessitates an expanded consciousness, a right sense of judgment and all the qualities that only a strong and clear mind possesses.

Small minds always fail to perceive the whole situation and in their narrow vision create imaginary obstacles and restrictions which are neither useful to themselves nor

to anyone else. Then their behaviour towards others only results in misunderstanding and increase of tension. Good social behaviour is based on a strong, clear and contented mind.

In any social relationship the minds of both parties should be established on the level of Being, or Being should be established on the level of their minds, so that the bliss and contentment of Being, are deeply rooted in the hearts of each. Then their behaviour produces influences of peace and harmony in the surroundings. The art of behaviour is such that not only do the people concerned gain but the entire atmosphere vibrates with their influence of love, kindness, harmony and peace." ¹⁸

Maharishi's attitude on right action will be discussed further in Chapter IV.

Maharishi emphasises the scientific verifiability of his statements. Thus, unlike most Indian movements in the West, Maharishi's movement stresses the importance of the scientific verification of meditation results and experiments on the physiological,

psychological and sociological effects of the technique have been undertaken at various universities and research centres since 1968, as well as on the movement's own premises. Maharishi, though conventionally Indian in his personal dress and behaviour and in his metaphysical ideas, has shown himself to be extremely enterprising in the use of modern Western facilities and technology. However he is not primarily interested in science as such, though some scientists among his followers are; his attitude is rather that science should confirm the existence of facts which he already knows to be true.

Maharishi's movement has had a very wide appeal owing to the effortless nature of the technique of transcendental meditation, the balanced and stimulating content of his theoretical teaching in comparison with other movements, his enthusiasm for scientific investigation and the use of modern methods of communication. In 1975 his world following was over one million and increasing at the rate of 35,000 a month. According to P. Russell,

"TM in America has enjoyed an annual growth rate of between 100 and 150 per cent - a

figure which makes it the fastest growing organization in the world".¹⁹

The distinguishing features of Maharishi's movement can therefore be summarised as follows :

1. It claims to belong to the Advaita Vedānta school of thought.
2. The teaching is based on the application of a meditation technique which is claimed to be effortless and suitable for every man and woman.
3. The practice of this technique does not presuppose any particular set of beliefs or change in lifestyle.
4. The theoretical aspect of the teaching has a stimulating intellectual content.
5. The attitude of the movement is not primarily emotional nor does it in any way seek emotional effect.
6. The movement attaches great importance to scientific verification of meditation results.
7. Sophisticated modern technology and methods of communication are used.
8. It has a worldwide appeal.

b) Organizations

1. The Students International Meditation Society (SIMS) was founded in 1965 to cater for the increasing number of students who were taking up Maharishi's teaching.
2. The Maharishi International University (MIU) was founded in 1970 to provide an interdisciplinary study of his work. This institution received official recognition in the United States and courses have been held there since 1973. A great part of these courses has been recorded on video-tape so as to be used at MIU subsidiaries throughout the world, such as :
3. The Maharishi International College (MIC) established in Great Britain and incorporated as an educational charity. The two main centres of MIC in Great Britain are Mentmore Towers in Buckinghamshire and Roydon Hall in Kent. Apart from MIU courses, all proceedings of Maharishi's lectures on all occasions have consistently been recorded since 1970.
4. The Maharishi European Research University (MERU) with offices in Seelisberg, Switzerland coordinates the scientific research on the effects of Maharishi's meditation.

According to the Maharishi International University catalogue,

"MIU is taking advantage of the scientific research into the physiological effects of Transcendental Meditation, being done in its own laboratories and in forty other institutions around the world, to begin establishing objective standards for progress towards higher states of consciousness." ²⁰

These include laboratory measurements of metabolic rate, oxygen consumption, blood chemistry, skin resistance, spontaneous and evoked galvanic skin response, electroencephalographic recording, reaction time, responsiveness and alertness of the senses and other indications.

The attempt to validate altered states of consciousness objectively on a scientific basis will be discussed further in the chapter on the subjective and objective aspects of such states. It is mentioned here in order to illustrate Maharishi's modern Western approach to the subject. In fact he constantly tries to express Indian philosophical ideas in Western terms.

5. The foundation for the Science of Creative Intelligence (FSCI) is one more organization formed in order to introduce Maharishi's teaching to business and industry in terms of the particular interests of this social group.

c) Terminology

Much of the Western terminology now widely used in Maharishi's movement results from :

1. The introduction of the teaching to specialist Western social groups.
2. Maharishi's active desire to express it in modern terms so that it will be intellectually comprehensible to the Western individual of today.
3. The adoption of some nineteenth-century terms used to express Indian philosophical concepts.

On the whole, however, Maharishi's terminology presents certain difficulties. He uses a number of terms with great frequency, but these are seldom defined and their meaning has to be inferred from their context. In general, Maharishi's usage corresponds more or less to the common-sense meaning of the words, but this is not always so. Some of his most commonly used terminology is discussed

briefly below :

Nervous System

In the Western scientific sense, the term nervous system refers in man to the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord) and the peripheral nervous system combined. Maharishi's understanding certainly includes these two elements, though he does not treat them separately. However, it also appears to include the "subtle" nervous system described in yogic texts (kuṇḍalinī, idā, piṅgalā, cakra, etc.). These "subtle" components are seldom mentioned explicitly by Maharishi but appear to be implied in what he says about the nervous system. While his understanding of the nervous system includes what a Western physiologist would understand by that term, therefore, it also covers other elements that are not recognized in Western physiology.

Energy

In the scientific sense, energy is used to mean "capacity for work", and in this sense energy exists in various forms (potential, kinetic, electrical, etc.). In ordinary speech, energy is often used to refer to a subjective feeling of well-being and ability to undertake activity, whether physical or mental. Thus, one speaks of feeling "full of energy", or of

"lacking energy". The colloquial meaning of energy could be regarded as a metaphorical extension of the more precise scientific meaning.

Maharishi's use of the word appears to include both these meanings, though for the most part he uses the term to refer to the psychological experience. There is also a metaphysical connotation in that Maharishi uses the term as a translation of the Sanskrit term ojas, commonly latent energy which is diffused over the body by means of yoga and mystical experience. According to Maharishi the source of all energy is the Absolute.

Absolute and Relative

These philosophical terms appear to derive from nineteenth - century German idealism, and probably reflect the influence of Indian thought on philosophers after Hegel and vice-versa. As used by Maharishi, Absolute refers to Brahman and relative to the whole phenomenal world. It must be borne in mind, however, that Maharishi's conception of the phenomenal world includes the various strata of Vedic divinities in their capacity of natural phenomena.

Evolution

Maharishi uses this word with great frequency. The term is borrowed from the West and has Darwinian

associations.

Western science uses "evolution" in two main ways. Biological evolution refers to the process by which new species are believed to have arisen in the course of geological time. In the other sense evolution refers to the changes in time undergone by a natural object or system. This second sense occurs frequently in astronomy, where it is applied to the development of stars and galaxies.

Maharishi's use of the word seems to relate mainly to the second of these meanings, and refers to the process of individual growth and enhancement of awareness. It is thus almost synonymous with "development". It seems possible that this application of the term derives originally from the ideas of the Theosophists in the late nineteenth century.

Maharishi has little to say about evolution in the Darwinian sense. He seems to accept as literally descriptive the traditional Indian accounts of the origin and development of the world and of man.

Enlightenment

Maharishi does not use this term himself but it is occasionally used by his followers to indicate the enhancement of awareness. It appears to be a straight

borrowing from Western sources.

Transcendental

This seems to have been another of Maharishi's borrowings from Western philosophy. He uses it to mean "going beyond" the relative level of experience during the practice of meditation.

Meditation

Maharishi has himself expressed dissatisfaction with this term, which he adopted when he first arrived in the West to describe the practice he teaches. He invariably links it with the term "transcendental" to indicate his own technique in contradistinction to other methods. He distinguishes between meditation in this sense, meaning "going beyond thinking" and contemplation by which he means discursive thinking about a given theme or idea.

Unfortunately, Maharishi's usage is liable to create confusion in the minds of Westerners who are familiar with the Roman Catholic literature on prayer, in which the meaning of terms is reversed : "meditation" refers to discursive thinking, while "contemplation" refers to the type of activity that Maharishi intends by "meditation".

Stress

Maharishi's idea of "stress" is very closely

related to his concept of the nervous system. He considers stress to be any "undue overload" on the nervous system whether of a physical or mental nature. Thus any physical trauma or any strong emotion, whether positive or negative (such as great sorrow or pain but also great joy), cause analogous stresses, which Maharishi represents as "knots" embedded in the nervous system. The practice of transcendental meditation is supposed to release the stresses that accumulate in the course of daily life.

These examples of Maharishi's terminology and its application indicate that his modernism is perhaps only skin deep. He has made use of modern technology, whose importance he fully recognizes, but he seems to have remained entirely true to his origins in outlook and ideas. As time has gone on his organization has moved closer to orthodox Indian traditions. It is therefore entirely reasonable to regard Maharishi as part of the Indian tradition and as an Indian teacher who has adapted his message for the West without, however, modifying it fundamentally.

CHAPTER II

THE VEDĀNTA IN RELATION TO
ALTERED STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Śaṅkara postulates two kinds of knowledge. Parā vidyā, which is absolute truth, is the knowledge of the unity of Brahman and ātman, which is the unity of absolute and relative existence. The proclamation of this ultimate knowledge is the theme of the Brahma Sūtra and of Śaṅkara's commentary, in which it is pointed out that this knowledge is open to all, though it is also freely admitted that very few actually achieve it.

Aparā vidyā is lower or empirical knowledge and represents relative truth. All knowledge that is not the "higher" awareness of the oneness of Brahman is thus considered to be lower knowledge. This does not mean that it is false; it just reflects a level of existence at which the ultimate unity of Brahman and the world is not yet apparent. If parā vidyā can be said to be the knowledge of unity, aparā vidyā is the knowledge of duality. According to Śaṅkara, lower knowledge can lead to the higher knowledge of Brahman.

From the point of view of ultimate knowledge there is only one reality but from the point of view

of relative knowledge distinctions arise which stem from different degrees of awareness of reality. Maharishi follows Śaṅkara closely in this and states that there are as many truths as there are levels of awareness.

A Western philosopher would assume that his listener or reader, provided he is sufficiently intelligent to follow logical argument, ought to see the philosopher's point of view. No special qualifications for philosophy are needed in principle, besides a good intelligence and application.

For Śaṅkara, intimate experience of ultimate truth is essential and yields the greatest degree of certitude. However, it has a low degree of conceptual clearness. For this reason, interpretation is necessary but this can be fallible and therefore needs revision from time to time. According to this view philosophical texts such as the Upaniṣads, the Brahma Sūtra or the Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya are all running commentaries on actual experience, like the words of a commentator which accompany a film seen on a screen. The quest for truth has two means: the experiential and the theoretical, which go hand in hand and inner experience is therefore central to this way of thought. In other words true knowledge

becomes possible only to him who has prepared himself appropriately to experience it. This is also Maharishi's position.

According to this view, the Vedāntist's purpose is not to try to persuade his hearers of the truth of his ideas by means of rational arguments in the way that a Hume or Russell does, for he knows that there is no point in doing so. All he can do is to state the truth as he perceives it in the hope that his words will strike some echo, however faint, in the minds of his hearers and that this will rouse in them the desire to explore further. Such exploration cannot be undertaken through intellectual discussion which is not a means^{to} but a commentary on it. The value of intellectual discussion is to give as great a conceptual clarity as possible to the subjective experience.

It is for similar reasons, I think, that Indian philosophy in general has often been accused of having no regard for ethics. This is not because it considers such matters as unimportant, but because it holds that behaviour stems from the quality of awareness of those who act; and this, is primarily to be improved by practical application.

Maharishi also holds that practical experience must accompany rational exposition and his own teaching is always done in that light. The thesis that he advances is that, to understand the Vedānta clearly, one must recognize that it is not a philosophical system analogous, say, to that of Kant and accessible in principle to anyone who takes the trouble to study it carefully, but that it depends on the prior undergoing of certain kinds of experience. This is not to say, of course, that the statements made by the Vedānta in general and Śāṅkara in particular are completely meaningless to anyone who has not practised certain techniques - if this were the case, it would be pointless to discuss the statements - but he does maintain that the practice of such techniques is intrinsic to the study of the Vedānta.

According to Maharishi, much of the Vedāntic material is written precisely for people who have already had such experiences and is intended to help them ^a understand these experiences; he considers such material to serve as "milestones along the way" for individuals aspiring to the realization of truth. He considers this to be one explanation as to why a great many Indian philosophical texts appeared in sūtra form. In the words of A.B.Keith :

"These texts are based on the principle of short catchwords which must from the first have been accompanied by verbal expositions."²¹

Most sūtras consist of only two or three words and are unintelligible without a commentary. Rare words are also commonly used in sūtras as well as the catchwords which served the purpose of memorization. The sūtra form is common to all branches of Sanskrit scientific literature and it is virtually certain that it was accompanied by the oral instructions and explanations of a teacher in the traditional Indian way. Maharishi believes that philosophical sūtras were at the time of writing also accompanied by the inner experiences of their hearers who therefore understood them very well and required no further intellectual explanations. Commentaries were written after the sūtras, allegedly at times when the need was felt for interpretations or revisions of the teachings. Saṅkara in his day held that revisions of interpretations were necessary from time to time and Maharishi holds the same view today.

As I mentioned in my introduction, of the possible terms which can be used to refer to the kind of experiences I wish to discuss, I prefer

the term : "altered states of consciousness", coined by modern secular psychologists such as Charles Tart. Until recently, such states have either been completely ignored in the West, or relegated to the category of pathology. Probably the first Western psychologist to pay much attention to them was William James. Subsequently, they greatly interested C.G.Jung and, still more recently, Tart has taken up the subject experimentally.

Another useful idea that emanates from the work of psychologists like Tart is the concept of "state-bound" learning. That is, certain information may be available to a person in one state of awareness and not in another. For example, a hypnotized subject may be able to perform mental calculations that he could not do in his ordinary state. Likewise, psychoanalysts hold that knowledge which is repressed or otherwise inaccessible to ordinary consciousness may appear in dreams. It is a fundamental premise of Maharishi's teaching that knowledge is different in different states of consciousness.

I referred a little earlier to practices which are supposed to lead to altered states of consciousness. One category of such practices constitutes what is commonly known as yoga (considered not as a system of philosophy but as a physical or mental exercise).

Maharishi teaches what he claims is a form of yoga, the mental technique called transcendental meditation. This meditational technique is claimed to bring about progressive experience of altered states of consciousness and these altered states of consciousness are supposed to provide the experiential foundation for the study of the Vedānta.

Many Vedāntic statements refer to altered states of consciousness and specifically to those which Maharishi talks about. The important difference between these statements and Maharishi's is that Maharishi categorizes these states in the order in which he claims them to occur. Thus Maharishi gives a schematic presentation of certain altered states of consciousness whereas in Vedāntic texts they are not normally mentioned in terms of relative sequence to one another.

For Maharishi as well as for Śaṅkara, the specific altered states of consciousness on which Vedāntic teachings are based are not only psychological but also ontological categories, that is, they have both subjective and objective validity.

The prospective meditator who will practise Maharishi's meditation technique does not have to believe this, because the efficacy of the technique is not dependent on belief. The general topic of

the subjective or objective nature of altered states, however, is of some intellectual interest, particularly to the modern Westerner who displays great interest in objective knowledge and verification.

C.G.Jung attributes this need of the modern Westerner to a split which has occurred between faith and knowledge in the Western mind, a split which, according to him, does not exist in the East because of a different historical and psychological development of its peoples. Taking as an example the various forms of yogic practices which have sprung up in the West, he says :

"In the East, where these ideas and practices originated, and where an uninterrupted tradition extending over some four thousand years has created the necessary spiritual conditions, yoga is, as I can readily believe, the perfect and appropriate method of fusing body and mind together so that they form a unity which can hardly be doubted. They thus create a psychological disposition which makes possible intuitions that transcend consciousness. The Indian mentality has no difficulty in operating intelligently with a concept like prāna. The West, on the contrary, with its bad habit of

wanting to believe on one hand, and its highly developed scientific and philosophical critique on the other, finds itself in a real dilemma. Either it falls into the trap of faith and swallows concepts like prāna, atman, chakra, samādhi, etc., without giving them a thought, or its scientific critique repudiates them one and all as "pure mysticism".²²

The split to which Jung refers is the division between the intuitive and the intellectual modes of experiencing the world. Western thought has become increasingly dominated by the ratiocinative intellect. To put this in terms of the currently fashionable distinction between the functions of the two halves of the brain, we are today in a culture that experiences the world predominantly via the left hemisphere -the hemisphere responsible for verbal, analytic thought - rather than via the right hemisphere, responsible for intuitive, representational functioning. The function of left-hemisphere thinking is to break things up, and its characteristic is that it excludes the subjective ("merely subjective") aspects from consideration.

Traditional Indian thought has not undergone this division to anything like the same extent. Maharishi,

for example, appears to find no difficulty in accepting the theories and practical techniques of Western scientists on the one hand while on the other he continues to conceive of the world and of man within a traditional mythological framework. He remains quite comfortable with the discrepancies that such an attitude entails, probably because for him they are "relative" and therefore less important. For Westerners, however, they can be a problem. Jung's reservations about the practicability of transplanting Indian ideas and practices to the West therefore, probably do have a good deal of justification.

It is certainly true that some Westerners do accept obscure Indian philosophical concepts quite uncritically, as anyone who has had anything to do with an Indian movement will know, while others will not accept them without some objective proof of their validity.

In this respect, altered states of consciousness have been very elusive. The sceptical modern Westerner will probably accept that they are subjective experiences which constitute a private psychological reality for those who perceive them. Their validity however has not been demonstrable in an objective way, nor can their content be precisely conveyed even by the experiencers themselves. Though many who have

had such experiences of either a secular or a religious nature have given descriptions of them, in most cases they did warn their hearers that their experience was "indescribable" or "ineffable" which therefore suggests that their descriptions, however full they may seem, can only be approximate.

Maharishi has often pointed out that it is as difficult to describe such an experience to someone who has never had it himself, as it is to describe the taste of an orange to a man who has never eaten one. It can be said that the orange is sweet, juicy, or sour, but these are only approximations. The best way to find out what the orange really tastes like, is to eat it.

However, the objective existence of the orange is easily verifiable by a visit to the local greengrocer, since it can also be seen and touched, whereas the same cannot be said for altered states of consciousness.

The psychologist J.H. Leuba gives an interesting speculation on the physiological and psychological process which gives rise to the experience of altered states, in supposing that

".....when the higher mental life and the activity of the external senses have ceased, the

primordial quality of organic sensations and feelings is revealed. On the brink of unconsciousness - whether it be the unconsciousness of sleep or of abnormal trance produced in any way whatsoever - consciousness is at its simplest; it is continuity without parts, and, therefore, let us say, eternal and timeless. This might be spoken of as the Urgrund, to use a term of the German pantheistic mystics, and it might be surmised that it is in this form that consciousness began in the organic world." 23

This speculative definition has interesting affinities with the account Maharishi gives of the process of transcendental meditation. According to Maharishi, during meditation one ceases to experience thought at the conscious mental level, which he calls the gross level of thought (presumably translating as "gross" the Sanskrit term *sthūla*); the attention is then allowed to experience thought at progressively less conscious levels which Maharishi calls subtler levels (probably using the word "subtle" as a rendering for the Sanskrit *sūkṣma*). To the degree that they are experienced, these subtle levels also become conscious.

Eventually, even the subtlest form of thought is transcended and what remains, according to Maharishi, is not unconsciousness but consciousness itself, behind time, space and causation.

"The technique may be defined as turning the attention inwards towards the subtler levels of thought, until the mind transcends the experience of the subtlest state of thought and arrives at the source of thought. This expands the conscious mind and at the same time brings it in contact with the creative intelligence which gives rise to every thought." ²⁴

This process of mental rarefaction or, as he calls it, simplification, arouses Leuba's strongest suspicions because he considers it to be responsible for a false sense of clarity of the experience. By allowing no room for contradiction, this simplification removes the circumstances in which doubt can arise and produces the high degree of certainty which is often claimed.

"Mental simplification, by eliminating contradictions or complexities that might be the occasion of doubt, tends to produce

assurance as to what remains in consciousness."²⁵

He then concludes :

"The clearness and certainty of that which is experienced in trance states bear no unequivocal relation to truth or objective reality. Mystical assurances of clearness and certainty need not weigh heavily upon us ; that to which these impressions are attached is to be regarded as true only in so far as experimentally verified or in so far as in agreement with established knowledge." ²⁶

Regarding the experience of "what remains in consciousness", Maharishi seems to be in total agreement with Leuba's conclusion. He accepts the possibility of altered states with reference to what he calls "experiencing the subtler states of thought", whose mental contents may have no objective validity whatever and which can be totally misleading. Such experiences are, according to him, completely unreliable, since on the one hand they may contain a true vision of reality but on the other they may not, and it is not possible to discriminate between the two situations.

He gives no emphasis at all to such experiences and repeatedly warns his followers not to attach any importance to them if they arise. He applies this scepticism even to apparently factual knowledge acquired from altered states of consciousness. He laughs and says :

"Check by telephone, or by post, before you believe this." ²⁷

The contradictions which Leuba talks about, as well as the remaining mental content, are part and parcel of the relative field of existence in which doubt, differences and changes take place and in which thought occurs whatever its form. If however the attention transcends contradiction and change and even thought itself, it enters another field of existence which he mentions as "unconsciousness". It is this that Indian mystics and German pantheists alike regard as consciousness itself, devoid of experience, and Absolute.

This leads one to an impasse, because it is impossible to evaluate such a state. Either it does not exist at all or, if it does, there is no means of proving its status through any empirical investigation or any way of thought, because it is completely outside these categories. It is not

possible to evaluate one state of existence in terms of another. One can evaluate empirical data in terms of logic which pertains to relative existence. One cannot, however evaluate the Absolute along the same lines, and objective verification must end at this point.

As I will show in the following chapters, all the altered states of consciousness which Maharishi mentions in connection with his teaching are based on this Absolute state. Maharishi, like Śaṅkara before him, believes in the status of the Absolute as an ontological category, and similarly in the ontological status of those altered states which have the Absolute as their conscious basis. He also believes, theoretically at least, that there are physiological correlates connected with these states and that they ought to be potentially measurable. In this he shares the attitude of those who hold that the scientific method should be applied to validate states of existence which would otherwise be considered as having only metaphysical significance. It is Maharishi's view that scientific investigation can verify such states at an objective level.

"Every experience has its level of physiology, and so unbounded awareness has its own level

of physiology which can be measured. Every aspect of life is integrated and connected with every other phase. These days, we have instruments and methods to measure brain waves, blood content and so on... When we talk of scientific measurements, this does not take away from the spiritual experience. We are not responsible for those times when spiritual experience was thought of as metaphysical. Everything is physical. Consciousness is the product of the functioning brain. Talking of scientific measurements is no damage to that wholeness of life which is present everywhere and which begins to be lived when the physiology is taking a particular form. This is our understanding about spirituality; it is not on the level of faith- it is on the level of blood and bone and flesh and activity. It is measurable."²⁸

Maharishi has so far attempted to measure the physiological changes that occur during the decrease of mental activity which takes place during the process of transcendental meditation. He is also actively interested in measuring similar changes occurring in the other altered states of consciousness which are included in his scheme.

Maharishi's approach is one that tends to bridge the split between faith and knowledge which Jung talks about. He is inclined to synthesize these two approaches to reality which represent the subjective and objective paths to knowledge. Maharishi's philosophical outlook is Indian, representative of the subjective path to knowledge which is more characteristic of the East. His practical outlook is greatly influenced by modern Western civilization which favours the objective path to knowledge.

Correspondingly, Maharishi International University offers an education which attempts to integrate both these ways of thought. Practical experience of subjective states is of equal importance as its objective evaluation, as this statement in its catalogue suggests :

"It will be known that cosmic consciousness, permanent unbounded awareness, is not only a concept in the mind of man, but also a living reality that his body can reveal and his behaviour can express, and that unbounded awareness is truly the basis of the most perfect thought and action... In this way, the value of enlightenment will be lifted from

the shadowy misinterpretations of past ages into a modern scientific reality now available to all." 29

Clearly, it can be no part of my present thesis to try to prove the truth of Maharishi's claims. I shall not seek to show that the practice of transcendental meditation actually brings about the experiences that Maharishi says it does, still less that the undergoing of such experiences produces the valuable psychological, ethical and sociological effects that he claims. My approach is purely historical. It has always been central to Maharishi's position that he is not an innovator, but a restorer. The truth of the Vedānta, according to him, has become obscured by those who have failed to realize that knowledge cannot be a path to experience but results from experience. His mission is to restore that realization. If he is right, it follows that his teaching ought to be in harmony with that of the Vedānta. It ought to be possible to find parallels for his statements in Vedāntic texts. He himself claims his teaching to be in accordance with Śaṅkara's Advaita tradition. Therefore, although I shall take account of other Vedāntic texts, I shall mainly refer to Śaṅkara's works for historical parallels.

The central aspect of Maharishi's teaching is his exposition of seven states of consciousness, how they are brought about, how they relate to each other and the philosophical tenets which underlie them or, to put it in William James's terms, the "overbelief" which he constructs on the basis of such experiences. Of the seven states of consciousness in Maharishi's scheme, three are the ordinary states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep and four can be referred to as altered states of consciousness, these being the states which Maharishi calls Transcendental Consciousness, Cosmic Consciousness, God Consciousness and Brahman Consciousness (Unity). I will therefore study these states with special reference to Śaṅkara's position on the subject. The question I propose to try to answer is how far and in what sense Maharishi's teaching is, as he claims, the heart of Vedānta philosophy and how far it is original.

CHAPTER III

TRANSCENDENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Maharishi regards the initial goal of transcendental meditation as achieving what he calls the fourth state of consciousness, transcendental consciousness. I will examine this idea from the following aspects :

1. Psychological, as described by Maharishi.
2. Philosophical, again as described by Maharishi.
3. Historical, in terms of parallels in the Advaita Vedānta with special reference to Śaṅkara.
4. Concluding Remarks.

1. Maharishi's Psychological Description of Transcendental Consciousness

Maharishi recognizes the existence of three ordinary states of consciousness (relative states of awareness) namely waking, dreaming and deep sleep. These three states are also regarded as states of ignorance. The ordinary experience of human beings is confined to these three states which succeed one another throughout the twenty-four hours.

The fourth state is conceived as underlying the other three, in the sense that it constitutes their basis. It is a "ground state" of awareness.³⁰ Psychologically, it is said to be a state of pure awareness; that is, a state in which there is consciousness but not consciousness of anything. The experiencer is awake, but he is not thinking.

The path to this state is considered to lie through the "transcending" of thought. In the meditation process, the mind is allowed to become progressively quieter and quieter until, at last it becomes completely still. At this point, pure awareness exists. Thinking has been allowed to die away but the meditator remains awake.

Maharishi has often used the analogy of a cinema screen to illustrate this idea:³¹ Ordinarily, we see the images projected on the screen, but not the screen itself; yet, the screen is the underlying reality on which the illusory images are projected. The waking state of consciousness would correspond to seeing an ordinary film. The deep sleep state would correspond to what happens when the projector fails and the house lights remain out, while the dreaming state might correspond to seeing a surrealist film. If the projector, without a film, shines white light on the screen, this would correspond

to the fourth state, pure awareness.

This analogy illustrates two points about pure awareness: First it is the underlying reality of the other states, in the sense that it forms their necessary foundation and is always there whether perceived or not. Secondly, it is revealed when the contents of consciousness (the film images) are removed but consciousness itself (the bright light) is not lost.

It is not part of my thesis to discuss the question whether or not anyone actually experiences this state of pure awareness, nor whether transcendental meditation in particular brings it about. On the more general question of the possibility of the state, however, it is worth pointing out that the fourth state as described by Maharishi appears to be identical with what W.T.Stace calls the "introvertive mystical experience", described as follows :

"Suppose that, after having got rid of all sensations, one should go on and exclude from consciousness all sensuous images, and then all abstract thoughts, reasoning processes, volitions, and other particular mental contents; what would there then be left of consciousness?"

There would be no mental content whatever but rather a complete emptiness, vacuum, void. One would suppose a priori that consciousness would then entirely lapse and one would fall asleep or become unconscious. But the introvertive mystics—thousands of them all over the world—unanimously assert that they have attained to this complete vacuum of mental contents, but that what then happens is quite different from a lapse into unconsciousness. On the contrary, what emerges is a state of pure consciousness—"pure" in the sense that it is not the consciousness of any empirical content. It has no content except itself."³²

This type of experience is described by Marghanita Laski in her book on secular and religious experiences as a "withdrawal experience".

"Thought is stilled, subject and object melt into one",

she says and then adds that the experience

"may be readily induced by anyone who cares to try the experiment."³³

Both W.T. Stace and Marghanita Laski, also Evelyn Underhill and William James, draw upon a large number of cases in describing this experience. Whatever one's opinion of its ontological status, therefore, I think that one must accept that it is a widespread, if uncommon, aspect of human experience.

A further point that should be emphasized at this stage, since it is central to much of Maharishi's thinking, is that though the state is usually described from the psychological aspect, Maharishi has always insisted that it is not "merely" psychological but depends on a particular disposition of the nervous system. Although his conception of the nervous system may well be somewhat wider than that current in modern science, we may interpret this as meaning that there is supposed to be a particular brain state which, when it exists, gives rise to the fourth state—pure consciousness. Maharishi has gone on to speculate on the nature of this hypothetical brain state, and has postulated that it consists in a state of "least activity",³⁴ an idea which has stimulated a good deal of physiological research by interested scientists. It is Maharishi's view that other altered states of consciousness such as cosmic consciousness, God consciousness and Brahman

consciousness, similarly depend on modifications in the disposition of the nervous system. This subject is again outside my terms of reference; I mention it to make it clear that Maharishi's position on the mind-body problem seems to be on the whole monistic rather than dualistic, and also because it sheds an interesting light on his approach, particularly as it is relevant to the question of "stress"³⁵, which I shall consider in the next chapter.

2. Maharishi's Philosophical Position

Maharishi assumes that the experience of pure awareness is not merely an experience among others but is actually "experience" of the Absolute; that is, he constructs what William James called an "overbelief" on the basis of the experience. I shall set out the elements of this overbelief more fully as I go on; but for the present it is important to make it clear that the state of pure awareness is said to be identical with the Absolute. For this reason it is incorrect-though linguistically convenient- to call it an "experience" for the Absolute, precisely because it is Absolute, cannot be an experience among others. Rather, it is said to be the ground of experience, and in the state of pure awareness the meditator is supposed to become one with that ground and thus to be beyond experience. To avoid clumsy periphrases, I shall continue to speak of "experiencing" pure awareness, but I should like it to be understood that this is actually a short-hand term referring to the state of affairs I have just described.

Maharishi frequently refers to the state of pure awareness as the "source of thought".³⁶ This is meant psychologically, in the sense that the meditator is supposed to be able to experience

directly the way in which thoughts originate from this level. It is also meant metaphysically, in that this level is thought of as being the Ground of the universe from which all things arise. This again, it is alleged, can be experienced directly by people who have reached the requisite level of refinement, but for others it must remain as a metaphysical assertion.

a) Saccidānanda

Maharishi predicates three features to the qualitless Absolute : Sat, cit, ānanda, which he translates as Absolute bliss consciousness. Sat is the unmanifest Being which never changes, which lies beyond the ever changing relative existence (the "πάντα ρεῖ" of Heraclitus) and is therefore Absolute. Cit is translated as consciousness. Ānanda refers to the psychological fact that contact with this state is said to give rise to bliss. Moreover, the nearer one comes to this level, the greater the element of bliss, so that there is a natural tendency for the attention to move in that direction; this, according to Maharishi, is the basis on which transcendental meditation works.

b) The nature of the Fourth State

Maharishi describes the fourth state as a state of pure Being, which is unmanifest and transcendental, beyond thought and beyond experience, where the subject - object relationship is no longer operable. However, this is not to be confused with the state of permanent union with the Absolute, which he calls the seventh state of Brahman Consciousness (Unity) and equates with the Sanskrit term Brahmīsthiti, which I will discuss in chapter VI. The difference between that state and the fourth which is discussed here is that one is permanent and the other is not. Transcendental consciousness is an impermanent glimpse of the Absolute which, though underlying the waking, dreaming and deep sleep states, is not immediately sustainable together with them on the conscious level. Maharishi understands the evolution of higher states of consciousness in terms of the increasing capacity of the human nervous system to consciously sustain the three ordinary states together with the state of the Absolute, on a permanent basis.

As far as the nature of Transcendental Being (Maharishi uses this term interchangeably with the term Absolute) is concerned, however, we are presented with a paradox. This is essentially the paradox of the Absolute-relative relationship as it

appears in the Vedānta. It is experienced directly in the state of cosmic consciousness, so I will discuss it at greater length when I discuss cosmic consciousness, in chapter IV. In the case of transcendental consciousness, the paradox is not experienced directly, but it poses the following intellectual problem : Though beyond the ever changing relativity, this state is considered to be the basis of relative existence, indeed, the very basis of thought :

"Being is the basis of thinking and thinking is the basis of doing. Being is the basis of all living. Just as without sap there would be no root and no tree, so also without Being, there would be no thinking and no doing. There would be no living without Being."³⁷

Here there is a progression of Being, thought, action the one dependent upon the other. If Being is Absolute and unchanging, however, how does it translate itself into thought? If Being is beyond all experience, then how is it that contact with this state gives rise to bliss? To resolve this contradiction, the Advaita postulates the theory of the two aspects of Being, which Maharishi follows and describes in this way :

c) Jīva and Ātman

"The inner spirit may be understood in two ways: first, as the ego, together with the mind and senses, which constitutes the doer and the experiencer, the enjoyer and the sufferer; secondly as the "dweller in the body", which is the individual aspect of cosmic existence, of eternal Being, and which is known in Sanskrit terminology as "jiva".

"Jiva, then, is individualized cosmic existence; it is the individual spirit within the body. With its limitations removed, jiva is atman, Transcendent Being."³⁸

The jīva-ātman principle then, according to Maharishi, has two functions: On one hand it is the doer and the experiencer, the enjoyer and the sufferer; on the other hand, it is the individual aspect of cosmic existence. It seems to be a two-faced Janus, one aspect of which is empirical, the other transcendent. This element can therefore accommodate both spheres within it. However, Maharishi tells us that there are "limitations" which give Jīva its empirical character. With these limitations removed, it is ātman, transcendent Being. The limitations

are imposed by relativity, which is pervaded by ignorance. When the superimposed relativity is removed, the transcendent alone remains :

"The word experiencer implies a relative state; it is a relative word. The experience and the object of experience are both relative. When we have transcended the experience of the subtlest object, the experiencer is left by himself without an experience, without an object of experience and without the process of experiencing. When the subject is left without an object of experience, having transcended the subtlest state of the object, he steps out of the process of experiencing and arrives at the state of Being." 39

d) Metaphysical and Psychological Subject

Maharishi distinguishes between the metaphysical subject which he calls "isness" and the psychological subject which he calls "amness". Isness is universal existence while amness is individual existence. Both, he says, are essentially based in the Absolute (Brahmani). At a more individual level than amness, he places "myness" which is the level at which human

emotions begin to appear. Myness, according to Maharishi, represents deep, unconscious emotion or, as he otherwise calls it, feeling and basic preoccupation with individual security. He considers these to be the first expressions of individuality. (Maharishi uses the terms emotion and feeling interchangeably as translations from the Sanskrit root hrd-).

Once the individual is aware of himself as a separate entity, he thinks. Maharishi therefore explains the process of individualization in terms of the progression : Isness-amness-myness or feeling-thinking. ⁴⁰

e) The Immortality of Jīva

Maharishi states that the universality of isness transcends the individuality of amness, but that both are based in the Absolute (Brahman) and in immortality (amrte). To illustrate this, he gives the following analogy: ⁴¹ The human body changes throughout life, it ages, it looks different at various times, yet the individual is essentially the same. In that sense, whatever changes the body may be subject to, individuality itself is immortal. The Jīva does not die because, in its essential nature, it is ātman.

f) The Self unfolds Itself by Itself to Itself

The philosophical postulate of the Jīva makes it possible to claim that a meditator experiences bliss (with reference to ānanda) or unboundedness (with reference to cit) pertaining to Saccidānanda . . Maharishi likes to use the word "unboundedness" to illustrate the unlimited nature of consciousness at that level.

When "amness" becomes "isness", individuality is universality because the boundary that distinguishes one from the other no longer exists. Thus, instead of boundaries, there is unboundedness. However, experience either of bliss, or of unboundedness, or of both, is really just "outside" transcendental consciousness as such. Transcendental consciousness is absolute bliss consciousness, which is by definition transcendental; that is, beyond experience, because of its absolute value. Any experience of either or both of its other components is actually a stage between the ordinary waking experience and the transcendent. It is a stage of experience that Maharishi calls "celestial" because of its blissful quality. He also postulates a distinct state of consciousness based on permanent celestial experience which he calls God consciousness.

I will describe Maharishi's theory of God consciousness in Chapter V.

Transcendental consciousness however is beyond all experience whatever its quality; it is beyond the ordinary waking experience which Maharishi calls the gross experience and the celestial experience which Maharishi calls subtle experience, alike.

As I mentioned in the previous section, during the transcendental meditation process as taught by Maharishi, the mind is allowed to become progressively quieter and quieter until at last it becomes completely still. At this point, pure awareness exists. There is no subject-object relationship; the limitations of ignorance and relativity are removed.

It would be linguistically convenient to say that pure awareness is in this case brought about by actively minimizing mental activity, a process which could be considered a form of mental activity in itself. Yet Maharishi says that this state is not achieved through any form of activity, mental or other. Activity is by definition relative and cannot produce the absolute state; even as minimal an activity as meditation cannot actually produce the state of transcendent Being :

"Meditation does not unfold the Self-the Self,

it must be repeated, unfolds Itself by Itself to Itself. The wind does nothing to the sun; it only clears away the clouds and the sun is found shining by its own light. The sun of the Self is self-effulgent. Meditation only takes the mind out of the clouds of relativity." ⁴²

3. Historical Parallels in the Advaita Vedānta with
Special Reference to Śaṅkara.

In "Seven States of Consciousness" A.Campbell
writes :

"The state of pure awareness is described in
the Upanishads as the fourth state - fourth
with reference to the three ordinary states
of awareness : waking, dreaming and dreamless
sleep... These three relative states are to
be thought of as projected on, or reflected
in, the underlying reality of the fourth state,
pure awareness." 43

a) The Nature of the Fourth State

The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad is in fact an exposition
of this, describing the four states as four parts or
quarters (pāt). First, the characteristics of the
three ordinary states are given in turn, then comes
the description of the fourth state :

"nāntaḥprajñam na bahisprajñam nobhayataḥ-
prajñam na prajñānaghanam na prajñam nāprajñam
adr̥ṣṭam avyavahāryam agrāhyam alakṣaṇam *acintyam*
avyapadeśyam ekātmapratyayasāram prapañcopāsamam

śāntaṃ śivaṃ advaitaṃ caturthaṃ manyāte.
sa ātmā. sa vijñeyah."

"It is not that which cognises the internal (objects), not that which cognises the external (objects), not that which cognises both, not a mass of cognition, not cognitive, not non-cognitive, (it is) unseen, incapable of being spoken of, ungraspable, without characteristics, unthinkable, unnameable, the essence of the knowledge of the one Self (ātman), that to which the world is resolved, peaceful, benign, non-dual, such is the fourth part (quarter) considered to be. He is the ātman. He is to be known." 44

This is a description (if one may use this word in the case of something which is defined as being indescribable) of ātman, the transcendent Self. I shall discuss in Chapter VII the Advaita theory according to which ātman is considered to be identical with Brahman. The above quotation would therefore be applicable to both. In commenting on this, Śaṅkara states that the fourth state, while transcending the three ordinary states, also includes them. It is cognized through the inclusion of all three.

"trayānām viśvādīnām pūrvapūrvapṛavilāpanena
turīyasya pratipattiḥ."

"The perception of the fourth (is attained by)
the merging of every preceding one of the three
such as viśva etc. (into every succeeding one)."⁴⁵

The Upaniṣad also tells us that this state is
to be known (vijneyaḥ). This, Śaṅkara endorses with
his attitude on anubhava and Maharishi follows him
by stressing the importance of direct experience.

b) Saccidānanda

Though following the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad in
considering the qualitiess Absolute (nirguṇa Brahman)
to be unknowable or ungraspable (agrāhyam) and without
characteristics (alakṣaṇam), Śaṅkara's Advaita allows
certain characteristics (lakṣaṇa) and attributes
(viśeṣaṇa) to be used in a provisional way.
Characteristics can be either essential (svarūpalakṣaṇa)
or accidental (tatasthalakṣaṇa). An essential
characteristic is Saccidānanda which Maharishi also
uses in connection with the qualitiess Absolute and
translates as Absolute bliss consciousness.

In the Ātmabodha which may or may not be the
work of Śaṅkara but is however attributed to him,

Saccidānanda is stated as being the very nature of
ātman :

"prakaśo'rkasya toyasya śaityam agner yathoṣṇatā
svabhāvaḥ saccidānanda nitya nirmalatātmanah."

"As light is the nature of the sun, coolness of
water and heat of fire, so is absolute
consciousness bliss eternity purity (the nature
of) the ātman." 46

As in the case of the definition of ātman in
the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, so also in the case of these
provisional characteristics, it must be taken into
account that the Advaita theory holds ātman to be
identical with Brahman.

c) Jīva and Ātman

The earliest scriptural evidence concerning the
jīva can be said to appear in Ṛg Veda I.164 ⁴⁷. The
same verse is also repeated in the Muṇḍaka and
Śvetaśvatara Upaniṣads :

"dvā suparnā sayujā sakhāyā
samānaṃ vrkṣaṃ pariśasvajāte

tayor anyañ pippalam svādv atty
anaśnann anyo'bhicākaśīti."

"Two birds, friends (who are) united, sit on
the same tree. Of these two, one eats the
sweet pippala fruit and the other looks on
without eating." 48

This is a poetic image of the relationship
between the two aspects of Being. One bird is
engaged in activity and eats the pippala fruit.
He is the experiencer and the enjoyer (bhoktr).
The other is not limited by the desires and needs
of the body; he is beyond experience and activity-
-he just looks on. Maharishi follows Śaṅkara in
declaring that it is not inherent in the nature
of the jīva to be an experiencer, but in that of
the limitations superimposed upon the ātman. In
the Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya, Śaṅkara is explicit about
this :

"copādhisaṃpr̥ktasyaivātmano bhoktr̥tvādi-
viśeṣalābham darśayati."

"The agency of the ātman is due to the
superimposition of the attributes of

limiting adjuncts and is not part of its nature." 49

Since experiencing is not the essential nature of the jīva, it is not really a doer (kartr) or an enjoyer (bhoktr). Its function as an agent (kartrtva) is only owing to the limitations caused by ignorance (avidyā) and therefore it is ignorance which causes the individuality of the jīva, thus making it appear different from ātman, whereas in reality it is the same.

Maharishi mentions ignorance but he does not elaborate very much on it, nor does he really explain its ontology. In simple terms, Maharishi's state of ignorance is the state of the ordinary common experience which has not become permeated with transcendental consciousness. Ignorance, according to Maharishi, indicates the absence of transcendental consciousness. Thus he collectively calls the three ordinary states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep "ignorance" because in these states, according to him, consciousness is either totally lacking, or restricted to empirical values only, with no simultaneous awareness of absolute value. The opposite of ignorance is cosmic consciousness, which includes both empirical and absolute awareness (see Chapt.IV).

Nevertheless, as long as the relative and absolute values are perceived as different, knowledge is still incomplete. When they are appreciated in terms of each other, supreme knowledge is achieved.

Though this is Maharishi's basic position, he himself points out that it is an oversimplification because, as I will describe in the following chapter in more detail, he considers ignorance to be an inevitable part of the human state. Ignorance and individuality are inseparable. Thus in empirical existence, relativity is to a greater or lesser degree superimposed on the absolute, and to that degree, it inhibits the appreciation of it.

In the *Ātmabodha*, Śaṅkara represents this as follows :

"ajñānān manasopādeḥ kartr̥tvādīni cātmani
kalpyante'mbugate candre calanādi yathāmbasaḥ."

"Because of ignorance, the agency etc. of the limiting adjunct, the mind, are superimposed on the ātman just as the movement etc. of water are superimposed on the image of the moon reflected in the water." ⁵⁰

Maharishi follows Śaṅkara in postulating that

the jīva consists of the ātman limited by the object. When the limitations that are due to ignorance are removed, jīva is ātman, transcendent Being.

From this discussion it follows that jīva is "known" as ātman only in the absence of experience. Their oneness is a transcendental and not an empirical reality and as such it is by definition beyond experience. This is the fourth state according to the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad and the state which Maharishi calls transcendental consciousness. Two things that are thus different from each other in terms of relative awareness are identical in terms of absolute awareness.

This is part of the central paradox of Śaṅkara's Advaita, which appears again in the question of the relationship or identity of Brahman and empirical reality. Śaṅkara's theory rests on the argument that this is not as inconsistent as it may appear to be :

"yat tūktam na viruddhaguṇayor anyonyātmatva-sambhava iti. nāyam doṣaḥ. viruddhaguṇatāyā mithyāttvopapattēh."

"As regards the statement (i.e.the opponent's

objection) that things with contrary qualities cannot be identical, (we reply that) there is no fault; for this opposition of qualities can be shown to be false." 51

Advaitins also express the apparent distinction between the empirical and the transcendental Self with the terms vijñānātman, the ātman limited by avidyā and paramātman, the highest ātman, which is unconditioned and unlimited.

Scriptural evidence for the identity of jīva and ātman is quoted from the Chāndogya Upaniṣad :

"sa ya eṣo'ṇimā aitaḍ ātmyam idaṃ sarvaṃ tat satyaṃ sa ātmā. tat tvam asi śvetaketo iti."

"That which is the subtle essence this whole (world) has for its Self; that is the true, that is the ātman. You are that, Śvetaketu." 52

As one might expect, this "tat tvam asi" is constantly quoted by Maharishi :

"The Upanishads declare : "Tat tvam asi - That thou art", implying that this obvious phase of

phenomenal existence which you take as your self, is not your real nature - you, in fact, are that transcendent Reality." 53

The Advaita concept of ignorance and of the jīva is an attempt to resolve the paradox of the relationship and simultaneous identity of absolute and relative existence which is inherent in the theory. The jīva seems to be conceived as a link between the two. The very idea of a link, however, is based in ignorance, because the ultimate truth, according to Śaṅkara, is that there is in fact no relationship at all - the Absolute and the relative are one.

d) The Immortality of Jīva

The Chāndogya Upaniṣad further informs us that the jīva is immortal :

"jīvāpetam vāva kiledam mriyate na jīvo mriyata iti."

"Truly indeed, this (body) dies when deprived of the jīva - the jīva does not die." 54

The jīva does not die because, in its essential nature, it is ātman. In its capacity of the transcendent Self, it is immortal. Thus the jīva is not identified with the body, but with the ātman, and it is not "slain when the body is slain." 55

The transition between mortality and immortality seems to come in precisely where Maharishi says that individualization is first expressed : at the level of the emotion, for in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad it is said:

"yadā sarve prabhidyante hrdayasyeha granthayah
atha martyo'mrto bhavaty etāvad anuśāsanam."

"When all the knots that bind the heart are cut, then a mortal becomes immortal. So far goes the teaching." 56

According to the Kaṭha and Muṇḍaka Upaniṣads 57 this freedom of the heart from the binding knots involves the dispelling of all doubt and the end of all deeds and desires.

e) The Self reveals Itself by Itself to Itself

Maharishi follows Śaṅkara in holding that meditation, however subtle, remains an activity which cannot of itself bring about the transcendental state

which by definition is beyond activity. One does not add to it or subtract from it or do anything at all in order to realize it. The pure transcendental Self reveals Itself without the aid of any empirical activity.

"avacchinna⁵⁸ ivājñānāt tannaśe sati kevalaḥ svayaṃ prakāśate hy ātmā meghāpāyemśumān iva."

"On account of ignorance, the ātman appears conditioned, as it were ; when that is destroyed, the ātman shines of its own accord like the sun when the cloud is dispelled." ⁵⁹

4. Concluding Remarks

The altered state of consciousness that Maharishi calls transcendental consciousness is mentioned in the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad as the fourth state - fourth in relation to the three ordinary states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep. Maharishi follows this Upaniṣad and indeed the Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya in considering it to be the ineffable, ungraspable state of no experience.

Maharishi calls this "transcendental consciousness" because it is a state that lies beyond experience in the sense that the subject, object and act of experience are one. It thus transcends experience. It transcends the three ordinary states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep; it is however the underlying reality which is the basis of all three.

Maharishi considers this to be a state of Absolute reality as opposed to the relative reality which is represented by the three ordinary or relative states. By Absolute, Maharishi translates the Sanskrit term Brahman as it is used by Śaṅkara.

Maharishi follows Śaṅkara in postulating the distinction between the highest Self (ātman) and the empirical self (jīva). Jīva is the ātman when it is restricted by superimposed limitations

(upādhis) caused by ignorance (avidyā). The postulate of the jīva is an attempt to resolve the paradox of the relationship of Absolute and empirical reality as it appears in the theory of manifestation of the Absolute into relative, empirical existence.

Maharishi also follows Śaṅkara in predicating to the qualitiess Absolute (nirguṇa Brahman) the essential (svarūpalakṣaṇa) characteristic of Saccidānanda, which he translates as Absolute bliss consciousness. He is in accordance with Śaṅkara in stating that this Absolute state cannot be brought about by any activity, but occurs spontaneously by unfolding itself by itself to itself.

CHAPTER IV

COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS

Gaining awareness of transcendental consciousness during meditation is not, according to Maharishi, an end in itself, but merely a stage on the way to development of "higher" states of consciousness. The first of these states, according to Maharishi, is cosmic consciousness. This I will examine from the same aspects as transcendental consciousness, i.e. :

1. Psychological , as described by Maharishi.
2. Philosophical, again as described by Maharishi.
3. Historical, in terms of parallels in the Advaita with special reference to Śaṅkara.
4. Concluding remarks.

1. Maharishi's Psychological Description of Cosmic Consciousness

When transcendental consciousness is first experienced during meditation it is characteristically fleeting. Moreover, it is an "either-or" state ; during transcendental consciousness awareness of the outer world is lost and only awareness of the Self remains. With constant repetition of the experience, however, the meditator begins to be able

to maintain Self-awareness alongside ordinary awareness. Now the senses continue to act, but inner awareness is not lost.

Maharishi illustrates this with the analogy of a cloth dipped into yellow dye. The cloth is then exposed to the sun and the yellow dye fades. With constant repetition of dipping the cloth into the dye, however, and exposing it to the sun, the yellow dye eventually becomes fast. The analogy probably refers to the actual practice of dying textiles in rural India.

Maharishi devotes a good deal of attention to the description of cosmic consciousness, and it could be argued that his account of this state is one of his most original contributions.

a) The Nature of Cosmic Consciousness

Cosmic consciousness is, Maharishi says, essentially a paradoxical experience, and indeed may well be regarded as such by those to whom it comes. The person in cosmic consciousness experiences himself or herself as separate from activity and as uninvolved in it, yet activity goes on. He or she is in the world and yet not of it.

This state supposedly occurs in brief flashes. With the repetition of the meditation, the flashes become more and more frequent until, eventually, permanence of the state is established. The development of the state depends on regular alternation of meditation and action; for this purpose, therefore, the periods of action are considered just as important and valuable as the periods of meditation.

Permanently established cosmic consciousness is described as a state of knowledge - permanent Self-knowledge because there is constant awareness of the Self as separate from the ordinary awareness of the waking state. It is thus important in itself, but it is also important in another way - as the necessary foundation for the development of the two "higher" states of God-consciousness and Brahman consciousness (Unity) which I will discuss in subsequent chapters. These various higher states can again, Maharishi says, occur in "flashes" even to someone who has not gained cosmic consciousness but they cannot be permanent except on a foundation of permanent cosmic consciousness. This is to some extent an over-simplification for teaching purposes, as Maharishi himself acknowledges, but the general principle holds good : Cosmic consciousness is the

basis of the higher states of consciousness.⁶⁰

In practice, of course, most people do not gain the state of cosmic consciousness spontaneously and even transcendental consciousness seems to be rare. Maharishi explains this by the hypothesis that clear experience is prevented by the existence of "stress".

b) Maharishi's Theory of Stress

Maharishi supposes that any strong experience, pleasant as well as unpleasant, overloads what he calls the nervous system and leaves a residue in it, presumably as a structural modification of the mechanism. These stresses (he applies the term both to the event that occasions the neural disturbance and to the disturbance itself) are obstructions which are supposed to interfere with the clear experience of the Self which would otherwise exist. During meditation, owing to the great degree of rest which occurs, the stresses are supposed to be progressively removed; when they are all gone, the state of cosmic consciousness ensues permanently.

Maharishi makes a distinction between stresses and the mental impressions (these are known in Sanskrit as *vāsanās* from the root *vas-*, to dwell

i.e. that which is left dwelling in the mind)
which they cause:

"Now stress and deeply rooted impressions are two separate things, but they can be closely related for our understanding. Impressions are the lines of memory left by that experience, but over and above that the nervous system gets twisted. But when, through meditation, these twists are taken away from the physical nervous system...then the memory also loses its binding influence." 61

Maharishi's language here is obviously figurative. The implied meaning of his statements, however, is that his attitude to the mind-body problem is closely related to Identity Theory (central state materialism) in that he considers a physical event to have a corresponding mental event and vice-versa. His approach is therefore monistic; mind and body are considered to be aspects of a mind-body "whole".

A further analogy is given to illustrate the progressive reduction of stress: In the case of a non-meditating individual, impressions on the nervous system are likened to lines drawn on stone.

In the case of someone who has achieved transcendental consciousness, they are likened to lines drawn on sand. And in the case of someone who has gained cosmic consciousness, they are likened to lines made on water.⁶²

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the state which Maharishi describes as transcendental consciousness is a widely recognized psychological state, with many parallels stated in western sources. Instances of cosmic consciousness, however, do not appear to be as common. This is possibly due to the fact that it might not always be recognized as a distinct state. Arthur Koestler gives an account of an experience which could well be understood to be a flash of cosmic consciousness, though not interpreted as such :

"Then I was floating on my back in a river of peace under the bridges of silence. It came from nowhere and flowed nowhere. Then there was no river and no I. The I had ceased to exist...When I say "the I had ceased to exist" I refer to a concrete experience...The I ceases to exist because it has, by a kind of mental osmosis, established communication with, and been

dissolved in, the universal pool. It is this process of dissolution and limitless expansion which is sensed as the "oceanic" feeling, as the draining of all tension, the absolute catharsis, the peace that passeth all understanding." 63

This account is an interesting one and W.T.Stace, himself probably intrigued by it, put several questions about it to Koestler, whose answers give further clarification :

Q. "Am I right in supposing that during the experiences your physical senses were still in operation, so that you continued to perceive the various physical objects around you, the walls, window, objects outside the window, etc.?"

A. "Yes."

Q. "Did they become dim or fuzzy at the edges?"

A. "No. But they were just there in the margin of attention, but unattended to."

Q. "One of the Upanishads says: "It is pure unitary experience wherein awareness of the world and of multiplicity is obliterated."

Have you had any experience like this?
Do you think that when the Upanishad
speaks of the awareness of multiplicity
being "completely obliterated" it is
perhaps exaggerating?"

- A. "No, I did not experience that. That must
be a higher degree. But somehow I believe
that the experience exists and that its
description is not exaggerated."⁶⁴

Stace's own interpretation of this, is that
it seems to be incomplete or partially developed
introvertive experience, because of the fact that
all distinctions had not disappeared.⁶⁵ (It should
be remembered here that what Stace calls an
"introvertive" experience, is an experience of the
Self to the exclusion of everything else.) For
example, the experience of the outside world
persisted alongside the fusion of the individual
with a universal I. This is indeed significant,
as is also the fact that the objects did not
become dim or fuzzy, and this observation could
suggest a different interpretation; it is possible,
though of course not certain, that Koestler's
experience was a brief experience of the state
that Maharishi describes as cosmic consciousness.

2. Maharishi's Philosophical Position

Maharishi's statement is that the state of cosmic consciousness is simultaneous awareness of both Absolute and relative existence. Whereas in the waking state the contents of consciousness overshadow consciousness itself and in the transcendental state pure consciousness obliterates the awareness of the outside world, in cosmic consciousness the awareness of both the waking state and the transcendental state coexist and are perceived as separate from each other. It is the experience of duality par excellence. I emphasize this paradoxical character of cosmic consciousness because it is, I believe, essential to an understanding of Maharishi's version of Advaita philosophy.

The paradox, as I briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, concerns the relationship of Absolute and relative worlds. There are two main positions that may be adopted :

- 1) It may be held that Absolute and relative are quite separate from each other.
- 2) It may be held that Absolute and relative are identical with each other.

Both these interpretations have been advanced in various forms by Dvaita and Advaita schools of

thought respectively. They are, of course, logically mutually incompatible, at least in terms of Aristotelian logic.

According to W.T. Stace, however, the essential characteristic of the mystical insight is that both statements are found to be true simultaneously. That is, the mystic has a direct experience of simultaneous identity and non-identity between Absolute and relative; he sees that the relative world both is and is not the same as the Absolute.⁶⁶ This is illustrated by a comment of Śrī Ramakrishna regarding the relationship between the Absolute, qualityless param Brahma and the personal aparam Brahma :

"When I think of the Supreme Being as inactive-neither creating nor preserving nor destroying- I call him Brahman...the Impersonal God. When I think of him as active-creating, preserving, destroying- I call him Sakti, or Maya, or Prakriti, the Personal God. But the distinction between them does not mean a difference. The Personal and the Impersonal are the same thing...It is impossible to conceive one without the other."⁶⁷

The Absolute - relative paradox is a central one which generates many other paradoxes which are, in reality, the same paradox under different guises. For example, free will : the will is both free and unfree; manifestation : the Absolute gives rise to the relative world, yet has nothing to do with it; and so on.

Although the mystic has these violently paradoxical experiences, he is also at other times an ordinary man, subject to the usual rules of thinking, which are roughly those of Aristotelian logic; hence his experience of an altered state of consciousness cannot be reconciled with his ordinary habits of thought. If he is a philosopher, he will try to construct some sort of rational framework to accommodate his experience. In Western thought we find such frameworks in the writings of, among others, Spinoza and Eckart, while in Indian philosophy they find probably their most sophisticated expression in Śaṅkara. The rational device that both Śaṅkara and Eckart use to resolve such paradoxes logically, is to say that a given statement may apply in one sense and not in another. In the question between the impersonal, qualityless Absolute and the personal God, the above quotation from Ramakrishna echoes Śaṅkara's position and more such examples will be given in the course of

this discussion, while Eckart^h says :

"The onefold One has neither a manner nor properties." 68

and again :

"In the unborn essence He is essential essence without personality : essence self-manifest as impersonal being. In the essence the Father loses his Fatherhood completely; nor is there Father at all." 69

In cosmic consciousness as described by Maharishi, the Absolute-relative paradox is experienced in its most direct form. As the higher states of consciousness following cosmic consciousness gradually unfold, the individual begins to find a direct, perceptual resolution of the paradox. But although the meditator, as we shall see, may experience a progressive resolution of the difficulty, the rest of us will find his statements of that resolution paradoxical. One cannot disregard this; it must be faced squarely if those philosophers whose writings are derived, directly or indirectly, from insights due to altered states of consciousness are to be

understood.

When cosmic consciousness is fully established, awareness of the Self is constantly present during the three ordinary states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep. Transcendental consciousness, which, according to Maharishi, underlies these three states, is now experienced along with each one in the form of what might be called "witness consciousness".⁷⁰ The Self witnesses the activity, dream, or deep sleep of the individual without taking part in it. This witnessing principle on one hand and the person's actual involvement in the relative world on the other, stand side by side. Maharishi gives his explanation of this in his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gītā :

"The self or spirit in its essential nature, knows no change or variation, is free from any attributes, is neither the doer nor the doing. All attributes belong to the relative, the manifested field of life; therefore the spirit cannot be regarded as either the subject or the object of any action. The activity assumed by an ignorant man to belong to himself-to the subjective personality that he calls himself-does not belong to his real Self, for this in its essential nature is

beyond activity. The Self in its real nature, is only the silent witness of everything."⁷¹

Maharishi considers the waking, dreaming and deep sleep states to be states of "ignorance", and cosmic consciousness to be a state of knowledge of the Self as separate from ordinary awareness in the waking state and from involvement in the relative world. Ignorance, in the three ordinary states, consists in that the perceiver is totally involved in the percept and thus experiences a false sense of unity which Maharishi calls a "mirage of unity".

According to Maharishi, the lack of attachment to relative values frees the individual from the bondage of the relative world. Cosmic consciousness, then, is a state of liberation which he identifies as the state of jīvan-mukta. Couched in terms of Yoga philosophy, he expresses this as follows :

"When samadhi, the state of Yoga, begins to be experienced, nothing more need be done for full enlightenment - for cosmic consciousness or jivan-mukti - except normal practice of samadhi, alternating with normal activity in practical life."⁷²

This brings us back to the original paradox:
one is free from the bondage of action even while
one is engaged in it :

"Non-action is the nearest translation of
the Sanskrit naishkarmyam which expresses
a specific quality of the doer, a quality
of non-attachment whereby he enjoys freedom
from the bondage of action even during
activity. It expresses a natural and
permanent state of the doer. Whether he is
engaged in the activity of the waking or
dreaming state or in the inactivity of deep
sleep, he retains inner awareness."⁷³

According to Maharishi, cosmic consciousness
is the simultaneous experience of the Absolute and
relative values together. He calls this 200% of
life, 100% Absolute and 100% relative, the expression
of "pūrṇamadah, pūrṇamidam" :

"This manifested world of activity is full
(purna). That life of absolute Being is
full."⁷⁴

This he considers to be a state of fulfillment

resulting from knowledge of the Self, freedom from the bondage of action, and immortality. These aspects of cosmic consciousness deserve special attention and will be discussed in a separate chapter.

Yet cosmic consciousness is a state of duality. It is experience of Absolute and relative together but it is not oneness, because although the two are experienced simultaneously, they are perceived as separate from each other. According to Advaita philosophy, duality is not the ultimate truth.

In Maharishi's scheme, also, cosmic consciousness is not considered to be the experience of ultimate reality, but the necessary basis for its development. In order to perceive ultimate oneness one has to progress beyond this state, to the states of God-consciousness and Brahman-consciousness (Unity).

3. Historical Parallels in the Advaita Vedānta
with Special Reference to Śaṅkara.

The principle of the silent witness is a familiar one in the Vedānta and the Śvetasvatara Upaniṣad mentions it as follows :

"eko devas sarvabhūteṣu gūḍhas
sarvavyāpī sarvabhūtāntarātmā
karmādhyakṣas sarvabhūtādhivāsas
sākṣī cetā kevalo nirguṇas-ca."

"The one God hidden in all beings, all pervading, the inner self of all beings, the ordainer of all deeds, who dwells in all beings, the witness, the knower, the only one and devoid of qualities."⁷⁵

This verse refers to the witnessing principle as the knower. Śaṅkara holds that there can be no knowledge without this. He argues this point extensively in the Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya, insisting that, for knowledge to exist, the witnessing principle must be present. When the three guṇas are in equipoise in the state of pradhāna (primal nature), then knowledge, which is a quality of sattva guṇa,

is not possible because then, the witnessing principle is absent :

"nāsākṣikā sattvavṛttir jānāti nābhidhīyate,
na cācetanasya pradhānasya sāksitvam asti."

"A sattva guṇa as apart from a witnessing principle is not capable of being expressed by the verb "to know", nor is non-sentient pradhāna such a witnessing agent." 76

Knowledge can arise only when the balance of the guṇas is disturbed and sattva, connected with the witnessing principle predominates. When the balance of the guṇas is disturbed they begin to interact and this interaction constitutes the activity of relative existence. Consciousness witnesses this activity in which it is not involved. Witnessing gives rise to knowledge; activity belongs solely to the province of the guṇas and is separate from witness consciousness.

In the Gītā-Bhāṣya, Śaṅkara expresses this as follows :

"Nature (prakṛti, pradhāna), is the equipoised

state of the three gunas, i.e. sattva, rajas and tamas. It is by the manifestation of the gunas as the body and the senses, that all our actions, conducive to temporal and spiritual ends, are done. The mind, whose antahkarana⁷⁷ is variously deluded by ahamkara⁷⁸, which identifies the aggregate of the body and the senses with the Self, i.e. which ascribes to itself all the attributes of the body and the senses and thus becomes thoroughly identified with them - he (whose mind has thus identified the body etc. with the Self) because of ignorance sees action in himself; as regards every action, he thinks : "I am the doer".⁷⁹

But who is the doer? It is not the witnessing Self who is the doer. The consciousness of "I" , (aham-pratyaya-viṣaya), is consciousness of the Self as overshadowed by limitations (upādhis :body, senses, intellect, etc.). It is consciousness of jīva, the individual Self. This empirical ego or agent is different from the witnessing consciousness which is present in all :

"na hy aham pratyayaviṣayakartrvyatirekena
tatsākṣī sarvabhūtasthaḥ sama ekaḥ
kūṭasthanityaḥ puruṣo vidhikānde tarkasamaye
vā kena cid adhigataḥ sarvasyātma."

"The eternal Self, different from the agent, which is the object of the consciousness of "I", dwelling as witness in all beings, uniform, one, the highest, is not apprehended by anyone from the Veda or any book based on reflection. He is the soul of all." 80

The individual, active and enjoying Self is on one hand the subject (aḥamkarta and pratyaḥin) and on the other hand the object of the consciousness of "I" (aḥam-pratyaya-viṣaya), owing to the limitations (upādhis) consisting in body, senses, etc. The upādhi-less Self is neither a subject nor an object, but in its state of freedom from the subject-object relationship, is opposed to them as the witness (sākṣin). The witness consciousness will therefore not be apprehended by means of study, nor by merely thinking about it. It can only be perceived as a direct experience. (Again, the words "perceived" and "experience" are used here for the sake of linguistic convenience ; see p.67).

That the silent witness is neither a subject nor an object is also discussed by Śaṅkara in the Gītā Bhāṣya:

"He who understands the Self - of whom we are

speaking - as the agent in the act of slaying and he who regards him as the sufferer in the act of slaying when the body is slain, neither of these has understood the Self right, for want of discrimination. Those who think "I slay", or "I am slain" when the body is slain, and thus identify the Self with the object of the consciousness of "I", the ego - they do not understand the real nature of the Self. Being immutable, the Self is neither the agent nor the object of the action of slaying." 81

The witness principle is constant and abiding. In the Ātmabodha it is compared to a king who presides at his court and merely supervises the activities of his ministers and deputies :

"dehendriyamanobuddhiprakṛtibhyo vilakṣaṇam
tad vṛttisākṣiṇam vidyād ātmānam rājavat sadā."

"Know the Self as different from the body, sense organs, mind, intellect and primal nature and as the witness of their functions always, just as the king (is the witness of

the actions of his deputies.)" ⁸²

This verse defines the witnessing Self as different from all aspects of empirical existence, from the more gross such as the body, to the most subtle such as primal nature. As such, it is neither the object, nor the subject of thought or action. It is the witness of all mental and physical activity and is separate from it. It is therefore different from the jīva, which is the empirical Self.

Later Vedānta in the main also considers the witnessing Self to be different from the jīva. In the Nāṭakadīpaprakāraṇa of his Pañcadasī, a classic of fourteenth century Advaita, Vidyāranya likens it to a bright lamp :

"nṛtyaśālāsthito dīpaḥ prabhuḃ śabhyāṃś ca
nartakīṃ dīpayed aviśeṣeṇa tadabhāve'pi
dīpyate."

"The lamp set on the stage illumines the director, the audience and the actress equally and goes on shining even in their absence." ⁸³

This verse can be interpreted to mean that the witnessing Self witnesses equally the jīva or empirical Self, the antahkarana and the objects of experience during the waking and dreaming states. In the deep sleep state when these no longer function, it simply shines of its own accord. It is existence itself, totally unaffected by the state of awareness of the experiencer.

The witnessing Self is thus defined as Absolute and devoid of qualities, uninvolved in activity and therefore not identifiable with the jīva who is a doer and an enjoyer of actions and their fruits.

The same mechanism which operates in the case of the individual is also considered to operate in relation to the cosmos. Ātman is called jīva-sākṣin in connection with the individual and Īśvara-sākṣin in connection with the cosmos. According to this view, Īśvara⁸⁴ is the world Self while jīva is the individual Self. This attitude is reflected in Śaṅkara's commentary on the following verse of the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad. The verse illustrates the relationship of the onlooker, who is the witnessing Self and the eater of pippala fruit who is the empirical Self :

"dvā suparnā sayujā sakhāyā
samānam vrksam parisasvajāte
taylor anyah pippalam svādv atty
anaśnann anyo'bhicākaśīti."

"Two birds, friends (who are) united,
sit on the same tree. Of these two,
one eats the sweet pippala fruit and
the other looks on without eating."⁸⁵

Śaṅkara here considers the non-eating onlooker
to be Īsvara, the witnessing principle of the universe
who :

"paśyaty eva kevalam darsānamātreṇa
hi tasya prerayitṛtvaṃ rājavat."

"His mere witnessing is as good as direction,
as in the case of a king." ⁸⁶

The relationship between the sākṣin which
is by definition Absolute, devoid of qualities
and aloof, and the jīva which is involved in the
relative world, a doer and an enjoyer, is part
of the Absolute-relative paradox and, strictly

speaking, logically insoluble. Śaṅkara attempts to solve this problem by the theory of limitations (upādhis), which applies to the macrocosm as well as the microcosm. The upādhis of Īsvara are considered to be perfect (niratiśaya) while those of the jīva are considered as imperfect (nihīna). The man who is in ignorance (avidyā) is hindered by the upādhis from perceiving the witnessing principle as separate from activity. When this distinction is perceived, ignorance disappears and knowledge of the Self is gained.

It is worth mentioning that the limitations of the jīva consist of :

- 1) The gross body (deha, sthūla śarīra)
- 2) The subtle body (sūkṣma śarīra)
- 3) The vital spirits (prāṇas), i.e.:
 - a. the five organs of sense (buddhendriyāni)
i.e. of sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch.
 - b. the five organs of action (karmendriyāni):
hands, feet, organs of speech, generation
and evacuation.
 - c. the mind or inner organ (manas or
antaḥkarana).

The terms manas and antaḥkarana as the inner organ which coordinates the activities of the external organs, are often used by Śaṅkara interchangeably.

He mentions but does not make frequent use of the terms buddhi, ahaṁkāra, and citta. Ahaṁkāra can be used to mean I-ness or, as a synonym of ahaṁ-pratyaya, self-consciousness. The object of self-consciousness, ahaṁ-pratyaya-viṣaya, is the empirical self while asmat-pratyaya-viṣaya refers to the highest Self. The subjects of ahaṁkāra and ahaṁ-pratyaya are called ahaṁkartar and ahaṁ-pratyayin respectively. All that involves activity is subject to ahaṁkāra, but ahaṁkāra itself, together with the subject-object relationship, is witnessed by the sāksin.

4. Concluding Remarks

In his psychological and philosophical description Maharishi follows Śaṅkara in postulating the existence of an aspect of the Self which is the silent witness (sākṣin) and the role it plays in the direct perception of duality.

He follows Śaṅkara in considering that there is no knowledge of the Self until the witnessing principle is realized. Man is considered to be in a state of ignorance (avidyā) so long as cosmic consciousness is not fully established. Maharishi considers cosmic consciousness to be the normal state of human existence. According to this view, the ordinary waking state would therefore be, in a sense, "sub-normal".

However Maharishi gives the experience of cosmic consciousness a central position in his scheme. He stresses its importance as the necessary foundation for the development of the perception of "higher" states such as God-consciousness and Brahman-consciousness, the ultimate Vedāntic Unity.

His physiological theory of "stress" also seems to be original. There is a similarity to the upādhis which are also, in the main, physiological, but Maharishi's "stress" is more

specifically an overloading of the nervous system caused by intense experiences of external origin. There is no evidence that he in any way equates the "stresses" with the upādhis which he translates as "limitations".

His use of the term cosmic consciousness is Maharishi's own. Other contemporary Vedāntists have used it before him but never with the same meaning, while in the historical Vedānta it does not appear at all.

CHAPTER V

LIBERATION IN COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS

1. Ethical Implications of Cosmic Consciousness

Maharishi considers cosmic consciousness to be a state of liberation from the bondage of action. A person in cosmic consciousness acts but at the same time remains uninvolved in activity. Because of his lack of involvement, he does not act for the sake of the results of his actions; he is not bound by them. He only acts for the sake of acting. This, according to Maharishi, does not mean that such a man will act at random; his actions will have a purpose but he will not be psychologically bound by that purpose. Activity carried out under such circumstances is not only less binding, but also more effective because the doer is not hampered by worry about the fruits of his actions :

"In this state a man is not affected by success or failure. It is not that he consciously tries to treat loss and gain as the same, but that he is naturally unaffected by them... The endeavour to preserve equanimity of mind without gaining this state, merely by trying

to view all things as alike, may be called hypocrisy or self-deception."⁸⁷

Maharishi maintains that many scriptural statements have often been misinterpreted so that people have developed tendencies towards inactivity and inertia in the name of non-attachment. He mentions :

"kṛpaṇāḥ phalahetavaḥ."

"Pitiable are those who live for the fruit of action." ⁸⁸

as a case in point. His argument is that non-attachment is not the result of inactivity, nor of a mere mood of equanimity as regards the fruits of one's actions. In his view, it can only be the result of cosmic consciousness in which the individual's attitude towards activity is radically changed owing to the presence of the witnessing principle which characterizes this state.

Maharishi insists that in order to achieve non-attachment one should not abandon action, or

even its fruits, but should gain permanent experience of cosmic consciousness and then act from that state of awareness.

He equates cosmic consciousness with Yoga as described in the second chapter of the Bhagavad-Gītā. There Yoga is described as "samatva" which Maharishi translates as "balance of mind" and believes to be the outcome of the general contentment of cosmic consciousness owing to permanence of transcendental consciousness which is absolute and therefore self-sufficient. Yoga is also described there as "karmasu kauśala" ⁸⁹ which Maharishi translates as "skill in action". He comments on this as follows:

"The process of action, if carried out with what is here called "skill in action", produces good results in all directions and enables the doer to derive maximum benefit from it. At the same time, it fails to produce a binding influence on him. This is because it influences the doer in such a way that its fruits do not leave an impression in the mind deep enough to form the seed of future action the doer being established in the Self, the eternal Being, and ever unattached to the field of activity." ⁹⁰

It is evident from this passage that the doer is considered to be free from the binding influence of action and therefore free from the cycle of birth and death. This will be discussed in the following section.

Right action is considered to be a natural result of cosmic consciousness because the doer is then established in the Absolute-in the form of the witnessing principle-which is by definition beyond duality and therefore beyond right and wrong. According to Maharishi activity is truly right and ethical when it is fully and automatically in harmony with the needs of the cosmos; this is for him the criterion of goodness or rightness :

"Any action which produces a life-supporting influence for the performer and his surroundings-is a good action, a virtuous action. Any action which produces life-damaging influences for the performer or the surroundings at any level of life, either in the present or future, may be called bad, wrong, sinful and immoral.

Thus, we have a criterion of right action and wrong action. Action should result in all good to the performer and the universe in the

present and for all time. This is a definition of absolute good." ⁹¹

Maharishi adheres to the traditional Indian idea of an eternal never-changing cosmic law, derived from the Vedic concept of *rta*, as the basis of all laws of nature. The Vedic *rta* is the past participle of the root *r* "to go, settle" and as a neuter noun means "established order, sacred ordinance."⁹² It is cognate with the Avestan *asa*, which means "truth, law, the personification of right".⁹³ Though originally the Vedic term referred to the order of natural phenomena, such as the succession of seasons, it eventually came to mean the right and appropriate time and way of doing things, particularly the Vedic sacrifice, with which it virtually became synonymous. This gave way in Hinduism to the concept of Dharma, which is often loosely translated as "law". Dharma means a divinely ordained norm of proper conduct, such as the *varnāśrama-dharma* which is the behavioural code of the castes and stages of life. Though not "law" in the strict sense of the word, behavioural codes could be very binding because of the social pressure involved. Dharma could be envisaged on any scale, regulating the life of the person, the social or religious group, and the order of the universe. Cosmic law, according to Maharishi, is

the right order of things in the cosmos. He claims that the state of cosmic consciousness is in tune with this cosmic law so that the actions of one who permanently lives in this state are automatically in harmony with it. According to this view the universe does not consist merely of matter but is an organic unity directly connected with human life. Anthony Campbell writes that :

"It is an organismic view of this kind which seems to be implied by Maharishi's references to the "Laws of Nature". For Maharishi, the universe is by no means soulless or dead. On the contrary, our human values emerge from and find their justification in, the structure of the cosmos." 94

Human moral laws are essential to the man in ignorance (avidyā) just as commentaries to philosophical texts are essential to those who have no practical experience of the states described therein. Maharishi's advice to his multinational following is always to obey the laws and injunctions of their respective countries and religions :

"Society lays down a broad conception of good

and bad; there is a common understanding among people regarding good and bad. The laws that govern a country provide another criterion; we should at least obey the laws of the country in which we live.

If we wish to go deeper into the values of good and bad we should study the scriptures. Whether we are Hindus or Christians or Buddhists our individual scriptures tell us what is right and wrong." 95

In India, Vedic injunctions were paramount until they were questioned by the more speculative passages of the Upaniṣads and challenged by Buddhism. Upaniṣadic authors wistfully wonder whether mere observance of Vedic rituals is enough without some direct contact with the divine.

Maharishi advises the Hindu to abide by Vedic injunctions.

"But," he says, "a jivan-mukta, a man of cosmic consciousness, finds himself at the ultimate fulfillment of all the duties prescribed for him. He knows Reality with such great fullness

that he becomes established in that, in the state of absolute bliss-consciousness. This is how, having gained the final aim of the whole Vedic way of life, such a man rises above the field of Vedic injunctions about right and wrong and also above the need for Vedic rituals; he rises above the need for Vedic guidance."⁹⁶

The implication is that the "ignorant" man should obey the Vedic rules because they are there precisely for his benefit. The cosmically conscious man will live in accordance with these rules spontaneously without being bound by them and without having any need for them.

Adherence to Vedic injunctions serves as a guideline for the man in ignorance in the ordinary waking state of life but will not lead him out of ignorance, to true knowledge of the nature of reality. Maharishi refutes the often repeated idea that goodness, purity and lawfulness are prerequisites for spiritual integration.

"Conventional Indian teachers insist that deeper experience in meditation comes only through "purification" by right action.

For Maharishi, it is meditation which produces purification and so leads to right action spontaneously."⁹⁷

True knowledge of the Absolute can only be brought about by the Absolute itself and not through any relative means.

"The Self...unfolds Itself by Itself to Itself." ⁹⁸

The Absolute-relative paradox appears again in the question of the activity of the enlightened man. From the empirical point of view, it can be said that the enlightened man acts in a disinterested way. From the Absolute point of view however, he cannot be said to act at all. Maharishi comments as follows :

"The authorship of action does not in reality belong to the "I". It is a mistake to understand that "I" do this, "I" experience this, and "I" know this. All this is basically untrue. The "I" in its essential nature, is uncreated; it belongs to the field of the Absolute. Whereas action, its fruits and the

relationship between the doer and his action belong to the relative field."⁹⁹

In cosmic consciousness, authorship of action is not attributed to oneself, as the Self is recognized as separate from activity. People who claim to have had even fleeting experiences of this have found this paradoxical dissociation from activity very bewildering and rationally inexplicable. This seems to be the cause of what Maharishi calls misinterpretations on the part of "conventional" commentators. Criticism of Advaita ethics in general is also on account of the inexplicable paradox. I do not think it can be defended in logical terms but, as Stace remarks in his "Mysticism and Philosophy" if one is even to try to understand the Advaita Vedānta one cannot disregard it.¹⁰⁰

Maharishi describes this state as follows :

"The state of cosmic consciousness is inclusive of transcendental consciousness as well as consciousness of the relative order ; it brings cosmic status to individual life. When individual consciousness achieves the status of cosmic existence then in spite of all the obvious limitations of individuality, a man is ever free, unbounded by any aspect of time, space or causation, ever out of bondage."¹⁰¹

This is an important aspect of Maharishi's theory of cosmic consciousness. Even though it is not the experience of absolute Unity, it is a state of liberation, because the individual has sustained "experience" of the Absolute throughout the waking, dreaming and deep sleep states. In "higher" states, this experience will remain the same; what will change is the perception of the three relative states. Thus, the development of the state which Maharishi calls God-consciousness is due to progressive transformation of these states. According to Maharishi, the antithesis which is experienced because of the coexistence of the Absolute and the ordinary (i.e. untransformed)

waking state, is responsible for a feeling which he calls a psychological "gap", an emptiness of unfilled time.¹⁰² The timeless quality of the Absolute state cannot be empirically transferred to the ordinary waking state. This leaves the experiencer with a sense of unused potential which is felt in terms of time. In higher states, perception of the waking state is alleged to change, the directness of the paradox to recede, and the gap to become less. This overshadows the clarity with which the Absolute was previously experienced and freedom from the cycle of birth and death is temporarily lost. It will be regained in the subsequent state of absolute Unity in which the "gap" is totally bridged and clarity of the Absolute state is reestablished when separateness disappears and everything is perceived in terms of oneself.¹⁰³

Another interesting aspect of Maharishi's theory concerning the activity of someone who experiences this state is that it has the quality of being of maximum benefit to the performer. When activity is in tune with cosmic law, it is not only harmonious and life-supporting, but also very powerful. Maharishi's insistence on the desirability of powerful action is original inasmuch as it results in maximum benefit for

the doer. A man who remains detached from his actions presumably does not particularly care about this, yet all the benefit is his.

The main theme of the teaching of spiritual teachers of most creeds has usually been to do good to others, with little emphasis on the effect of one's action on oneself; at least, not as regards this present life. Maharishi on the contrary believes that maximum benefit should not only be derived by others but also by oneself. Life, according to him, should be an enjoyable process and this can be achieved if one's actions are in tune with cosmic law :

"The purpose of life is to enjoy bliss-consciousness and evolve to the eternal state of liberation while accomplishing and enjoying the maximum in life, achieving the greatest good for oneself and for others." 104

The implication is, of course, that whatever is good for oneself is good for others and vice versa, if action is performed from the state of the Absolute. This apparently begins to occur in the measure in which the Absolute state is

consciously lived and finds its fulfillment in total liberation.

While Maharishi associates goodness with strength and with gain of maximum benefit, he associates badness with weakness, confusion and tension. He considers wrong action to ultimately have bad effects on the individual, his surroundings and the entire cosmos. Wrong action is not only bad or immoral, but of least benefit for the doer as well.

2. Historical Parallels in the Vedānta

In his commentary to the Bhagavad-Gītā, Śaṅkara stresses that adherence to varṇāśrama dharma (duties of the castes and stages of life) and observance of religious rituals are necessary to the man who is involved in activity (karmin). He endorses that :

"nāyaṃ loko'styayajñasya"

"This world is not for the one who does not sacrifice." 105

and agrees that men are bound to perform their respective duties because they are prescribed by śruti and tradition. 106

The part of śruti 107 which contains instructions for good behaviour is the karmakāṇḍa (the part concerned with action). The jñānakāṇḍa on the other hand is the part of śruti which is concerned with knowledge and describes the nature of truth and, according to Śaṅkara, is to be followed by seekers of true knowledge (samyag-jñāna).

Vedic ritual reigned supreme in India until the time of the Upaniṣads. Whether it had ever been connected with altered states of consciousness is a matter of conjecture; it is generally held that

it had not. What is certain, however, is that at the time when the first Upaniṣads were composed, Vedic ritual, consisting of dry formulae, no longer satisfied the speculative mind of the philosophers.

This is characteristically expressed in the Kāṭha Upaniṣad when Naciketas is seriously disturbed by his father's formal ritualistic attitude in making sacrificial offerings :

"pītodakā jagdhatṛṇā dugdhadohā nirindriyāḥ
anandā nāma te lokās tān sa gacchata tā dadat."

"Their water drunk, their grass eaten, their milk milked, without strength to breed, joyless, indeed, are those worlds to which he who presents (such cows) goes." 108

There is here a desire to go beyond even the most sacred action and to know a metaphysical reality which lies beyond activity. Vedic sacrifice was by no means considered unimportant but it was thought that even this could be transcended, since it was part of empirical reality. Śaṅkara advocates right action but above all he advocates knowledge of

Brahman which is beyond action.

The resulting attitude that the man of true knowledge (samyag-jñāna) is beyond right and wrong has led to the mistaken understanding that he is therefore entitled to behave as badly as he chooses because he is beyond the law. Hence the notion that Indian philosophy is essentially immoral. Firstly, this is a generalization; Indian philosophy is a varied subject, encompassing many theories, some of which are extremely moralistic and some of which are not. It cannot possibly be described by one such statement. Secondly, as far as the Advaita is concerned, it is incorrect, for the man who is beyond the law is so because his actions are considered to be automatically in harmony with it and he therefore no longer needs it; he is no longer bound by it. In his Bhagavad-Gītā commentary, Śaṅkara explains the distinction between these two attitudes towards action and the law:

"The śāstra is concerned with the ignorant who view things as they present themselves to their consciousness. It is indeed the ignorant who identify themselves with the cause and the effect of action with the non-Self. But not the wise; for the wise

do not identify themselves with the cause and effect since they know that the Self is distinct from the cause and effect." 109

True knowledge, therefore, consists in not identifying with the empirical reality of cause and effect because the Self is distinct from it. When this true knowledge (samyag-jñāna) is achieved, man is liberated from the bondage of the empirical world and no longer lives for the fruit of his actions. He acts in a disinterested way.

"He who has, even before engaging in action, realized his identity with Brahman abiding within all as the innermost actionless Self; who is free from desire for objects of pleasure seen or unseen; and who, therefore, finding no use in action which is intended to secure such objects of pleasure, renounces all action with accessories, except what is necessary for the bare bodily maintenance (śarīra-karma) ; such a devotee, steady in his devotion to knowledge, is liberated." 110

He who possesses true knowledge and is not

identified with the empirical reality of cause and effect, is naturally uninvolved in the cause and effect of action. He is not bound by karma.

Karma means action or deed but also eventually came to mean the cause-effect relationship between two actions. The empirical world is characterised by change in the form of activity and, in the life of animate beings, change was thought to be determined by conduct. Thus the quality of an action determined the quality of a future event and so influenced the course of change. This idea has not always been linked with the idea of reincarnation, though in Hinduism karma and saṃsāra came to be closely connected. Saṃsāra originated as a fairly crude idea of metempsychosis which was further elaborated so that it eventually became included in the most sophisticated Indian philosophical thought, such as the Advaita.

The idea that a man who has realized the oneness of Brahman is not bound by karma because from the standpoint of that realisation he is beyond cause and effect holds good irrespectively of the concept of saṃsāra. Śaṅkara however extends his theory to include saṃsāra, postulating that true knowledge liberates one from cause and effect as such and from its continuation in further incarnations (mokṣa).

Śaṅkara's idea of liberation is therefore a way out of the interminable cycle of birth and death. According to this theory, a man who is no longer bound by cause and effect and lives in the empirical world but is not of it, is no longer subject to birth and death and becomes immortal.¹¹¹

The notion of a live man who is beyond change, however, contains a contradiction because everything in the empirical world is subject to change and to karma. Theoretically, when change and karma stop, life can no longer be maintained, with or without the prospect of saṃsāra. The Indian concept of cause and effect lies at the basis of creation and everything in the relative world is subject to it. A material body, therefore, is necessarily subject to it; if it went beyond cause and effect, it would go beyond creation itself and would not exist in the material world at all.

From the point of view of the liberated man himself, this is a fair statement. As far as he is concerned, he is one with the undifferentiated Absolute and as such he does not materially exist. But the Absolute is undifferentiated and stands apart from relative creation on the one hand, while on the other it gives rise to it and is Itself within it.

"tad ejati tan najati tad dūre tad vad antike
tad antarasya sarvasya tad u sarvasya
bāhyatah."

"It moves and it moves not; It is far and It
is near; It is within all this and It is also
outside all this." 112

So the liberated man does not exist, yet he
does exist. In terms of the Vedāntic Absolute-
relative paradox, both statements are equally true.
If he does exist, his relative life can only be
maintained through cause and effect (karma) and
the only way he can be subject to this is if he
still has some degree of ignorance (avidyā). A
fragment or particle of ignorance (lesāvidyā)
assures the existence of his body until death.

The mechanics of this is explained for the
benefit of the ignorant man, for whom the distinction
between the state of a living body and that of
ultimate release is real. According to this
explanation, there are three kinds of karma: Sañcit
karma is accumulated karma from past lives; prārabdha
karma is the karma which has begun to operate and
belongs to the present life and āgami karma is the
karma which relates to the future. For a man
liberated while still living (jīvan-mukta) sañcit

is already extinguished and āgami cannot arise. Prārabdha, however, still operates because of its momentum, upheld by the particle of ignorance (leśāvidyā) which still exists. When the momentum of prārabdha karma is spent, the jīvan-mukta is released from the body and becomes a videha-mukta. He is no more a created being, he is no longer bound by birth and death, he is uncreated Absolute.

In some passages Śaṅkara states that the liberated man acts in a disinterested way, in others he seems to imply that he does not act at all. In terms of the Absolute-relative paradox, both are true. From the point of view that there is no action in the Absolute, the liberated man does not act. From the point of view of the "illusory" relative existence to which a jīvan-mukta still belongs until his death, action has to be taken into account as a real factor. Śaṅkara accepts that the two states, that of the Absolute and that of the relative, have to be assessed separately and that unity of Brahman does not invalidate ethical distinctions on the empirical level. This he explains with the following analogy:

"yathā jyotiṣa ekatve'py agniḥ kravyāt
parihniyate netaraḥ. yathā ca prakāśa
ekasyā'pi savitur amedhyadeśasambaddha

parihniyate netaraḥ sucibhūmisthaḥ.
yathā bhaumāḥ pradēśā vajra-
vaidūryādaya upādīyante bhaumā api santo
narakalevarādayaḥ parihniyante."

"Light is the same as fire, yet we shun a fire which has consumed dead bodies, not any other fire. The light of the sun is the same everywhere, yet we shun that part of his light which shines on unholy places, not that part which falls on pure ground. Similarly, some things consisting of earth are desired, such as diamonds and beryls, other things consisting of earth are shunned, like dead bodies etc." 113

Śaṅkara concludes that, though external injunctions are important in the relative field of life, they do not, in themselves, constitute a final solution to the question of ethics which can only be achieved through liberation (mokṣa) by the removal of ignorance (avidyā). They do not lead a man out of ignorance to true knowledge.

"avidhilakṣaṇatvād vidyāyāḥ. asādhyatvāc
ca vidyāphalasya."

"Because knowledge is not characterised by injunction and also because the fruit of knowledge is not brought about by (empirical) means." 114

One is reminded that the Self unfolds Itself by Itself to Itself and that therefore no empirical knowledge or activity can lead one to the liberation which is attained through the realization of the Self. Śaṅkara calls empirical or obvious knowledge *parokṣajñāna* while *mokṣa* can only be achieved through *aparokṣajñāna* or *anubhava* which is the direct personal perception of truth.

"tasmād yad avidyāpratyupasthāpitam apāram
ārthikaṃ jaivaṃ rūpaṃ kartr̥bhoktr̥rāgadveśādi-
doṣakaluṣitam anekānarthayogi tadvilayanena
tadviparītam apahatapāpmatvādi guṇakaṃ
pārameśvaraṃ svarūpaṃ vidyayā pratipādyate
sarpādivilayaneneva rajjvādīn."

"The unreal knowledge of the *jīva* brought about by ignorance, which is rendered impure by faults of desires and aversions of the agent and experiencer and which is connected with many evils is thus dissolved by true

knowledge and shown to be of the opposite nature. (The jīva is thus shown to be) of the nature of the highest Lord which has the attribute of being free from sin etc. just as a rope etc. is understood to be really a rope after the false notion of its being a snake etc. is dissolved." 115

3. Concluding Remarks

From this analysis it can be seen that, as regards ethics, Maharishi follows Śāṅkara very closely. There are however two differences which are worth discussing.

The first difference is that Śāṅkara does not seem to make a distinction between cosmic consciousness and the state of total unity with the Absolute to which Maharishi gives the name Brahman consciousness in his discussion on true knowledge and liberation.¹¹⁶ This may be because, although the theoretical interpretation or "overbelief" as well as the subjective experience are different in these two states, for practical purposes the result is the same. It could also be that the idea of cosmic consciousness is an innovation on Maharishi's part. As this issue is central to my thesis as a whole, it will be discussed separately in the concluding chapter.

The second difference is that Maharishi puts great emphasis on the practical applications of non-attachment. According to him the state of non-attachment is in accordance with cosmic law and, as such, spontaneously good. Not only does he not consider it to imply withdrawal from the world, he believes that it is actually a positive

means of changing the world for the better. In that sense his type of Vedānta has millenarian overtones, as becomes evident from his proclaimed attempts to create an "Age of Enlightenment" in the world today.

To anyone even slightly less optimistic, the idea sounds at best extremely difficult to realize and at worst ridiculous, if one takes into account the very serious problems and dangers which threaten humanity in the present time. In proclaiming such a grandiose development Maharishi deviates from the staid Vedānta as it presents itself to us through its main texts. Of course we do not know what Śaṅkara's oral teaching was like and whether it too, was in this sense bolder than the texts which are ascribed to him reveal.

Maharishi's idea of non-attachment has two aspects, personal and social. The personal aspect is the actual experience of cosmic consciousness with its metaphysical and psychological implications as regards the individual. The social aspect is the effect that a number of individuals experiencing this state would have on society.

Maharishi considers that the state of non-attachment in cosmic consciousness is socially desirable inasmuch as it produces spontaneously beneficial action. It is a state in which

"one becomes capable of performing actions in complete accordance with the laws of nature, thus fulfilling one's dharma and serving the cosmic purpose." 117

There is a sense of inevitability in this notion that, action which is right for oneself is ultimately right for society and even the cosmos if it is performed from a particular state of awareness. At the same time, such activity would, according to the theory, be produced from a state of total freedom. Thus, free action is action which is in harmony with cosmic law and freedom and determinism are ultimately the same. As an extension to this, good action is action which serves the cosmic purpose. Maharishi's conclusion is that, when performed from this state, activity is spontaneously good. Anthony Campbell describes Maharishi's attitude like this :

"In reality, all our actions are the results of the working out of cosmic forces. To this extent, the determinists are right. But determinism becomes true only if one takes all the cosmic forces into account, and at this universal level the distinction between

free will and determinism ceases to have any meaning.

Enlightenment -"liberation" - consists in the realization on the level of experience of this truth about the nature of causation. The enlightened individual perceives that all activity proceeds in accordance with natural forces." 118

It follows that according to Maharishi's view, a society wholly made up of individuals in cosmic consciousness would be ideal. He himself holds that even a relatively small number of individuals in this state could gradually transform it. He is at present directing a social experiment aiming at producing the state of cosmic consciousness- or even of transcendental consciousness- in 10% of the population. This goal is attempted - and sometimes achieved - on a small scale in schools, colleges and various institutions such as prisons and in a few small towns. Some results have been interesting. In the Folsom Penitentiary in California, a maximum security prison for extreme offenders, mostly murderers, where this was tried, the murder rate inside the prison dropped dramatically from about ten per year to about one

per year. ¹¹⁹ However, experiments of this kind are not easily measurable, the social factors involved can be very complex and cases like this one are encouraging but rare. I mention it only as a concrete example of Maharishi's attempt to put the experience of cosmic consciousness to practical social effect. He maintains that, if he could succeed, man would live in an ideal society and permanent world peace. This bold emphasis on social applications does not seem to derive from classical Vedānta but to be, to a great extent, his own.

CHAPTER VI

GOD CONSCIOUSNESS

As I mentioned in the last two chapters, Maharishi considers cosmic consciousness to be the first stage of "enlightenment". It is a paradoxical state because inner Self-awareness appears to be unrelated to outer awareness of the relative world. Further progress from this point consists in the gradual development of perception of the Self not only within but also without, in the outer world. This is really conceived of as a gradual process, but for purposes of description Maharishi has subdivided it into two stages, which he calls God consciousness and Brahman consciousness.

These terms refer to the perception of the personal and impersonal God respectively, and particularly to the way in which this perception relates to the external environment. During the first years of his teaching, Maharishi treated the two states as one. Thus, references to God consciousness in his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gītā often include remarks on what he later called the state of Unity, while a distinct state of Brahman consciousness is not mentioned there at all.

In later years he has treated these two subjects separately and has coined the term Brahman consciousness, which he equates with the Sanskrit term Brahmīsthiti. Following this development in Maharishi's teaching, I consider God consciousness and Brahman consciousness as two distinct states.

It is worth mentioning again, however, that the schematic presentation of the various states as Maharishi describes them is for the sake of greater intellectual clarity. In actual fact there is a considerable overlap between them, as Maharishi himself points out. His schematic presentation seems to be an original contribution to the understanding of the subject.

In this chapter I will consider the state of God consciousness from the following aspects :

1. Psychological as described by Maharishi.
2. Philosophical as described by Maharishi.
3. Historical parallels from the Advaita Vedānta with special reference to Śaṅkara.
4. Concluding remarks.

1. Maharishi's Psychological Description

Maharishi describes God consciousness as a state in which the outer world is seen to be transfigured. It thus seems to be an ecstatic state which can begin to develop either before or after the state of cosmic consciousness is fully established but will not become permanent until after that time. Fully established cosmic consciousness is considered a necessary prerequisite for the permanent experience of God consciousness.

While cosmic consciousness consists of the simultaneous awareness of the Absolute and the three relative states of waking dreaming and deep sleep, God consciousness consists of the simultaneous awareness of the Absolute and of the three relative states in their "glorified" form. Maharishi calls this a "refinement" of the perception of the relative states as opposed to the "grossness" of ordinary perception. In cosmic consciousness the subjective value of pure awareness coexists with relatively unrefined objective perception, while in God consciousness it coexists with more refined objective perception. The implication is that the senses become sensitive enough to appreciate increasingly subtler values of the objects of perception until eventually, the subtlest relative

value is perceived. To illustrate this, he says that in this state the world is seen as through golden glasses.¹²⁰ By this he does not mean that the experience is an illusion, but that the golden glasses reveal qualities in the world which were always there to see. In the same way a distant star seen through a telescope is not an illusion; the telescope simply makes it possible to see something that was always there.

This refined perception is empirical in the strict sense of the word yet quite different from that which would normally be considered to be the ordinary. The Absolute awareness which in cosmic consciousness was confined to the subjective level now begins to enter into the objective world as well. The world is appreciated as if with an added dimension supplied by the increasing presence of the qualities of consciousness and bliss. Thus, permanently established God consciousness amounts to permanent ecstasy and indeed, it seems that the ecstasy may be so overpowering in the early stages that the subjective Self-perception of cosmic consciousness may be overshadowed or temporarily lost.¹²¹ Self-awareness and outer awareness once more become confused as they were in the initial state of ignorance, only this is a blissful

transfigured condition. According to Maharishi in ignorance, Self-awareness is overshadowed by ordinary empirical perception whereas in God consciousness it is overshadowed by its subtle, glorified form.

God consciousness is the state of emotion par excellence. The richness of the emotion is the antithesis of the dryness which characterizes cosmic consciousness, particularly at the height of the psychological "gap". As the gap becomes less, dryness gradually gives way to emotion which may be overpowering and is mostly experienced in terms of love, devotion and bliss. ¹²²

It appears that the transition from the "dryness" of cosmic consciousness to the emotion of God consciousness is significant in the evolution of awareness . For Maharishi, both psychological states appear to be necessary for this purpose in this particular order.

The emergence of love is therefore a dominant feature of this state. Maharishi's view is that growth of love results from refinement of perception for he maintains that :

"One can only love what one knows." ¹²³

This statement refers to love of one's fellow men, of the world in general and even of God. The ability to perceive subtle empirical values of the objective world and to know everything through direct perception as opposed to through blind faith are instrumental in deepening understanding and increasing the capacity to love.

Awareness of God, however, presupposes awareness of one's Self,¹²⁴ and if this precondition is not there, no other awareness can have its full clarity.

"If a man wants to be a true devotee of God, he has to become his pure Self; he has to free himself from those attributes which do not belong to him, and then only can he have one-pointed devotion. If he is enveloped by what he is not, then his devotion will be covered by that foreign element." ¹²⁵

By this, Maharishi implies that both objective reality and subjective reactions can be much more extensive than ordinary awareness allows one to understand. He also insists that their experience can be much more fulfilling in this extended form.

The "platform" state which allows permanence of such experience, however, is the established awareness of the Self in cosmic consciousness that is the basis of the permanent refinement of the perception of the objective field.

This refinement of perception is explained in terms of the refinement of the senses. This is meant in a physiological as well as a psychological sense and reflects Maharishi's monistic approach to the individual in his theory of altered states of consciousness. Each different state has its own physiological and psychological characteristics.

The refinement of the senses in his view, may be accomplished in either of two ways :

1. By cultivating the refinement of one or more of the senses in isolation.
2. By the development of every aspect of the individual as a whole.

Maharishi is in favour of the holistic approach because, according to him, this maintains the psychological balance of the individual whereas the isolated culture of one or the other of the senses does not. He does not believe in the culture of the senses or of any other faculty per se, but only in so far as this results from

general over-all development of the individual state of awareness. 126

In God consciousness everything appears infused with an exceptional kind of life that it had not been credited with before. The environment is apprehended as translucent and radiating. Maharishi claims that in this state life assumes a "celestial" quality, which defies description for lack of appropriate terms. His own descriptions of this state are certainly rare. His book on "Love and God", a description of love in lyrical prose, seems to reflect the state of God consciousness. 127

On the general question of the possibility of this state, it is worth pointing out that the sixth state as described by Maharishi appears to be identical with what Marghanita Laski calls "intensity ecstasy" and is well attested in Western sources. As Miss Laski points out, experiences of this kind seem to be considered more desirable in Western societies than experiences of "withdrawal ecstasy",¹²⁸ which corresponds to Maharishi's transcendental consciousness. It is possible that this is so because of their theistic character, which is more in accordance with the religions of the West.

William James also quotes such experiences. The following is from a well-known example, the experience of R.M. Bucke :

"Directly afterwards there came upon me a sense of exultation , of immense joyousness accompanied or immediately followed by an intellectual illumination impossible to describe. Among other things, I did not merely come to believe, but I saw that the universe is not composed of dead matter but is, on the contrary, a living presence; I became conscious in myself of eternal life. It was not a conviction that I would have eternal life, but a consciousness that I possessed eternal life then; I saw that all men were immortal; that the cosmic order is such that without any peradventure all things work together for the good of each and all; that the foundation principle of the world, of all the worlds, is what we call love, and that the happiness of each and all is in the long run absolutely certain." 129

This experience has many interesting elements.

Notice the following :

1. "sense of exultation"
2. "immense joyousness"
3. "impossible to describe"
4. "I did not merely come to believe, but I saw"
5. "the universe is not composed of dead matter
but is, on the contrary, a living presence"
6. "eternal life"
7. "the foundation principle of the world, of
all the worlds, is what we call love"

In "Mysticism and Philosophy", W.T. Stace quotes a most interesting experience of this type by an American whom he calls N.M.:

"The room in which I was standing looked out into the back yard of a Negro tenement. The buildings were decrepit and ugly, the ground covered with boards, rags and debris. Suddenly every object in my field of vision took on a curious and intense kind of existence of its own; that is, everything appeared to have an "inside" - to exist as I existed, having inwardness, a kind of individual life, and every object, seen under this aspect, appeared exceedingly beautiful... All things seemed to glow with a light that came from within

them. I experienced a complete certainty that at that moment I saw things as they really were, and I was filled with grief at the realization of the real situation of human beings, living continuously in the midst of all this without being aware of it." 130

The importance of this experience lies in the fact that it occurred in circumstances that were not particularly pleasant. From Marghanita Laski's study of "Ecstasy", one finds that triggers for ecstatic experiences are often (though not always) aesthetically beautiful sights such as sunsets and flowers, and Bucke's own experience resulted from a quiet ride home after discussing poetry and philosophy with friends. The environment that N.M. describes, however, was not of a kind that would normally give rise to an aesthetic experience and, to this extent, his experience is different from most. Notice the following elements:

1. "every object....took on a curious and intense kind of existence of its own;"
2. "a kind of individual life"
3. "exceedingly beautiful"
4. "All things seemed to glow with a light

that came from within them."

5. "I saw things as they really were"
6. "the real situation of human beings, living continuously in the midst of all this without being aware of it."

Some of the experiences of this type quoted in Western sources are reported to have been momentary; for example Bucke's, which lasted a few seconds. Others seem to have lasted longer. Almost all include joy or bliss, an intense sense of life, beauty of the outside world and strong feelings of love. Many mention glow and light and the impossibility to describe their experience in everyday terms.

On the whole, such experiences tend to be appreciations of inner awareness and of the outside world in "heavenly" terms, as if heaven were a matter of here and now, rather than a distant possibility. In Bucke's experience, the eternal quality of such a heavenly condition is also there. Maharishi's definition of this type of experience as "celestial" seems to agree with Western texts.

2. Maharishi's Philosophical Position

It seems, from Maharishi's remarks on God consciousness in his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gītā and elsewhere, that this is a phase of development which gives rise to statements about a personal God.

In "The Science of Being and Art of Living" Maharishi makes the distinction between a personal and impersonal God and it is to the perception of the personal God that the state of God consciousness is said to relate.

"God is found in two phases of reality: as a supreme Being of absolute eternal nature and a personal God at the highest level of phenomenal creation. Thus God has two aspects, the personal and the impersonal." 131

The personal God, according to Maharishi, is characterized by personality and therefore the pronouns to be used in this connection should be either "He" or "She", rather than the neuter "It" which may be used to refer to the formless, qualitless Absolute. The personal God has form, qualities and attributes and can be realized empirically on the level of sensory perception

while the impersonal can only be realized on the transcendental plane which is not bound by time, space and causation.

"We find that there are grades in creation. Some forms, some beings, are less powerful, intelligent, creative and joyful; others have these attributes to a higher degree. The whole of creation is composed of the different strata of intelligence, peace and energy." 132

The implication is that creation consists of various strata, some of which man is normally aware of and some of which he is not. Maharishi regards the personal God as the basis of all strata of creation and as the "highest" or "subtlest" form of existence. He supports the theory that all relative existence is subject to cycles of creation and dissolution, a macrocosm of birth and death; when the relative world is dissolved, the personal God also merges into the impersonal and at the time of creation he resumes his status at the highest level.

Inasmuch as the personal God merges with the impersonal Absolute at times of dissolution, He is

eternal. From the point of view of relative existence, He and the relevant strata of subtler and subtlest manifestation exist for the duration of creation. The personal God is therefore not eternal from the relative standpoint which is bound by space and time, though this epithet is usually applied to him in this context because his relative existence seems "eternal" compared to the duration of human life.

According to Maharishi the subtler and subtlest levels of creation are permeated with the very essence of life as they consist of the most creative forces of relative existence. He also considers them to be pervaded by bliss, which appears there in its most concentrated form.

God consciousness, then, seems to consist of modified relative states of consciousness owing to the perception of subtler and subtlest values of existence. This perception may be so overwhelming as to overshadow the Self-consciousness of the qualitless Absolute, in which case the individual's perception is again totally relative however blissful and sublime this may be.

In this state, therefore, the bondage of the material world is again in full force as it was in the state of ignorance; perhaps even more so, in fact, as the charm of relative existence in God

consciousness appears to be very much enhanced. Maharishi concludes that God consciousness is not in itself a state of liberation but that it is, on the contrary, a necessary stage of sublime bondage leading to final liberation in Brahman consciousness.

In God-consciousness the individual is once more subject to the law of cause and effect until such time as the perception of the subtlest stratum of creation no longer overshadows the Self-awareness of cosmic consciousness. Thus one understands that, according to Maharishi, moksa (liberation) is achieved in cosmic consciousness and in Brahman consciousness but not in the intervening state of God consciousness.¹³³ The determining factor in the attainment of moksa is awareness of the Absolute. In the state of cosmic consciousness this exists alongside the ordinary awareness of the three states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep, while in Brahman consciousness, as will be seen in the following chapter, everything in the empirical world is alleged to be perceived in terms of the Self. In God consciousness, however, this factor is overshadowed and therefore absent from perception, in which case the condition of liberation cannot arise. The implication seems to be that permanent Self-awareness cannot be maintained unless the

whole range of relative strata become, not only known, but assimilated to such an extent that it can no longer overshadow knowledge of the Absolute.

In Maharishi's account of the cause and subtle manifestation of creation allusions are made to "celestial" strata which, though extrasensory in terms of ordinary human perception, constitute a part of relative existence and, in his view, can be known.

Maharishi is not original in postulating this cosmological theory. Most philosophical systems claim some cosmological viewpoint and the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara, though not theistic as such, contains the element of a personal God in the concept of Īśvara. Taken as an overbelief on the basis of the experience of the sixth state of awareness which Maharishi describes, it can be treated in two ways :

1. One can either accept such a stratum of creation as positively existing both inside and outside oneself in which case one must also accept that one's sensory organs are normally too limited to perceive it.
2. Or one can hold that the external world presents itself to one as it really is

and that it is possible to acquire a psychological capacity to see it in a transfigured way.

From the practical point of view it does not seem to matter whatever theory one adopts; inasmuch as the experience occurs, it is subjectively real. As regards the objective existence and the psychological value of the personal God, the following by J.H.Leuba is an interesting view:

"The truth of the matter can be put in this way: God is not known, he is not understood; he is used sometimes as meat-purveyor, sometimes as moral support, sometimes as friend, sometimes as the object of love. If he proves himself useful, the religious consciousness asks for no more than that. Does God really exist? How does he exist? What is he? are so many irrelevant questions. Not God, but life, more life, a larger, richer, more satisfying life, is in the last analysis, the end of religion. The love of life, at any and every level of development, is the religious impulse." 134

3. Historical Parallels in the Advaita Vedānta
with Special Reference to Śaṅkara.

In Śaṅkara's Advaita, God is both Absolute and relative. The distinction is made between nirguṇa Brahman, the Absolute pure consciousness without attributes or characteristics which is beyond cause and effect, and saguṇa Brahman, the self-conscious personality and first cause which is called Īśvara. Nirguṇa Brahman is one without a second (ekam advitīyam); Īśvara is the one that becomes many in association with the concept of Māyā (Illusion). Māyā is the power (śakti) by which Īśvara gives rise to multiple creation, just as a magician produces illusory beings by his magical power. The absolute character of Īśvara is not affected by this.

"yathā svayaṃ prasāritayā māyayā māyāvī
triṣv api kāleṣu na saṃspr̥śyate'vastutvād
evaṃ paramātmāpi saṃsāramāyayā na saṃspr̥śyata
iti."

"As the magician is not at any time affected by the illusion which he has himself created because it is unreal, so also the supreme is not affected by the māyā of the cycle of birth

and death." 135

From the standpoint of the Absolute, Īśvara is himself unreal; He only becomes real from the relative point of view in association with the unreal māyā. From the Absolute point of view there is unity of cause and effect while from the relative point of view, difference begins.

"yathaiva hi brahmaṇo jagadutpattiḥ s̄rūyata
evaṃ vikāravvyatirekenāpi brahmaṇo'vasthānaṃ
s̄rūyate prakṛtīvikārayor bhedena vyapadeśāt."

"For in the same way as scripture speaks of the origin of the world from Brahman, it also speaks of Brahman existing apart from its modifications. This appears from the passages indicating the difference of cause and effect." 136

Here again there is the Absolute-relative paradox; Īśvara both is and is not. This is one of the main differences between the theories of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja because Rāmānuja considers Brahman to be a one, all-embracing, but essentially personal God and the paradox of the

distinction between nirguṇa and saguṇa Brahman does not arise. Śaṅkara's theory of simultaneous transcendence and immanence is the Absolute-relative paradox par excellence. Śaṅkara himself has some difficulty to accomodate it and concludes that human logic is itself relative and can only go so far towards explaining the origin of the world; he adds that one necessarily has to take account of the experience of seers recorded in sacred texts.

"ata āgamavaśēnāgamānusāritarkavaśēna ca
cetaṇaṃ brahma jagataḥ kāraṇaṃ prakṛtiśceti
sthitam."

"Thus on the ground of scripture and of reasoning subordinate to scripture, the intelligent Brahman is to be considered the cause and substance of the world." 137

It is the nature (svabhāva) of Brahman to modify itself in association with māyā and it is therefore as simple and natural as "mere sport" (līlā). In a sense, saguṇa Brahman cannot help creating. He is a constant process of becoming as opposed to the being of nirguṇa Brahman.

"yathā lōke kasya cid āptaīṣanasya rājño
rājāmātyasya vā vyatiriktaṃ kiṃ cit
prayojanam anabhisandhāya kevalaṃ līlārūpāḥ
pravṛttayah kriḍāvihāreṣu bhavanti. yathā
cocchvāsaprasvāsādayo'nabhisandhāya bāhyaṃ
kiṃ cit prayojanaṃ svabhāvād eva sambhavanti.
evam Īśvarasyāpyanapekṣya kiṃ cit
prayojanāntaraṃ svabhāvād eva kevalaṃ
līlārūpā pravṛttir bhaviṣyati."

"Just as in the ordinary world, the sporting activities of a king who has fulfilled all his desires, or of a minister in places of amusement are merely in the nature of sport and have no extraneous purpose; or as the process of inhaling and exhaling takes place naturally without any extraneous purpose, so may the activity of Īśvara be mere sport without any other purpose, as a result of his own nature."¹³⁸

This occurs with no implement other than his own creative power, owing to the association with māyā. Nothing apart from Īśvara is necessary for his modification into name and form (nāma-rūpa) and, by further modification, into the material elements.

"cetanam ekam advitīyaṃ brahma kṣīrādivad
devādivac cānapekṣya bāhyasādhanam svayaṃ
parinamamānaṃ jagataḥ kāraṇam iti sthitam."

"Brahman, intelligent, ^{one,} without a second,
modifying itself like milk (turning into
curd) or like the gods (creating by their
power) without the employment of any
extraneous means, is to be considered the
cause of the world." 139

The nirguṇa Brahman is beyond cause and
effect, the material creation consists of cause
and effect and Īśvara is the cause.¹⁴⁰ He causes
and contains all change - which is produced by
alternating expansion and contraction according
to the influence of the three guṇas - actually
or potentially. The Absolute-relative paradox
appears as regards the three guṇas in that
Īśvara is envelopped in them and simultaneously
transcends them.

The influence of sattva is responsible
for expansion which gives rise to creation
(sṛṣṭi) and as the creator, Īśvara is called
Brahmā. The influence of rajas is responsible
for preservation (sthitī) and in his capacity

of the preserver He is called Viṣṇu. The influence of tamas is responsible for contraction which results in dissolution (pralaya) and in the capacity of the destroyer he is known as Śiva.

"kālo'smi lokakṣayakṛt pravṛddho
lokān samāhartu miha pravṛttaḥ."

"I am the mighty world-destroying time engaged in destroying the worlds."¹⁴¹

During the periods of creation and preservation everything is actually contained in Īśvara, while in the period of dissolution everything is contained in him potentially.

Īśvara stands in macrocosmic-microcosmic relationship to the individual jīva and his cycle of creation, preservation and dissolution has the same relationship to birth, action and death in the empirical world, as well as to the three relative states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep, as defined in the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad. ¹⁴²

This relationship may be summarized as follows:

1. The individual soul in connection with the material body is called jīva or Viśva and the collective jīva in the waking state is Vaiśvānara or Virāj.

2. The individual soul in connection with the subtle body is called taijasa and the collective taijasa in the dream state is Hiranyagarbha.
3. The individual soul in connection with the subtle body is called prājña and the collective prājña in dreamless sleep is Īśvara.¹⁴³

The progression from Īśvara to Vaiśvānara represents creation, while the reverse order stands for dissolution.

These three categories refer to manifest creation while the fourth quarter, according to the Upaniṣad, is turīya the transcendental state which refers to unmanifest Brahman.

The four categories or quarters may be presented schematically as follows :

	waking state	material body karma śarīra	jīva or viśva	Vaiśvānara or Virāṭ
D I S S O L T I O N C R E A T I O N	dream state	subtle body sūkṣma śarīra	taijasa	Hiraṇyagarbha
	deep sleep	causal body kāraṇa śarīra	prājña	Īśvara
	transcendental		turiya	Brahman

Thus the distinction between nirguṇa and saguṇa Brahman, between Brahman and Īśvara, becomes the distinction between turiya and prājña.

"tam abījāvasthaṃ tasyaiva prājñaśabdavācyasya
turiyatvena dehādisambandhajāgradādirahitāṃ
pāramāthikīm prthag vakṣyati."

"That which is designated as prājñā (when it is viewed as the cause of the world) will be described as turīya separately when it is not viewed as the cause, and when it is free^{of} all phenomenal relationship, i.e. in its absolute real aspect." 144

The third quarter is described in the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad as a mass or heap of cognition, full of bliss and an enjoyer of bliss, the lord and the source of all. 145

As the fourth state, turīya, potentially contains the other three states merged into one another, so Brahman potentially contains manifest creation, even in the period of dissolution. During the process of creation each effect is produced by its immediately antecedent cause while during the process of dissolution the opposite occurs and each effect is reabsorbed into its immediately antecedent cause. Śaṅkara describes this as follows:

"evam krāmena sūkṣmaṁ sūkṣmataram cānantaram
anantaratarām kāraṇam apītya sarvaṁ kāryajātam
paramakāraṇam paramasūkṣmaṁ ca brahmāpyetīti
veditavyam."

"It should be understood that in this way every effect, by reverting to the condition of a subtle and still more subtle cause successively, is finally absorbed into Brahman, the ultimate and most subtle of causes."¹⁴⁶

The first change from the state of the immutable (avikriya) Brahman to the beginning of modification is desire for the sport of creation:

"tad aiksata bahu syāṃ prajāyeyeti."

"It thought : may I be many, may I procreate." ¹⁴⁷

This produces the so-called golden egg of creation which is its subtlest manifestation and which, probably because of this, is often called the creator in various Indian cosmological texts. Śaṅkara gives the following account of the beginning of manifestation:

"Nārāyaṇa is, in the popular conception, the creator who was brooding over the waters just before the beginning of creation. According

to a subtler conception, Nārāyaṇa is the anteryāmin, the divine being in whom all embodied souls have their being. He is not a creator of the avyakta but far transcends it. It is the avyakta - the avyakṛta, māyā, the undifferentiated matter out of which, when in apparent union with Īsvara, is evolved the principle of Hiranyagarbha, here spoken of as Anḍa or the Mundane Egg which is composed of the five simple rudimental elements of matter."¹⁴⁸

Śaṅkara's cosmology was the conventional one of his time and based on Vedic tradition. He recognized the traditional Vedic deities as existing entities and as personifications of forces of nature. The five rudimental elements : earth, water, fire, air and space or ether (ākāśa), represent five presiding deities but also life functions such as speech, breath, sight and so on.¹⁴⁹

Vedic deities possess individuality¹⁵⁰ just like other creatures and the five presiding functions constitute the highest "rank" (sthāna-viśeṣa) of deity after Īśvara. There is a hierarchy of all creatures according to the degree of their knowledge, perception and power and this extends from plants

and minerals¹⁵¹ to the subtlest relative level of Hiraṇyagarbha.

"yathā hi prāṇitvāviśeṣe'pi manuṣyādi
stambaparyanteṣu jñānaiśvaryaḍi pratibandhaḥ
pareṇa pareṇa bhūyān bhavan dṛśyate tathā
manuṣyādiṣveva hiraṇyagarbhaparyanteṣu
jñānaiśvaryaḍy abhivyaktir api pareṇa pareṇa
bhūyasī bhavatiṭy etacchrutismṛtivādeṣv
asaḥḍd anuśrūyamānaḥ na śakyaḥ nāstīṭi
vaditum."

"For as in the series of beings which descends from man to blades of grass a successive diminution of knowledge power and so on, is observed although they have the common attribute of being animated—so in the ascending series extending from man up to Hiraṇyagarbha, a gradually increasing manifestation of knowledge, power, etc. takes place; a circumstance which Śruti and Smṛti mention in many places, and which it is impossible to deny." 152

The deities are not immortal because they are part of manifest reality which is subject to birth

and death.

These mortal entities possess greater knowledge of reality than man but they do not necessarily have knowledge of the unity of Brahman which they are, however qualified to acquire. They are a physical fact of manifest existence, even though different from other creatures normally known to man, they reside in a field of light and can be perceived by man. 153

Īśvara constitutes the subtlest relative level, superior to the Vedic deities and ultimate object of worship.

Perception and worship of the personal God is indeed a meritorious activity, but it is not the supreme knowledge of the Absolute which, alone is liberation.

"traividyaṁ māṁ somapāḥ pūtapāpā
yajñair iṣṭvā svargatim prārthayante
te punyam āsādyā surendralokam
aśnanti divyān divi devabhogān.
te taṁ bhuktvā svargalokam viśālam
ksīṇe punye martyalokam viśanti
evam trayīdharmam anuprapannā

gatāgatam kāmakāmā labhante."

"Men of the three Vedas, drinkers of soma, purified from sin, who worship me with sacrifices, pray for the goal of heaven; they reach the holy world of the lord of gods and enjoy in heaven the heavenly pleasures of the gods.

Having enjoyed that spacious world of heaven, their merit exhausted, they enter the mortal world; Thus, following the threefold dharma, desiring objects of desires, they obtain the state of going and returning." ¹⁵⁴

Liberation is achieved by those who, having no desire of any kind, not even a desire for heaven, see everything in terms of the Self.

"Those men of renunciation who worship Me as infinite, ever meditating on Me, regarding themselves as non-separate, i.e. looking upon the supreme God Nārāyaṇa as their own Self, to those who see the reality, who are ever devout, I secure gain..... While other devotees work themselves also for their own gain and safety, those who see nothing as

separate from themselves do not work for their own gain and safety. Indeed, these latter never cherish a desire for life or death; the Lord alone is their refuge. Wherefore the Lord himself secures to them gain and safety." 155

Thus Śaṅkara places the awareness of non-difference above the relationship between the worshiper and the object of worship. He accepts the value of religious worship and it has been traditionally believed that he was himself a Śaiva. He composed various hymns to Hindu gods such as Viṣṇu, Śiva, Śakti and Sūrya. He held, however, that the highest truth transcends all the particular forms of expression of it and all empirical perception, including the celestial world of the gods.

3. Concluding Remarks

In the philosophical theory of the personal and impersonal God, of saguṇa and nirguṇa Brahman, Maharishi follows Śaṅkara's Advaita. He describes the nature of the Absolute, seen as Īśvara through association with māyā, and the modification into subtler and grosser or more material forms of manifest creation according to the theory of Śaṅkara, though in less detail. He subscribes to the traditional Vedic cosmology in the same way as Śaṅkara and considers Vedic deities as personifications of natural forces, and the five presiding deities as personifications of the five primal elements. He holds, again according to the Vedic tradition to which Śaṅkara also adheres, that this "celestial" field contains forms of various degrees of subtleness, the subtlest of which is Īśvara, the highest lord of creation and first manifestation or cause.

Maharishi acknowledges the concept of māyā in association with Īśvara, but I have been unable to find a clear exposition of his attitude on this subject. Virtually nothing on his ideas on māyā exists in print and, to the best of my knowledge, not much has been said on this subject in lectures. One is left with the impression that, though he

adheres to the theory of māyā, he does not wish to elaborate the subject. The following is one description that he gives:

"From a cosmic standpoint, Vedanta explains the relationship of the unmanifested absolute Reality (Brahman) with the manifested relative aspect of life by introducing the principle of maya. The word maya means literally that which is not, that which does not exist. This brings to light the character of maya. Its presence is inferred from the effects that it produces. The influence of maya may be understood by the example of sap appearing as a tree. Every fibre of the tree is nothing but the sap. Sap, while remaining sap, appears as the tree. Likewise, through the influence of maya, Brahman, remaining Brahman, appears as the manifested world."¹⁵⁶

In his exposition of the subtle forms of manifestation, Maharishi dwells equally on the cosmological theory of the origin of creation and on the value of experiencing these subtler levels in the state of God consciousness. Śaṅkara, on the contrary, expounds the theory in great detail with

less on actual experience.

Śaṅkara comes down to us through his commentaries as more theoretical, while Maharishi is chiefly practical. The distinction can plausibly be made that Śaṅkara is a philosopher, while Maharishi is a teacher. This distinction applies in connection with most of Maharishi's work, but is particularly obvious in his description of God consciousness.

It must be emphasized again, however, that Śaṅkara's oral teaching is not available, whereas Maharishi's is. As mentioned before, Maharishi's own descriptions of the state he calls God consciousness are rare and usually not to be found in print. The information given in this chapter is largely derived from notes of lectures given at Livigno, Italy, in June 1970.

CHAPTER VII

BRAHMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

1. Maharishi's theory of Unity

The process which I considered in the previous chapter reaches its culmination in the state which Maharishi calls Brahman consciousness. Here the wheel has come almost full circle. In the state of "ignorance" man revolves through waking, dreaming and deep sleep and knows nothing beyond this. In transcendental consciousness all knowledge of these three relative states is lost temporarily but Self consciousness is gained. Self awareness to the exclusion of the relative states cannot be a permanent condition in life. Eventually, however, it becomes possible to maintain it along with the relative awareness of waking, dreaming and deep sleep.

After a time, the bliss of Self awareness begins to spill over into the waking, dreaming and deep sleep phases of life; a "subtle" aspect of the objects of sense is perceived. This is what Maharishi calls God consciousness. This is an ecstatic state in which Self awareness and outer awareness are once more becoming confused, as they were at the initial state of ignorance, except that

this is a blissful, transfigured condition. It is not, however, full illumination. Final enlightenment consists in acquiring a clear understanding of the relationship between inner and outer reality, between Absolute Self and the relative world.

The process of developing this understanding is the continuation of the process which led to God consciousness. While the Self is appreciated in terms of the Absolute, subtler and subtler aspects of the objective world are perceived, until the experience of its subtlest aspect—which Maharishi identifies with the realm of the personal God—is transcended and the objective world is also appreciated in terms of the Self. Gradually, the dualistic, emotional state of God consciousness gives place to a sense of oneness as the sense of duality becomes increasingly less.

"As the Union grows more and more complete, the link of worship, of adoration and devotion finds fulfilment in its own extinction, leaving worshipper and worshipped together in perfect oneness, in the oneness of absolute Unity."¹⁵⁷

Thus, the process of the development of higher states from cosmic consciousness to Brahman

consciousness sounds theoretically very similar to the process of gaining transcendental consciousness through the process of transcendental meditation.

During this meditation, the meditator experiences what Maharishi calls progressively subtler levels of thought, until even the subtlest level is transcended by the attention and the Absolute is realized on the subjective level. In the development of higher states the individual experiences progressively subtler aspects of the objects of sense until the subtlest aspect is transcended and the Absolute is realized on the objective level. Thus both subject and object are perceived in terms of the Absolute.

Brahman consciousness is the direct perception of the Absolute basis of the outer world as well as the inner Self. In cosmic consciousness the subject is appreciated in terms of the Absolute but the objective world is seen to be relative. That is the state of duality par excellence and characterized by a sense of separateness. In Brahman consciousness, however, both subject and object are appreciated in terms of the Absolute and this gives rise to the state of oneness which Maharishi calls Unity.

According to Maharishi, this sense of oneness does not obliterate the experience of the diversity

of manifest creation; the diversity is seen to co-exist with its Absolute basis. A man in Brahman consciousness does not experience the distinctions of the relative world as being identical with each other.

"This does not mean that such a man fails to see a cow or is unable to distinguish it from a dog. Certainly he sees a cow as a cow and a dog as a dog, but the form of the cow and the form of a dog fail to blind him to the oneness of the Self which is the same in both. Although he sees a cow and a dog, his Self is established in the Being of the cow and the Being of the dog, which is his own Being." 158

The essence of the relationship between oneness and diversity is, of course, paradoxical. Until this point, Absolute and relative values had been perceived either on a mutually exclusive basis, or in the form of two unrelated categories. Transcendental consciousness is the Absolute state where the relative is dismissed from consciousness with no trace of duality. Cosmic consciousness is a state in which Absolute and relative are two different

categories with no connecting link. Maharishi says that this is because:

"....life is composed of activity in the outer surface together with the stability of Being within. In their essential nature there exists no link between them. Just as a coconut has two different aspects, the outer hard cover and the inner milk within, one solid, the other liquid, without any link between them, so life has two aspects, one unchanging and eternal, the other ever-changing and relative without any link between them." 159

Brahman consciousness bridges the gap between Absolute and relative values which is experienced in cosmic consciousness.

"No diversity of life is able to detract from this state of supreme Unity. One who has reached it is the supporter of all and everything for he is life eternal. He bridges the gulf between the relative and the Absolute. The eternal Absolute is in him at the level of the perishable phenomenal world. He lives to give meaning to the paean of the

Upanishads: "Purnamadah, purnamidam"-that Absolute is full, this relative is full. One who lives this supreme reality in his daily life "is deemed the highest yogi", says the Lord. Yoga in this state has reached its perfection; there is no level of Union higher than this that he has gained. He stands established on the ultimate level of consciousness." 160

In this state the individual realizes that the lack of connection between the Absolute and relative fields of life as experienced in cosmic consciousness is an illusion. Maharishi claims that it is not the world itself which is considered to be an illusion at this stage, but the non-relationship between it and the Absolute. In other words, the paradox of cosmic consciousness is the illusion. Both Absolute and relative are real and the only way to resolve the paradox is to expand the awareness to the point where it can encompass both views simultaneously.

As the "refinement" of the senses continues, the boundaries between the subjective value of the Self and the objective world are gradually perceived as less well defined, until the two

eventually merge into each other. To illustrate this, Maharishi says that in cosmic consciousness the boundaries between the two are experienced as opaque, in God consciousness as translucent and in Brahman consciousness as completely transparent.

When the perception of the subtlest relative level is achieved , this is seen to be almost one with transcendental consciousness which represents the subjective value at this stage, and it is at this undefined boundary that relative and transcendent are the same.

The words "almost one" are very significant here. The maintenance of at least some degree of separation is necessary if Brahman consciousness is to be a living reality, because lack of any separation would amount to undifferentiated Unity, which is by definition incompatible with living and strictly speaking achievable only after the death of the body. If some separation were not maintained, the state of unity would be so overpowering that living would become the flat existence of Absolute life. Maharishi says :

"We spend so much time, in order to achieve the perception of unity, and then we have to be so poised as to maintain even a small

degree of separateness, if this perception is to remain a living reality." 161

Thus, according to Maharishi, the state of perception of the subtlest relative level is the vantage point from which it is possible to have the awareness of the Absolute value of the objective world. As the awareness of the Absolute value of the subjective Self in cosmic consciousness is the basis for the development of the refinement of sensory perception, so the state of perception of the subtlest relative level of manifestation is the basis for the awareness of the Absolute value of the world.

Because of the slight degree of separation that still exists, it is also possible to see the world as being different from the Absolute, that is, to appreciate its relative (in terms of the subtlest relative) as well as its Absolute value. In this way, the resolution of the paradox of cosmic consciousness is almost totally complete. It is only on the perceptual level that this can be understood, however, because on the intellectual level the resolution sounds equally paradoxical, since it contains two logically incompatible propositions :

1. The world is perceived as being identical with the Absolute.
2. The world is perceived as being different from the Absolute.

Maharishi implies that Brahman consciousness develops in two stages: At the first stage, the Absolute value of each object is appreciated in terms of the Self. At the second stage, the Absolute value of all objects collectively is appreciated in terms of the Self. The existence of the necessary degree of separation makes it possible to also distinguish the separate values of the objects. From the standpoint of the relative, the objective world is seen to be diversified while from the standpoint of the Absolute everything is one. In the state of Unity the world is seen to be many and one simultaneously and at that level of perception, according to Maharishi, it does not seem paradoxical at all. Unity is the state which resolves the Absolute-relative paradox on the level of perception. As soon as this resolution is expressed in words, however, the paradox reappears because the resolution can only be on the level of perception and cannot be translated into language.

One of the categories that characterize empirical existence is logic and man's intellectual

capacity as also his language are in accordance with this. The Absolute, however, is not characterized by logic, therefore it is not intellectually "graspable" (agrāhya), it is indescribable and ineffable (avyavahārya). This is borne out by Upanisadic texts ¹⁶² and by modern individuals who have experienced what Marghanita Laski calls "transcendent ecstasies".¹⁶³ Logic is applicable in the relations generated by multiplicity in the empirical world but in the oneness of Absolute existence it cannot apply. This puts intellectual understanding of the Absolute beyond our usual mental capacity and, equally, beyond words. Thus, the simultaneous perception of Absolute and relative is also intellectually ungraspable and ineffable and the resolution of the paradox between them can only be on perceptual grounds but not intellectual ones, at least in so far as the usual human intellectual capacity is understood.

In the first chapter I discussed the impossibility of evaluating the Absolute field of existence in terms of the relative. The same would naturally apply the other way around: the relative state of existence cannot be evaluated in terms of the Absolute. This problem exists if one is able to perceive only one of these states to the

exclusion of the other. It also exists and is in fact intensified in the state which Maharishi describes as cosmic consciousness, because though both are sustained on the conscious level in this state, they are appreciated as being different from each other. In Brahman consciousness, however, the problem of evaluating the relative in terms of the Absolute and vice versa does not arise. They are automatically perceived in that way.

The altered state which Maharishi calls Brahman consciousness is better attested in the East than it is in the West. This is probably due to the overwhelming theistic influence of Christianity. Some Christians seem to have had the perception of a state of Unity, of which Meister Eckhart is by far the most precise:

"There is something in the soul which is above the soul, divine, simple, an absolute nothing; rather unnamed than named; unknown than known... It is higher than knowledge, higher than love, higher than grace, for in all these there is still distinction. This light is satisfied only with the supra-essential essence. It is bent on entering into simple ground, the still waste wherein

is no distinction, neither Father, nor Son, nor Holy Ghost; into the unity, no man dwelleth. Then is it satisfied in the light, then it is one in itself - as this ground is a simple stillness, in itself immovable, and yet by this immovability are all things moved." 164

Generally, however, Christians have tended to have experiences of a dualistic rather than a monistic nature, and their experience of union has seldom been one of complete identity. Either the monistic experience is not possible for Christians, or they have interpreted it in a dualistic way in accordance with the teachings of the Church. W.T.Stace favours the second explanation :

"There is something in the theistic religions which causes their theologians - who usually have no mystical experience and are only intellectuals - to outlaw as a heresy any tendency to monism or pantheism. The mystics have for the most part been pious men, obedient to the constituted authorities in the religion in which they have been raised. They humbly submit all their conclusions to the judgment

of the Church or whatever the institutional authority in their particular religion may be...The threat of possible punishment for heresy need not have been his (the mystic's) main motive, though since he was human, the fear of punishment may well have reinforced his own wish to be a law-abiding person within the framework of the ecclesiastical institution. Nor, on the other hand, is there any reason to accuse the theologians and Church authorities of mere prejudice, ignorance or obscurantism. It is surely understandable that they should regard as sheer blasphemy the claim of a human being to be identical with God." 165

It is mainly in the more distant, non-Christian past that parallels to the concept of Absolute Unity exist in the Western cultural heritage, in the form of the neo-platonic teachings of Plotinus and, earlier still, in the eleatic philosophy of Parmenides.

In the East and particularly in India, much has been written on this topic and it constitutes the basis of Śaṅkara's Advaita philosophy, as will be shown in the following section.

By introducing the altered state of Brahman consciousness to the Western world, therefore, Maharishi brings in a concept which is comparatively new to modern Western culture. It is not entirely new, because it has been expressed by some previous Indian teachers in the West and studied by scholars of Indology for approximately the past hundred years. Maharishi however has brought this idea to the attention of a much wider public than ever before and, what is more, he insists that it is a reality which is potentially achievable by every man.

2. Historical Parallels in the Advaita Vedānta with Special Reference to Śaṅkara.

Śaṅkara's whole philosophical system is based on the theory of non-duality (Advaita) which is developed at great length in the Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya, where he postulates the identity of Brahman and the world. This identity is not a mere tautology, however, because if it were, the world would not exist at all, in which case it could not be identical with Brahman. The identity is therefore an identity in difference. In treating Brahman and the world as cause and effect, Śaṅkara distinguishes between causality (kāryakāraṇatva) and non-difference (ananyatva). The world has its basis in Brahman, so from this standpoint they have the relationship of cause and effect. From a different standpoint, the world and Brahman are identical, so there is no relationship between them.

"kṛtsnasya jagato brahmakāryatvāt
tadananyatvāc ca"

"Because the whole world is an effect of
Brahman and non-different from it." 166

Brahman and the world are not identical and stand in the relationship of cause and effect because

Brahman is not subject to the constant change of the world, but is absolutely changeless and eternal (kūṭastha). The cause and the effect are identical, because the world does not exist apart from Brahman; outside Brahman, there is nothing and in that sense Brahman is infinite. Brahman is infinite because it is unrelated to space, just as it is eternal because it is unrelated to time.

"yatra nānyat paśyati nānyac chr̥noti nānyad vijānāti sa bhūmā.atha yatrānyat paśyati anyac chr̥noti anyad vijānāti tad alpam."

"Where one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, understands nothing else, that is the infinite. But where one sees something else, hears something else, understands something else, that is the small (finite). 167

Brahman and the world simultaneously have a cause and effect relationship and are identical. From the empirical point of view, the world exists as a manifestation of Brahman; its existence however is within Brahman and not outside it.

"kāryam ākāśādikaṃ bahuprapañcam jagat kāraṇam

param brahma tasmāt karanāt paramārthato'
nanyatvam vyatirekenābhāvaḥ kāryasyāvagamyaate."

"The effect is the manifested world beginning with ākāśa; the cause is the highest Brahman. It is understood that the effect is non-different from this cause, the highest reality, having no existence beyond it." 168

The fullness of both cause and effect is complete. The effect, though a manifestation of the cause, is never outside it, so the manifestation does not detract from Brahman. There is no plurality in the Absolute, so nothing can be subtracted from it. It is the nature of the Absolute to give rise to the empirical world, just as it is the nature of the empirical world to proceed from it, without detracting from its wholeness.

"pūrṇam adah pūrṇam idaṃ pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate
pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya pūrṇam evāvaśiṣyate."

" That is full, this is full. From fullness, fullness proceeds. If we take away the fullness from fullness, fullness still remains." 169

The cause gives rise to the effect by way of appearance (vivartopādāna) rather than transformation (parināmopādāna). To illustrate the principle of transformation, Śaṅkara gives the analogy of milk changing into curds. Brahman does not transform itself, because transformation involves change whereas Brahman is absolutely changeless (kūṭastha). To illustrate the principle of appearance, Śaṅkara gives Gaudapāda's well-known analogy of the rope appearing as a snake.¹⁷⁰ The rope is a rope; it never changes into a snake; it appears as either a rope or a snake according to the vision of the seer.

From this follows the concept of identity in difference expressed by Gaudapāda¹⁷¹ and expanded by Śaṅkara.

"naikatve'pi śārīrasyopabhogena brahmaṇa
upabhogaprasaṅgo vaiśeṣyāt.viśeṣo hi bhavati
mithyājñānasamyagjñānayoḥ.mithyājñānakalpita
upabhogāḥ samyagjñānadr̥ṣṭam ekatvam."

"In spite of their unity, enjoyment on the part of the dweller in the body does not involve enjoyment on the part of Brahman because there is a difference. For there is

a difference between misapprehension and perfect knowledge, enjoyment being the figment of misapprehension while unity is revealed by perfect knowledge." 172

Śaṅkara explains the understanding of the unity of cause and effect and the simultaneous difference between them in terms of perfect and apparent knowledge. Although they are one, the soul within the body is involved in enjoyment whereas Brahman is not. This makes Brahman and the incorporated Self to appear as being different, which is the effect of a misapprehension, while perfect knowledge reveals their underlying unity.

From the Absolute (pāramārthika) standpoint, subject and object are one and identical with Brahman. The rope is a rope and there is no question of seeing it as a snake. From the empirical (vyāvahārika) standpoint, there is a distinction between subject and object, between cause and effect. In this case the rope can:

1. Appear as a snake and the seer does not realize that it is in fact a rope.
2. Appear as a snake though the seer knows that it is a rope.

The second possibility implies that, though subject

and object are appreciated as distinct and as related to Brahman in terms of cause and effect, the identity of cause and effect is also realized.

Śaṅkara illustrates the paradox of simultaneous identity and difference with an analogy of the waves and the sea.

"na ca samudrād udakātmano'nanyatve'pi
tadvikāraṇām phenataraṅgādīnām
itaretarabhāvāpattir bhavati na ca teṣām
itaretarabhāvānāpattāv api samudrātmano'
nyatvaṃ bhavati.evam ihāpi na ca
bhoktrbhogyayor itaretarabhāvāpattiḥ.na ca
parasmād brahmaṇo' nyatvaṃ bhaviṣyati.yadyapi
bhoktā na brahmaṇo vikāraḥ "tat sṛṣṭvā tad
evānupraviśat" (Taitt.Up.II.6)
iti sraṣṭurevāvikṛtasya kāryānupraveśena
bhoktrtvaśravanāt tathāpi kāryam
anupraviṣṭasyāsty upādhinimitto vibhāga
ākāśasyeva ghaṭādyupādhinimittaḥ. ityataḥ
paramakāranād brahmaṇo'nanyatve'py upapadyate
bhoktrbhogyalakṣaṇo vibhāgaḥ
samudratarāṅgādinyāyenetyuktam."

"These modifications of the sea, i.e. foam, waves, etc. even though they are non-different

from their cause i.e. the sea which has water as its self, do not pass over into each other; and again, even though they do not pass over into each other, they are not different from the sea which is their self. Similarly, in the case under discussion, the enjoyers and the objects of enjoyment do not pass over into each other and yet they are not different from the highest Brahman. Even though the enjoyer is not a modification of Brahman, since the unmodified creator himself, in so far as he enters into the effect, is called the enjoyer (according to the passage, "Having created, he entered into it" Taitt.Up. II.6), still, by reason of its having so entered, it passes into a state of distinction because the effect acts as a limiting adjunct; just as ether (*ākāśa*) is divided by its contact with jars and other limiting adjuncts. Therefore, the distinction of enjoyers and objects of enjoyment is possible, although both are non-different from Brahman, their highest cause, as the analogous instance of the sea, waves, etc. demonstrates." 173

Although from the Absolute point of view all is one, distinctions are also possible in the sense

of the analogy of the waves. It is impossible to get away from the fact that in empirical reality, distinctions are observed to exist. Unity and manifoldness are both true, according to the perception of the experiencer. The vision of ultimate truth is the awareness of their simultaneous reality. Śaṅkara remarks :

"nanv abhedanirdeśo'pi darśitaḥ "tat tvam asi" ityevaṃ jātīyakaḥ kathaṃ bhedābhedau viruddhau sambhaveyātām.naiṣa doṣaḥ. ākāśaghaṭākāśanyāyenobhayasambhavasya tatra tatra pratiṣṭhāpitatvāt."

"But there is also mention of non-difference in passages such as "That art thou", an opponent could object. How can difference and non-difference which are contrary to each other both be possible? (We reply that) there is no fault. The possibility of the coexistence of the two is shown by the parallel instance of the universal ether (ākāśa) and the ether limited by a jar." 174

Śaṅkara points out, however, that it is impossible to comprehend the relationship between Brahman and the world in logical terms. He considers

this relationship to be indefinable (anirvacanīya). In itself, Brahman is beyond duality (advaita) and therefore all reasoning concerning it is completely meaningless. Śaṅkara states that, this is the case, according to the author of the Sūtras.

"tad avyaktam anindriyagrāhyam
sarvadr̥ṣyasākṣitvāt"

"Because it is unmanifest, not to be grasped by the senses, for it is the witness of all experience." 175

Statements about Brahman only have meaning from the relative point of view, because they are in themselves emirical and not adequate to describe the non-emirical Absolute. Because logical statements and intellectual understanding can only disclose values of the relative sphere of existence, they can only be meaningful as confirmation of direct experience.

"sanmārgasthās tāvad bhavantu tataḥ śānaiḥ
paramārthasād api grāhayiṣyamīti manyate
srutiḥ."

"The scripture thinks: Let them first find themselves on the path of the existent, then I shall gradually also make them understand it in the highest sense." 176

3. Concluding Remarks

Ultimate truth, according to Maharishi's teaching, consists in the unity of cause and effect as expounded by Śaṅkara. Maharishi is in accordance with Śaṅkara on the subject of the theory of unity and he is also aware of the intellectual problems in connection with this, of which Śaṅkara is often at pains to make logical sense in his own commentary.

The ultimate altered state of human consciousness, according to Maharishi, is that of living Brahman on the level of perception. This is an intellectually impossible situation, he says, because it is not logical to postulate that infinity can be upheld in the field of change. He holds that the human nervous system has the inbuilt capacity to reflect the Absolute state, like a pond reflecting the image of the sun. It is this capacity which makes it possible for the Absolute, unmanifest state to become a living reality. To clarify this, he says that the Absolute state could be called "life" whereas its reflection in the human nervous system could be called "living", the individualization of life.¹⁷⁷ If one were to use Śaṅkara's wave analogy to illustrate this, the sea would exemplify the Absolute, life, while the waves dancing on the surface would represent

living.

"If a wave can enjoy the dignity of the ocean, that is the fulfilment of the play of the wave. The purpose of the play of individual life is to display the cosmic play of creation."¹⁷⁸

Maharishi holds that life is infinite and eternal and the individual value of life is living. The value of Absolute life can be lived on the basis of individuality only through perception. It cannot be understood intellectually, precisely because it constitutes a logical impossibility. He maintains, however, that not only is this perceptually possible, but it is also highly desirable. If infinite life is not upheld in the field of ever-changing living, then living is in that sense devoid of life and caught up in constant death.

"We are designed to live life and not to continue living death. Living cannot be without limit of time and space. But if time and space are permeated with unboundedness in the perception of the seer, even though they remain in the field

of limitation and change, it is possible to have every phase of living permeated with the reality of life. Life is omnipresent and underlies the field of change and death." 179

The concept of leśāvidyā, however, which Maharishi applies to the state he calls cosmic consciousness, also applies to Brahman consciousness. There is an ultimate grain of ignorance even in this exalted state. If there were, not, then the state could not possibly be characterized by individual "living". The state of unity would be so overpowering that "living" would become the flat existence of Absolute life.

Ultimately, the theory of the unity of cause and effect remains a mystery, not in the sense of something which is capable of rational explanation but is not yet rationally explained, but rather as something which totally transcends the possibility of human understanding. In spite of this considerable inherent limitation, Maharishi attempts an exposition that will be meaningful to twentieth-century man. In the course of his teaching, he devotes much time to explaining in so far as this is possible in intellectual terms, the mechanics of achieving the state of Brahman as a living reality. He does this not only in order to expound what is, according to him, the highest goal of his

teaching, but also to make apparent what he considers to be its desirability and usefulness to man. Maharishi's theory of unity is not so much a statement of fact, as it is in the Brahmasūtra bhāṣya but an explanation of why this state is not only achievable, but also worth achieving.

In this sense Maharishi is a practical teacher rather than an original philosopher. Śaṅkara's often dry statements become enhanced by Maharishi's intelligent and enticing promotion of the subject. This is by no means to demote Maharishi to the position of a public relations man for the Advaita cause. His own thought is deep and penetrating and he can be considered a philosopher in his own right, not so much for originality of thought, as of approach. His interpretation of Advaita statements, though in agreement with Śaṅkara's, is original in its adaptation to the language and ideas of the modern world.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

1. Points of Agreement with Śaṅkara's Vedānta

a) The Fourth State

Maharishi's exposition of the Advaita Vedānta is on the whole traditional and in agreement with the theory as formulated by Śaṅkara.

Maharishi follows the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad and the Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya in his definition of the fourth state, which he calls transcendental consciousness, as one of the four quarters of Brahman, the ineffable, ungraspable state of no experience. This is a state of awareness in which the subject, object and act of experience merge into one, in a state which is beyond experience and at the same time the source of all experience. Though it transcends the three ordinary states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep, it is the underlying reality which exists in all three. Maharishi follows Śaṅkara in making the philosophical distinction between the highest Self (ātman) and the empirical self (jīva). Jīva is the ātman when it is restricted by superimposed limitations (upādhis) that are due to ignorance (avidyā). Individual consciousness is potentially unrestricted (ātman) and the empirical self (jīva). Jīva is the

ātman when it is restricted by superimposed limitations (upādhis) that are due to ignorance (avidyā). Individual consciousness is potentially unrestricted (ātman) and this, according to Maharishi, is a state of perception which he calls unbounded awareness. The individual Self (ātman) is one with the universal Self (Brahman) which Maharishi renders by the term Absolute. Maharishi teaches that the core of Vedānta philosophy as represented by Śaṅkara is that ātman and Brahman are one and this constitutes the focal point of his own teaching. Maharishi further follows Śaṅkara in predicating to the qualitiess Absolute (nirguṇa Brahman) the essential (svarūpalakṣaṇa) characteristic of Saccidānanda which he translates as Absolute bliss consciousness.

b) The Witnessing Self

The Self is also mentioned in the Brahma-Sūtra Bhāṣya as the witness principle (sākṣin) which Śaṅkara considers as the knower. Maharishi follows Śaṅkara in considering absolute knowledge or knowingness as the totality of knower, knowing and the object of knowledge which is undifferentiated in Absolute Brahman, while the witnessing capacity of the Self, i.e. the capacity to know is linked

with individuality. In accordance with the Brahma Sūtra Bhasya, Maharishi states that the activity of the relative field must exist for the witnessing Self to operate. As Śaṅkara declares, for the witness to be there, the balance of the three gunas must be disturbed. However, though there is no witness without activity, the witness is itself uninvolved in activity. Maharishi claims that this simultaneous witnessing and lack of involvement may be applied to one's individual activity and this is expressed in his theory of cosmic consciousness.

c) The Personal God

Maharishi adheres to the philosophical theory of the qualitless and qualified Absolute, the nirguṇa and saguṇa Brahman of the Advaita, which he otherwise calls the impersonal and personal God. He describes the nature of the Absolute, seen as Īsvara through association with māyā and the modification into subtler and grosser or more material forms of manifest creation according to the theory of Śaṅkara. Śaṅkara's cosmology is the traditional Vedic cosmology of his time to which Maharishi also adheres and which is expressed in his theory of God consciousness. In the Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya Śaṅkara declares that there is no

reason why subtler forms of existence should not exist, simply because they are not apprehended by ordinary means of perception and Maharishi states that subtler levels of manifestation are perceivable through the refinement of the ordinary means of perception.

d) The Unity of Cause and Effect

The unity of cause and effect is the main tenet of the Vedānta according to Śāṅkara. This tenet in fact is the Advaita, and everything else it teaches is effectively in support of this main theme. Maharishi follows Śāṅkara in considering this to be the highest truth, while the realization of this truth is, according to him, the goal of human existence.

2. Points of Difference from Śāṅkara's Theory

a) An "Applied" Vedānta

However, Maharishi's exposition of the Advaita Vedānta is coloured throughout by a very great emphasis on practical experience. His presentation is contained in his theory of seven states of consciousness, which, according to him, reflect various aspects of the reality expounded by Śāṅkara's Vedānta. The Advaita thus assumes a practical as well as a theoretical aspect, because all of it is considered as being realizable as a living reality, in human life. The theory that Maharishi presents is not a philosophical postulate about a conjenctural Absolute and its relations or lack of relations with an equally conjenctural ātman or jīva. For Maharishi as well as for Śāṅkara, the Absolute is not just a construct, but a fact, and Maharishi's presentation of the Advaita is based on the assumption that all shades of relations between the categories postulated by Śāṅkara can actually be lived as distinct states of consciousness on the basis of perception. Maharishi maintains that the expansion of consciousness which is requisite in order to apprehend these aspects of reality has a direct effect on the general outlook and attitude to life of the individual. Furthermore, Maharishi holds

that the perception of these states is progressive in the sense that it fulfills the human personality and renders it more "whole". He believes that the ensuing "wholeness" is not only beneficial to both the individual and society, but that it is in fact the only basis on which to live a good, harmonious and satisfying life.

Maharishi firmly believes that man has the capacity to live these states and that they can enhance life and make it truly normal. He characteristically insists that, given that this possibility is available to man, the mere living of life within the usual cycle of waking, dreaming and deep sleep, which he collectively calls a condition of ignorance, is not normal but sub-normal, while real normality consists in living life to the full. This, according to him, means making use of the potential which he believes is available to man, in order to perceive all of reality as expounded in the Advaita Vedānta, including the reality of the unity of cause and effect.

Maharishi's presentation differs from that of Śaṅkara in this respect. Maharishi's is in effect an applied Vedānta, presented in terms of direct experience, in which the value of experience is of paramount importance. Śaṅkara also states that personal experience (anubhava) is very important; his general presentation of the Advaita theory

however, at least as it comes down to us today, tends to be more abstract. 180

Maharishi's practical approach to the presentation of the Vedāntic material has two salient points in which he seems to be original. One, is the systematization of seven states of consciousness, of which the four that can be called altered states of consciousness are cited in the order in which Maharishi claims them to occur. The other is the theory of cosmic consciousness as it is formulated by Maharishi and the central position of this state as a necessary basis for the perception of the sixth and seventh states of Maharishi's scheme.

b) The Systematization into Seven States

Maharishi's systematization of the various altered states of consciousness which he postulates is according to the varying degrees of an individual's perception of the Absolute and relative fields. The relationship between these two fields by definition never changes, but the degree of individual perception of this relationship is subject to change.

There are infinite possibilities of such change : It is possible to "experience" the Absolute and relative fields separately to the exclusion of each other. For example, only the relative aspect

of life is experienced in the ordinary waking state, while the "experience" of no experience, which has been defined as the Absolute state, occurs in transcendental consciousness to the exclusion of all else.

It is possible to perceive the Absolute and relative simultaneously, according to Maharishi, without the awareness of any relationship between them, as two totally unrelated fields, in the state of cosmic consciousness. This simultaneous perception presupposes the permanent living of the Absolute value on the subjective level at least. In cosmic consciousness it does not extend to the objective level and this accounts for the experience of unrelatedness and duality. Thus transcendental consciousness is a momentary state which, though it is capable of prologation, will of necessity have to cease if living is to continue, whereas cosmic consciousness is characterized by permanence.

Ultimately therefore, the difference between these two states is a difference of duration. Because the perception of transcendental consciousness is sustained all the time, it is able to coexist with the experience of ordinary waking awareness. However, the change of this perception from impermanent to permanent does not usually happen overnight. This means, that between the so-called momentary and the permanent "experience" there is an infinite number

of possibilities as regards the evolution of this perception in time, which in turn implies an infinite number of levels of consciousness in between. Though Maharishi presents his states as distinct levels of awareness for the purposes of teaching, he continually makes it clear that he considers that there are an infinite number of such levels, of which his seven states are the salient points. In fact, human consciousness is never static and degrees of awareness are constantly subject to change.

As cosmic consciousness develops into God consciousness and again as God consciousness develops into Brahman consciousness, there are again infinite numbers of altered states which can result from the infinite varieties of degree of awareness that arise.

Maharishi's exposition of the seven states is considered entirely as seen through the awareness of an individual who begins to cognize the truth as it is recorded in the system of the Advaita. He contends that there is one Absolute truth, but that in the changing world of multiplicity there are innumerable relative ones. The truth as seen through the awareness of each level of perception is unique and unlike the truth as perceived from the levels of other states. The one Absolute truth can be viewed from an infinite number of different angles

which represent relative truths.

The systematization by Maharishi of these seven "landmark" states is made in the order in which he claims that they generally occur. On the whole, Maharishi's position is that altered states of awareness resulting from the various degrees of perception of the Absolute naturally develop from each other in a particular sequence and that, when attempting to induce them by mechanical means (such as mental exercises or meditation), it is best to do it in that order. So far it has been impossible to either prove or disprove this claim, since there is no objective means of verifying subjective states of awareness.

c) Maharishi's Emphasis on Cosmic Consciousness

An original point which follows directly from the systematization of states of awareness is Maharishi's emphasis on cosmic consciousness as a distinct state and as a necessary foundation for the development of what he calls the "higher" states of God consciousness and Brahman consciousness.

According to the theory this is a state in which the witnessing principle of the Self operates consciously on the subjective level on a permanent twenty-four hour basis, that is simultaneously with normal daily activity, dreaming and deep sleep.

This produces an experience of separateness in which the Self and the empirical world, as well as the jīva, are seen to be different from each other.

In the three ordinary states that collectively constitute the condition of ignorance (avidyā), there is no conscious awareness of the Self at all. In transcendental consciousness, on the other hand, the Self is conscious of itself but the ordinary relative states are suspended. Thus, in neither of these conditions is the witnessing Self (sākṣin) a conscious reality, owing to the absence from the awareness of the witnesser in the first case and of the witnessed in the second.

In cosmic consciousness the three ordinary states no longer overshadow the Self but on the contrary, they are constantly witnessed by it. Thus the condition of ignorance (avidyā) is removed.

The removal of ignorance, that is the permanent awareness of the Self, is considered to be the necessary prerequisite for the development of "higher" states. They are considered to be variations on the essential theme that both Absolute and empirical reality are maintained in the awareness simultaneously and permanently. The difference between cosmic consciousness and the states which are said to develop from it is that owing to the gradual refinement that takes place in subsequent states as

regards experiencing empirical reality, the distinction between Absolute and empirical reality is gradually perceived as less. The experience of duality therefore slowly begins to fade until eventually it is almost reduced to nil. The starkness of duality, the apparent antithesis of Absolute and empirical states, is the hallmark of cosmic consciousness.

I say "apparent antithesis" because the antithesis is illusory, due to a particular state of perception of the experiencer. According to Maharishi this is the state of mithyā-jñāna,¹⁸¹ which I will translate as apparent knowledge. This is different from ignorance (avidyā), in which there is no awareness of the Absolute; it is also different from perfect knowledge (samyag-jñāna), because Absolute and relative appear to be totally distinct. Maharishi calls cosmic consciousness 200% of life, 100% Absolute and 100% relative values both lived to the full on a parallel basis but not in unity. The cognition that will follow is that these two 100% are not different, but that they are both 100% Absolute, which is the Vedāntic non-difference of cause and effect.

The permanence of Absolute consciousness in cosmic consciousness as opposed to its impermanence in transcendental consciousness gives this state a

central position in Maharishi's scheme, because it brings about the removal of ignorance from the three ordinary states of everyday life. Thus mithyā-jñāna, which is the knowledge of an apparent duality when Absolute and relative values are seen as separate, has a central position according to Maharishi. Mithyā-jñāna occupies an intermediate position between ignorance (avidyā) and perfect or supreme knowledge, as Maharishi translates samyag-jñāna. It is not ignorance, because that is automatically removed by the permanent awareness of Absolute Brahman; it is not supreme knowledge because the unity of cause and effect has not yet been perceived. It is however a state of knowledge, because Absolute awareness has been integrated with the three states of ordinary living. 182

d) The Theory of Stress

According to Maharishi, this integration of Absolute awareness is brought about by the removal of stress from the nervous system. This is another characteristic theory of Maharishi's, where he also offers an original presentation.

By stress, Maharishi means an overloading of the nervous ^{system} caused by intense experiences whether of a positive or negative nature. For example, both extreme sorrow and extreme joy are liable to cause such an overloading of the nervous system as

Maharishi suggests. This theory implies a correlation of the physical and mental aspects of the individual which seems to be gaining favour with certain medical circles concerned with "holistic healing". Thus an intense mental experience may translate itself into not only mental but also physical stress. (Maharishi likens such stresses to knots.) According to Maharishi, stresses embedded in the nervous system interfere with its ability to reflect the Absolute value, and should therefore be released from the system if this ability is to be restored. Their release is achieved by means of deep rest and stresses are in fact released during deep sleep. (Maharishi likens stress release to the untying of the knots). However, for the release of more deep rooted stresses, rest deeper than that which is brought about by sleep is required and this, claims Maharishi, is afforded by transcendental meditation. Because of the partial relief gained through sleep, the need for further stress release is not always felt and that is why the ordinary cycle of waking, dreaming and deep sleep is usually considered to be "normal". Maharishi holds that this is in fact sub-normal compared to the normality gained through deeper rest, the release of more deep rooted stress and the resulting expansion of awareness. He considers this expansion to be a liberating and fulfilling experience.

This theory of stress and stress release may be described as a mechanical approach to achieving expansion of awareness, expressed in modern Western rather than traditionally Indian terms. It has the practical advantage of attracting people from all walks of life and all religious affiliations because it does not have religious overtones and does not involve displays of religious emotion which some people find distasteful or embarrassing. Conversely, it has the disadvantage that people whose needs are of a primarily emotional nature, may reject it as being too "dry" a method, which does not appear to fulfill their requirements. Though this mechanical aspect of Maharishi's teaching is reassuring to some, there are others who criticize it precisely on account of this point.

Maharishi points out that the way to "enlightenment" is not to be confused with its effects. Good behaviour, devotional attitudes and so on are, according to him, results of the expansion of consciousness and not the other way round. No amount of good works will bring about the desired broadening of the awareness, if the nervous system is not in a fit state to allow it to occur. Maharishi's emphasis is therefore on the importance of expanding human consciousness as

a basis for physical and mental well-being, good behaviour and the spiritual enlightenment that is the goal of many religions.¹⁸³

The theory of stress implies a correlation and interdependence of mind and body. According to this view, each altered state of consciousness must have related distinctive physiological characteristics. Scientific evidence along these lines exists as regards some relative physiological differences between the ordinary waking, dreaming and deep sleep states and, as I mentioned in the introduction, Maharishi encourages research in the expectation of establishing similar findings with regard to the altered states of consciousness that he describes.

This is undoubtedly an innovation on his part and naturally comes as a result of the scientific trends of the present time. This is yet another aspect of Maharishi's practical approach to the Vedānta. Maharishi's scientific interests and his attempt to present the Vedānta in such terms, reflect the vast increase in empirical knowledge that has occurred, not only between Śaṅkara's and our own, but even within the last fifty years.

e) Maharishi's Attitude to the Other Systems of Indian Philosophy

Another point of interest is that Maharishi's

teaching does not contain polemics against the other five systems of Indian philosophy. As he considers each of his postulated states of awareness to be valid on its own terms and so to disclose certain truths, so he considers each of the six systems to be valid in the same way. According to Maharishi, the Vedānta yields the ultimate knowledge of the unity of cause and effect which, however, presupposes all other knowledge that is available through the other systems. He claims that, because of its all-inclusiveness, the truth of the Vedānta automatically contains the truth of the other systems while it is unique in proclaiming that Brahman and the world are one. Maharishi has also advanced the hypothesis that the knowledge contained in each system corresponds to the knowledge of a different state of awareness. This attitude is reflected in his teaching. Though the theoretical aspect of his teaching is a presentation of Śaṅkara's Advaita system, the practical aspect seems to include the adoption of yogic ideas. However, the analysis of the practical aspect of Maharishi's teaching is not within the scope of my thesis; that would be the subject of an extensive study in its own right.

Maharishi's interest is not so much to establish the supremacy of the Vedānta against

the other five systems, as to make it a fact of daily living for every man. This brings me again to the point I made earlier, that Maharishi is more of a teacher than a philosopher. The innovations in his teaching are differences of emphasis and method rather than of doctrine, in which he remains conservative and traditional.

f) Maharishi as a Practical Teacher

It could be argued that his presentation is too neat and simple an exposition of the Advaita. I think that even Maharishi himself might not disagree with this. He has repeatedly emphasized that his exposition is in many ways an oversimplification for the sake of clearer understanding and I think it should be seen as such. Maharishi is not offering a variation on the Advaita, but an explanation of it in present-day terms; it is the method therefore, that is original and not the substance.

My own feeling is that though simplification may well be objectionable from an academic point of view, it does have certain practical advantages. It must be remembered that Maharishi does not aim his teaching at a small number of university students, but at the general public, and to the vast majority of Maharishi's Western audience

Indian thought and philosophy is, to say the least, unfamiliar. So simplification makes for clearer understanding of at least some principles, if not all. It does not make all of Maharishi's six million followers brilliant Vedāntists intellectually, but provides an introduction to the study for people who would otherwise probably have known nothing about it at all.

Maharishi's therefore^{is} basically a layman's approach in his general teaching, because his main consideration is to make himself understood by the general public. His simplicity, as well as his dedication to scientific investigation is in response to the way he feels the public thinks. They are the tools that he uses in order to make his teaching better and more widely understood in a society in which science is considered to represent the authoritative approach to reality.

Maharishi's movement differs from other contemporary neo-Vedāntist movements in a way similar to that in which he differs from Śaṅkara. When he first came to the West, he emphasised his practical approach and his insistence on one technique became the characteristic feature of his teaching. He stressed the practical benefits that could be derived from the practice of this one technique, irrespectively of whether the

the prospective meditator had any knowledge of Advaita philosophy or not.

It is probably fair to say that the method he has chosen in order to propagate his teaching is practical, modern and calculated to reach the maximum number of people. It is also probable that his technique of transcendental meditation is the technique which is most suitable for widespread use in Western society, if compared to others in use in the West today. Techniques of this nature, however, are almost impossible to evaluate by objective standards.

On the whole Maharishi can be considered to be an asset to the cause of Indian cultural relations with the West. He stimulates the interest of thousands of Westerners in his country's religious heritage, lecturing as he does on a variety of subjects in connection with the Vedānta, ranging from the Rg Veda to Bhakti cults, varṇāśrama dharma and other customs, not to mention the Advaita proper.

Maharishi can be considered an imaginative and inventive follower of Śaṅkara rather than an original philosopher in the strict sense of the word. However, he has a penetrating mind and deep insights and his comments on Advaita theory can be stimulating and thought provoking. Unfortunately, many of his most

interesting lectures do not exist in print.

The unhelpful state of affairs is that Maharishi is better known for the followers whom he attracts or the places in which he lives than for his philosophy. For this, the responsibility lies to a great extent with Maharishi himself. Although some of his philosophical teaching exists in print, he has for the most part reserved it for an inner core of teachers of transcendental meditation who have been spending much time with him on teacher training and advanced training courses. Though the numbers of this privileged few have been increasing, they are but a small proportion of his overall following. Thus the most interesting and obviously less "simplified" part of Maharishi's philosophical teaching is not very widely available.

Maharishi's attitude to this, however, is consistent with the Indian tradition that philosophical or esoteric teaching is always transmitted orally, and also with his own often repeated claim that intellectual understanding cannot precede, but should follow direct experience. His main interest is to make available the experience which he claims is reflected in the Advaita theory to as many people as possible, and

the intellectual teaching of Advaita philosophy should, according to him, be an accompaniment to the perceptual knowledge that has already been gained. The theoretical aspect of his teaching is not meant to be abstract; it is meant to be coupled with practical experience and therefore to be very concrete.

Whether or not the altered states of consciousness experienced by his followers are of the importance that he assumes them to be, is beyond the scope of my thesis. His aim however is to transform abstract philosophy into "living reality" an idea which, though familiar to the philosophical circles of the East, has been largely unknown to the modern West.

CHAPTER IX

MAHARISHI'S MOVEMENT COMPARED WITH SOME OTHER

NEO-HINDU MOVEMENTS IN THE WEST

In this section I will compare Maharishi's movement with some other neo-hindu movements in the West, of which two are Vedāntic (the Vedānta Society and the teaching of Ramana Maharshi) and the others are not (the Radha Krishna Temple and Krishna Consciousness Society, the teaching of Bhagavan Shree Rajneesh, the Divine Light Mission of Guru Maharaj and the Ānanda Mārga movement.)

1. The Vedānta Society and the Teaching of Ramana Maharshi

The earliest Indian teacher in the West was Svāmī Vivekānanda (1862-1902), the disciple of Paramahansa Ramakrishna of Bengal. Ramakrishna was a teacher of Advaita Vedānta and Vivekananda adapted his teaching for the West. His efforts were directed principally at America, where he founded the Vedānta Society, the movement that introduced the Vedānta to the Western world. He was a splendid speaker of great personal charm and his influence became considerable. Vivekānanda had a clear idea of the cultural contributions of India and America :

"As regards spirituality, the Americans are far inferior to us, but their society is superior to ours. We will teach them our spirituality, and assimilate what is best in their society."¹⁸⁴

This attitude seems to have been shared by many later Indian spiritual teachers, including Maharishi.

By 1904 the Vedānta Society was firmly established and continued to expand. At the centres run by the Society the Indian svāmīs were more guests than missionaries and the centres were run by native Americans. The development of centres of Maharishi's movement has been similar in this respect. The Society is still a very influential neo-hindu movement, although in recent years it has been less in the public eye than movements such as Maharishi's, Krishna Consciousness, or those of Bhagavan Shree Rajneesh or Guru Maharaj. The Vedānta Society now operates in many parts of the world and has an English centre in Buckinghamshire.

Ramana Maharishi (1879-1950) did not found a movement as such nor did he ever travel to the West or anywhere in India for that matter. When he was seventeen years old he left his home for the sacred hill of Arunacala in the Tamil country of

South India which he subsequently never left. Large numbers of devotees gathered at Arunacala to hear his teaching, which exerted influence in the West mainly through its compilation into books by his follower Arthur Osborne.

Ramana Maharshi taught Advaita Vedānta through the discipline of self-enquiry. "Who am I?" was the central question through which he urged his disciples to discover the real nature of the "I" which is not identified with the body or the mind. The "I" is the basis of the mind and body but it is also beyond them :

"The Self is the pure Reality in whose light the body, the ego and all else shines. When all thoughts are stilled, pure Consciousness remains over." 185

The realization and constant awareness of the real nature of "I" is liberation; then, the ignorance that mistakes the "I" for its bodily attributes disappears.

"The duality of subject and object and the trinity of seer, sight and seen can exist only if supported by the One. If one turns inwards in search of that One Reality they

fall away. Those who see this are those who see the wisdom." 186

The Vedānta Society, the teaching of Ramana Maharshi and Maharishi's movement are all Advaita Vedānta orientated. An important difference between these movements and Maharishi's is that they are far more overtly religious and classically Indian. The Vedānta Society was a liberal religious movement of the last century adapted for the West and is typical of the nineteenth century. Ramana Maharshi's was a classical traditional yogic teaching. Ramana Maharshi taught in India (and in fact in Arunacala only), to a following that consisted mainly of Indian devotees and his approach was specifically Indian.

Maharishi's presentation is modern, Westernized and not overtly religious. Although Maharishi's movement exists and is active in India, his message is tailored to appeal to the West. It is essentially pragmatic, with great emphasis on modern life and normal activity. Maharishi takes Western attitudes very much into account in his presentation and likes to use Western scientific methods and technology.

Maharishi's presentation is certainly not classically Indian and in some ways his enthusiasm

for Western scientific method and technology is even greater than that of his more conventional Western followers. He made the headlines in the sixties as an unconventional Indian guru who does not insist on strict austerities and is not averse to material success, and in a sense he still retains that image.

In recent years, however, there has been a gradual shift from the modernistic to the classically Indian approach. Although this has not yet penetrated the rank and file of the movement and is certainly not apparent to the general public, the classically Indian yogic approach is beginning to prevail in Maharishi's entourage.

2. The Movements of Krishna Consciousness, of
Bhagavan Shree Rajneesh the Divine Light
Mission of Guru Maharaj and Ānanda Mārqa.

These are popular and influential neo-hindu movements that are not, however, Vedāntic. They are worth mentioning because they are large organizations with a worldwide appeal and in this respect they can be considered to be similar to Maharishi's. In most other respects there are considerable differences between these movements and Maharishi's organization.

a) The Radha Krishna Temple and Krishna Consciousness
Society

This is a devotional movement whose members are seen occasionally in the streets chanting in saffron robes. They are vegetarian and adhere to a strict moral code. Chanting is their main way of inducing altered states of consciousness and constitutes the main event at temple sessions of which the most important is the Sunday session that is followed by a "Love Feast".

The Krishna Consciousness Society is essentially a religion orientated movement with strict moral and dietary regulations, that demands the devotion of its followers. The effect of the

group is not to maintain an enhanced or enriched version of normal modern life, but to encourage members to alter their life style to conform to the religious and social ideal of the movement.

Apart from its worldwide appeal and common Indian origins, the Krishna Consciousness Society has little in common with Maharishi's movement. As I mentioned before when comparing it with the Vedāntic neo-hindu movements, Maharishi's teaching does not have a specifically religious presentation. Maharishi has a relaxed attitude to the religious beliefs and way of life of his followers and does not impose regulations of any kind on their daily life. He claims that the practice of transcendental meditation will automatically bring about a state of greater spiritual and social integration, and states that to change one's life without altering one's level of awareness is to put the cart before the horse.

Maharishi's movement is not a devotional one nor does it encourage the veneration of any particular deity, and Maharishi actively discourages his followers from behaving or dressing like Indians. He believes that individuals should be integrated within their own society.

b) Kalpitaru or the Dynamic Meditation of Bhagavan
Shree Rajneesh

Rajneesh does not belong to any particular religious or philosophical tradition. He was a professor of philosophy and uses this knowledge, together with his own meditation experience, in teaching the disciples who flock to his āśrama near Poona, in India. Until very recently, he had never travelled to the West himself and the numerous Rajneesh meditation centres were established all over the world by followers who had already taken courses at his āśrama.

Although the ultimate aim of his teaching is to bring about a state of "enlightenment" in his disciples, he is less specific than Maharishi about what "enlightenment" is actually meant to be. As he does not belong to a particular tradition, his approach is eclectic and he attempts to incorporate what he considers to be most valid from the best-known religious and philosophical traditions into an integrated teaching of his own. In this he is totally different from Maharishi whose philosophy is that of the Advaita and who is not at all an eclectic.

The practical aspect of Rajneesh's teaching has been said to be a "psychological approach" to

enlightenment, and this is probably because he makes use of a variety of psychotherapeutic techniques including encounter groups according to what he considers to be the special needs of each particular individual.

He also uses a set of meditation techniques that he collectively calls dynamic meditation. Their aim is to still the mind by a process of "letting go" after a period of hyperactivity. This is normally done in five stages : The first stage lasts for about ten minutes and consists of fast and deep breathing through the nose done to music. This is medically known as hyperventilation and produces alkalosis due to the reduction of the concentration of carbon dioxide in the blood. It can result in dizziness, fainting, tingling, or twitching and seems to be the appropriate starting point for the next stage which is ten minutes of a cathartic expression of tension or emotion. The third stage is ten minutes chanting of the word "hu" fast and loudly while jumping up and down - borrowed from a Sufi technique. This is again done to music and when the music stops people are supposed to hold whatever position they are in for the next ten minutes. This is the fourth stage, probably borrowed from Gurdjieff's "stop" techniques, which is meant to be a time for feeling and

assimilating what has gone on before. The last stage is a gentle dance meant to integrate the feelings of the previous stages physically as well as mentally.

The only possible similarity between the practical aspects of the teachings of Maharishi and Rajneesh can be said to be the secularization of meditation so that it may be practised by everyone regardless of his religious background. In every other way the methods used are totally dissimilar. Maharishi uses only one technique, his transcendental meditation, and there is no chanting, no dancing and no hyperventilation. An interesting point is that physiological studies done on people practising transcendental meditation showed no change of carbon dioxide concentration in the blood during the practice of the technique. Maharishi also never uses any techniques of psychological manipulation.

Although Rajneesh does not encourage the renunciation of activity in the world, the taking of what he calls Sannyas (not to be confused with the traditional sannyāsa) involves a change of life and breaking the identifications of the past. A new Sanskrit name is given to the follower and he is expected to wear only orange coloured clothes; he also wears a mālā that carries a small picture of Rajneesh. According to Rajneesh, these three

requirements are ultimately meant to be transcended when the devotee's life has undergone the necessary changes which they are supposed to facilitate.

This practice is also very different from that of Maharishi, who does not encourage any change of life-style at all. He believes that each individual should live a life that is as integrated as possible with his or her own social, cultural and religious background. He attaches great importance to one's background and always advises obedience to laws and injunctions of one's own society. He encourages his followers to live in conformity with their own culture and only to add two twenty-minute periods of transcendental meditation to their daily routine. According to him, the changes that are produced by this meditation help towards leading an integrated life within one's own community.

c) The Divine Light Mission of Guru Maharaj

Guru Maharaj, who has been a guru since the age of eight, is believed to be an avatar by his disciples. His father, Shri Maharaj of Badrinath in North India, was also a Bhakti guru who attracted many disciples with his simple teaching of devotion to God.

Guru Maharaj claims to impart knowledge of God through a fourfold experience of vibration, light,

smell and sound. The teaching consists of techniques that produce the feeling of a vibration, the seeing of a bright light at the place between the eyebrows which is referred to as the third eye, the taste or smell of nectar in the mouth, and the hearing of heavenly music. A prerequisite for learning the "Knowledge" is daily attendance over a period of two weeks during which the prospective devotee learns to surrender him or herself totally to Guru Maharaj. At the end of this period he or she is given the "knowledge" during a six-hour session if considered to be ready to accept it.

The effects of Guru Maharaj's techniques seem to be very pleasant if not ecstatic and he is followed mainly by young people who are looking for precisely that. Followers of some other movements who feel that their own techniques are not ecstatic enough also tend to join, while many are also attracted by the highly emotional atmosphere that surrounds the young guru.

Guru Maharaj's teaching is based more on sensation than on any definable philosophical content. He appeals to great audiences in Europe but mainly in America and his style has become a mixture of Hindu Bhakti devotion and American Fundamentalist preaching, his public lectures giving the impression of huge pop-festivals.

The whole approach of this movement is very different from Maharishi's. There is always a very serious, if not businesslike, atmosphere at Maharishi's public lectures where his followers usually appear impeccably dressed and no music is used to enliven the proceedings. As I mentioned before, devotional attitudes are not a part of his teaching and he actively discourages gestures of devotion from followers towards himself. Maharishi's use of only one technique is again an important difference, as is the fact that transcendental meditation does not normally produce ecstatic effects.

d) The Ānanda Mārga Yoga Society

The Ānanda Mārga organization is a yogic group founded in India by Shri Ānandamūrti. This is again a religious devotional yogic relationship of master and disciple and the authority of the guru. The guru is the ultimate authority venerated, not just as a spiritual teacher or as a representative of God, but as God himself. As far as his follower is concerned, he is God. This is a movement with no obvious intellectual content which is based entirely on revelation by authority. Its characteristic is absolute guruhood.

There is no doubt that all neo-hindu movements have some degree of emphasis on the relationship between guru and disciple and this varies from movement to movement. The Ānanda Mārga group is more extreme than most and in this is very different from Maharishi's movement.

Maharishi is the ultimate authority in his movement in the sense that he is in control of the spiritual teaching and directs the activities of his now vast organization. Although it is possible that some of his followers ascribe to him divine qualities, the vast majority of even his closest followers do not. Maharishi himself is careful not to encourage this attitude, at least as regards his Western followers. In India the situation may be slightly different because the devotees themselves expect a more traditional guru-disciple relationship and it is possible that there, Maharishi may feel the necessity to fulfill his traditional role.

I think it is fair to say that Maharishi's Western followers consider him to be "evolved" in the sense of having achieved the state of Brahman Consciousness as defined in his scheme.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1965 p.9
2. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1965 p.9
3. Olson
4. Russell 1976 p.26
5. Fiske
6. Āryavidhyāsudhākara quoted by Deussen 1912 p. 36
7. Keith 1920 p. 476, Radhakrishnan 1923 p. 447
8. Keith 1920 p. 476
9. Thapar 1966 p. 193
10. Keith 1920 p. 476,477
11. Thibaut 1962 p. XIV
12. Thibaut 1962 p. XIV
13. Lalande 1928 p. 496
14. See p.39
15. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1966 p.p.55,56
16. Forem 1974 Chapter III
17. Saunders 1975 p.22
18. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1966 p.184
19. Russell 1976 p.27
20. Maharishi International University Catalogue 1974-75 p.6
Higher states of consciousness are particular states of awareness claimed to be brought about through the practice of transcendental meditation. In this thesis I have preferred to use the term "altered states of consciousness" according to Charles Tart.
21. Keith 1920 p.471
22. Jung 1958 p.533

23. Leuba 1929 p.316
24. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1967 p.470
25. Leuba 1929 p.277
26. Leuba 1929 p.277
27. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1970 Lecture
28. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1974 Lecture
29. Maharishi International University Catalogue 1974-75 p.p7,8
30. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1972 Lecture
31. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1969 Lecture
32. Stace 1961 p.p.85,86
33. Laski 1961 p.49
34. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1972 Lecture
35. See p.94
36. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1967 p.470
37. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1966 p.32
38. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1967 p.98
39. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1966 p.52
40. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1972 Untranscribed Tape
41. The analogy is from Bhagavad-gītā II.13
42. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1967 p.396
43. Campbell 1973 p.49
44. Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad 7. Translation adapted from Radhakrishnan 1953 p.698
45. Śaṅkara (☺) 7. The Gaudapāda Kārikā begins with the statement that one all-pervading reality underlies the three states of viśva, taijasa and prajña which represent waking, dreaming and deep sleep:

"bahisprajño vibhurviśvo hyantaḥprajñastu taijasah
ghanaprajñastathā prājña eka eva tridhā smṛtaḥ"

"Viśva is the cogniser of the objective (outer);
taijasa is the cogniser of the subjective (inner);
prājña likewise is a mass of cognition; it is the
all-pervading one which is known (lit.remembered)
in the three (states)."

Gaudapāda Kārikā I.1

46. Śaṅkara (a) 24
47. Rg Veda I.164.20
48. Mundaka Upaniṣad III.1.1, Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad IV.6
49. Śaṅkara (b) II.3.40
50. Śaṅkara (a) 22. Translation adapted from ed. T.M.P. Mahadevan
51. Śaṅkara (b) IV.1.3
52. Chāndogya Upaniṣad VI.8.7. Translation adapted from
Radhakrishnan 1953 p.458
53. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1967 p.p.357,358
54. Chāndogya Upaniṣad VI.11.3
55. Bhagavad-gītā II.20
56. Kātha Upaniṣad II.3.15
57. Mundaka Upaniṣad II.2.9, Kātha Upaniṣad II.3.14
58. Alternative reading paricchinna.
59. Śaṅkara (a) 4. Translation adapted from ed.T.M.P. Mahadevan
60. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1969 Lecture
61. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1970 Lecture
62. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1970 Lecture
63. Koestler 1954 p.352

64. Stace 1961 p.122
65. Stace 1961 p.122
66. Stace 1961 p.212
67. Stace 1961 p.166 quoted from Ramakrishna, Prophet of New India.
68. Meister Eckhart, trans. by R.H.Blakney, 1941 p.211
69. Stace 1961 p.172 quoted from F.Ffeifer, Meister Eckhart, trans. by C. de B. Evans.
70. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1970 Lecture
71. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1967 p.p. 98,99
72. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1967 p.321
73. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1967 p.187
74. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1967 p.279
75. Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad VI.11, translation adapted from Radhakrishnan 1953 p.746
76. Śaṅkara (b) I.1.5, translation adapted from Apte 1960 p.38
77. Antaḥkaraṇa: Technical term used by Śaṅkara to designate an inner organ which coordinates the activities of the internal organs.
78. Ahaṅkāra: I-ness, or, as a synonym of ahaṃ-pratyaya, self-consciousness. It is often translated as "ego".
79. Śaṅkara (c) III.27, translation adapted from Sastry 1977 p.108
80. Śaṅkara (b) I.1.4
81. Śaṅkara (c) II.19, translation adapted from Sastry 1977 p.40
82. Śaṅkara (a) 18

83. Vidyāraṇya X.11. Vidyāraṇya's authorship of this verse is disputed, as Chapters VII-XV of this work have also been attributed to Bhāratitīrtha.
84. The concept of Īśvara is discussed in Chapter V.
85. Mundaka Upaniṣad III.1.1
86. Śaṅkara (f) III.1.1
87. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1967 p.139
88. Bhagavad-gītā II.49
89. Bhagavad-gītā II.50
90. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1967 p.143
91. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1966 p.139
92. Macdonnell 1971 p.57
93. Reichelt 1911 p.97
94. Campbell 1975 p.p.197,198
95. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1966 p.138
96. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1967 p.132
97. Campbell 1975 p.10
98. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1967 p.396
99. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1967 p.352
100. This is part of what Stace calls the dynamic-static paradox: "Brahman is conceived at the same time as dynamic and static, moving and motionless, creative energy yet wholly inert and actionless." (Stace 1961 p.167)
101. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1967 p.145
102. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1970 Lecture
103. These ideas are developed more in Chapters V and VI.

104. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1966 p.143
105. Bhagavad-gītā IV.31
106. Śaṅkara (b) III.4.43
107. Śruti: Revealed, lit. "heard" texts: The four Vedas, the Brāhmanas, Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads.
108. Kaṭha Upaniṣad I.3
109. Śaṅkara (c) XIII.2, translation adapted from Sastry 1977 p.326.
110. Śaṅkara (c) IV.20, translation adapted from Sastry 1977 p.136.
111. Śaṅkara (c) XIV.20
112. Īśa Upaniṣad 5, translation by Radhakrishnan in Radhakrishnan 1953 p.571.
113. Śaṅkara (b) II.3.48
114. Śaṅkara (b) III.4.33
115. Śaṅkara (b) I.3.19, translation adapted from Apte 1960 p.176.
116. See p.129.
117. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1967 p.192
118. Campbell 1975 p.200
119. Russell 1979 p.24
120. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1970 Lecture
121. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1970 Lecture
122. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1970 Lecture
123. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1970 Lecture
124. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1970 Lecture
125. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1967 p.131

126. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1970 Lecture
127. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1965
128. Laski 1961 p.47
129. James 1960 p.385
130. Stace 1961 p.p.71,72. Although Stace admits that N.M.'s experience had been preceded by a dose of mescaline, he quotes him as insisting that this did not produce the experience, but only "inhibited the inhibitions which had previously prevented him from seeing things as they really were." (Stace 1961 p.71). My opinion, based on a similar experience which had not been preceded by the use of any drug, is that this is probably true.
131. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1966 p.271
132. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1966 p.277
133. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1970 Lecture
134. Leuba 1901 p.p.571,572
135. Śaṅkara (b) II.1.9
136. Śaṅkara (b) II.1.27, translation adapted from ... Thibaut 1962 Part 1 p. 350.
137. Śaṅkara (b) II.1.11, translation adapted from Thibaut 1962 Part 1 p.317.
138. Śaṅkara (b) II.1.33
139. Śaṅkara (b) II.1.26

140. Taking into account the table of correspondences on p.174, one sees an illustration of this in the following:

"kāryakāraṇabaddhau tāviṣyate viśvataijasau
prājñāḥ kāraṇabaddhastu dvau tau turye na
sidhataḥ."

"Viśva and taijasa are considered to be conditioned by cause and effect; prājñā however is conditioned by cause alone. These two (cause and effect) do not exist in turya."

Gaudapāda Kārikā I.11

141. Bhagavad-gītā XI.32

142. Māndūkya Upaniṣad 1-7

143. Gaudapāda Kārikā I.1-14

144. Śaṅkara (g) I.2, translation by Radhakrishnan in Radhakrishnan 1953 p.697. Gaudapāda also remarks on the difference between prājñā and turya as follows:

"dvaitasyāgrahaṇam tulyamubhayoḥ prājñaturyoḥ
bījanidrāyutaḥ prājñāḥ sā ca turye na vidhyate."

"The non-perception of duality is common to both prājñā and turya. Prājñā is associated with the seed in sleep while this is not found in turya."

Gaudapāda Kārikā I.13

145. Māndūkya Upaniṣad 5-6

146. Śaṅkara (b) II.3.14

147. Chāndogya Upaniṣad VI.2.3. This verse is also found in Aitareya Brāhmaṇa I.1.1,
148. Śaṅkara (c) Introduction, translation by Sastry in Sastry 1977 p.1.
149. Aitareya Upaniṣad I.2.4
150. Śaṅkara (b) I.3.28
151. Śaṅkara (b) I.3.30
152. Śaṅkara (b) I.3.30, translation by Thibaut in Thibaut 1962 Part I p.213.
153. Śaṅkara (b) I.3.33
154. Bhagavad-gītā IX.20,21, translation adapted from Sastry 1977 p.p.251,252.
155. Śaṅkara (c) IX.22, translation by Sastry in Sastry 1977 p.p.252,253.
156. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1967 p.p.491,492
157. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1967 p.448
158. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1967 p.359
159. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1967 p.351
160. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1967 p.449. Maharishi uses the term Yoga here with the meaning of union and not with that of the System of Indian Philosophy. In Maharishi's view kaivalya, the end result of the philosophical system of Yoga, would correspond to the state that he calls transcendental consciousness and not to that which he calls Brahman consciousness or Unity.
161. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1970 Lecture

162. Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad 7
163. Laski 1980 p.13
164. Hunt 1884 p.180
165. Stace 1961 p.p.234,235
166. Śaṅkara (b) II.1.20
167. Chāndogya Upaniṣad VII.24.1, translation by
Radhakrishnan in Radhakrishnan 1953 p.486.
168. Śaṅkara⁽⁶⁾ II.1.14
169. Brhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad V.2.1, translation
adapted from Radhakrishnan 1953 p. 289.
170. "anīścitā yathā rajjurandhakāre vikalpitā
sarpadhārādī^hrbhāvaistadvadātmā vikalpitah."
- "As the rope, not ascertained, is imagined to
have the nature of a snake, a stream of water,
etc., so in the same way ātman is imagined
(to be various things)."

Gaudapāda Kārikā II.17

171. "advaitaṃ paramārtho hi dvaitaṃ tadbheda ucyate
teṣāmubhayathā dvaitaṃ tenāyaṃ na virudhyate."
- "For non-duality is the highest reality; duality
is said to be its modification. For them (the
dualists) duality exists on both sides; with
that, this does not conflict."

Gaudapāda Kārikā III.18

The implication here, is a distinction between the
really real and the phenomenally real. Absolute

reality is the highest reality which really exists;
multiplicity exists in appearance. Neither is
totally unreal.

172. Śaṅkara (b) I.2.8

173. Śaṅkara (b) II.1.13

174. Śaṅkara (b) II.1.22

175. Śaṅkara (b) III.2.23

176. Śaṅkara (d) VIII.1.1

177. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1970 Lecture

178. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1970 Lecture

179. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1970 Lecture

180. There are passages on actual experience in Śaṅkara's
commentaries, such as Brahmasūtra Śaṅkarabhāṣya III.2.24;
on the whole, however, he is mostly theoretical.

181. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1970 Lecture.

182. According to Maharishi cosmic consciousness is a
state in which ignorance (avidyā) is most clearly
perceived for what it is, as it is dispassionately
witnessed by the witnessing Self (sākṣin).

(Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1970 Lecture)

183. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi 1970 Lecture

184. Vivekananda 1968 p.25

185. Osborne 1971 p.24

186. Osborne 1959 p.73

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