

You'll believe it when you don't see it

# TMers levitate, disappear

By CAROL HANNER  
DTH Contributor

When Tommy Dean says he can fly, he doesn't mean in an airplane.

Dean, the owner of a Chapel Hill natural food store, recently finished the newest Transcendental Meditation course — the sidhi program — which claims to teach meditators how to acquire "supernormal abilities" such as levitation.

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi of India brought TM to the United States 20 years ago as a technique for removing stress and improving the growth of consciousness.

Last January, he announced the new sidhi program by sending 450 "executive governors" trained in the techniques to teach them to meditators, mainly in the United States.

Bill Cahill, a TM teacher and chairperson of the Chapel Hill TM center, has also learned the sidhi techniques, which besides "flying" include invisibility, super-strength, and increased intuition, friendliness and compassion.

"The word 'sidhi' means perfection," says Cahill. "Through the TM program we experience a quiet state of the mind where there is more silence and orderliness. The sidhis bring this silence and orderliness into more active states of the mind and allow us to perform these mental perfections."

The levitation sidhi progresses in three stages, adds Cahill — first, "shaking," then "hopping," in which the person goes up perhaps a foot and lands a few feet away, then actual "flying."

To learn the techniques, meditators must attend four to eight weeks of "preparatory courses" at \$245 a week. Then they spend eight weeks actually learning the sidhis, which are practiced along with meditation and cost approximately \$3,000.

Dean and Cahill admit the cost is high, but Cahill says, "Of all the big expenditures I've had, this one is worth it."

Dean, who has practiced TM for seven years, says, "The bliss (of the sidhis) almost just takes your head off. I had more fun in the first five minutes (of sidhis) than I had in my entire life. It's like a light switch — you want to fly, you fly."

Both are quick to add that even though they enjoy the sidhis, the purpose is "a quick path to enlightenment" by removing stress so they can use their full potential.

The reaction to TM claims of levitation has been skeptical — partly because Maharishi will not allow his sidhi pupils to demonstrate their abilities.

"Why won't they show me?" says Hewitt Rose, a Duke graduate student in Law and Public Policy.

He practiced TM for a month but says he quit because "the benefits were modest compared to the time I put into it (approximately an hour a day). As a law student, I have a very busy schedule."

Rose adds, "There is no scientific explanation for the sidhis, and in a logical decision-making process, I have to believe the laws of nature are more realistic than the claims of people who won't show me that they can levitate."

"As for invisibility, I'll believe it when I don't see it."

Dr. Sherman James, an assistant professor of epidemiology and psychology at UNC's School of Public Health, also says he doubts "whether it is really possible for the body to lift off the ground."

"There is a concern among TM watchers that some trickery is involved in the levitation claims. Besides, the program is much too expensive for a person with an average paycheck," James adds.

However, James says he is "very excited" about TM as a method of allowing individuals to "generally function better, particularly in cases of stress-related health problems such as high blood pressure and migraine headaches."

TM teacher Cahill explains, "Psychologists say the average person uses only one to 15 percent of his mental potential."

"It's easy to see how a person using 100 percent of his mind's potential would appear as supernormal, but the sidhis are just natural by-products of this development through the TM program."

Cahill says no demonstrations are allowed, probably because "Maharishi would like people who perform levitation to be fairly proficient, and most people now are in the hopping stage. He wants it to be as dignified as possible."



Some just meditate, others levitate and some even evaporate. The new TM technique of Sidhi enables meditators to reach supernormal potentials, some claim. This man seems content with just sitting. Photo by L. C. Barbour.

Cahill says he does not know when public demonstrations will become available.

Tony Meadows of 30 Fidelity Court in Carrboro who is also a Chapel Hill TM teacher, says a frequent question is whether the sidhis can be misused by criminals.

"You don't have to worry about criminals turning invisible and slipping into banks," Meadows says with a smile on his face. "The sidhis won't work unless the individual has established enough orderliness in his nervous system."

"By the time a criminal had mastered the sidhis, his consciousness would be too evolved to want to rob a bank."

Meadows' next-door neighbor, Mrs. Carolyn Donnelly, looks at Meadows and says, "I'll believe it when I see someone sitting on my front porch float away across the yard."

She shrugs her shoulders and says, "Oh well, anything to help the energy crisis."

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