

My spiritual INSPIRATION

Author **Susan Shumsky** reveals what the Beatles' guru taught her about spirituality



The photo had me transfixed. It showed guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, spirituality radiating from his dark eyes.

It was 1966, I was 18 and an art student in Berkeley, California. Desperate to achieve a higher state of consciousness, I'd visited the Transcendental Meditation Centre, where I'd come across Maharishi's portrait. I'd soon booked myself onto a course.

By the time it came round, a number of celebrities had become involved with Maharishi. The Beatles, in particular, had publicly embraced Transcendental Meditation, before falling out with Maharishi equally publicly.

I first saw Maharishi in the flesh when he flew into LA and I went to wait at the airport with other fans. Small but majestic, his face glowed with joy.

I longed to get close to him and in 1970 I was accepted on a Transcendental Meditation teacher training course in India under Maharishi himself.

Heaven and hell

I was devoted to Maharishi and, after the course, I managed to get onto his staff, following him around Europe as he promoted meditation.

Maharishi was the happiest person I ever met. The press called him 'the giggling guru' because he was always laughing and that joy was contagious.

With him, you felt like the only person in the universe, in the only moment that mattered. But he'd also test me, telling me to paint certain images, which were never good enough. I was



made to redo these paintings again and again.

He'd give impossible deadlines for tasks and then have no interest in the work you'd killed yourself to complete. I was made to feel special then cast out, praised then demeaned, my ego shattered. I see now that these were deliberate lessons in humility, futility and letting go.

Maharishi was the carpenter and I was the wood. It was a painful process, but just to be near him felt like a gift and I hung on his every word.

A devastating dismissal

Then one day in October 1976, Maharishi ordered me to return to America. Devastated, he said I'd become too dependent on him.

I went home and became a jewellery designer, though for the next 10 years I remained intimately involved with the movement.

By the mid-eighties I started to explore other branches of spirituality, learning about healers, psychics, shamans...

Then a friend introduced me to a new form of meditation called Divine Revelation. 'Off program' study was forbidden in the Transcendental Meditation movement and, when word got out about my activities, I was blacklisted.

After 22 years, I was devastated. But that same year, Maharishi came to me in a meditation and blessed my teaching of Divine Revelation. He told me he loved me and was always near, but that I was meant to find my own path.

A new path

Soon after leaving the movement, I wrote my first book, *Divine Revelation*, guided by Spirit.

Two decades on, I've written 16 spiritual books. My latest is a memoir called *Maharishi & Me*, a story I needed to tell.

Maharishi taught me so much more than meditation. Through him I discovered eastern wisdom, how to experience higher consciousness, focus and to stand up for myself. It wasn't an easy relationship but a guru is meant to push your buttons.

By the time Maharishi died in 2008, Transcendental Meditation was practised worldwide. He transformed a generation and lifted the consciousness of a planet.

He profoundly transformed me, too.

✦ **More info** *Maharishi & Me. Seeking Enlightenment with the Beatles Guru* by Susan Shumsky (£21.37, Skyhorse) ●