

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, founded Transcendental Meditation movement

By Elaine Woo, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer
February 6, 2008

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the founder of the Transcendental Meditation movement, who taught the Beatles to meditate, made "mantra" a household word in the 1970s and built a multimillion-dollar empire on a promise of inner harmony and world peace, died Tuesday in Vlodrop, the Netherlands. He was believed to have been 91.

Bob Roth, a spokesman for the Transcendental Meditation organization, said the Maharishi died peacefully of natural causes at his private residence in Vlodrop, a village about 120 miles south of Amsterdam where he moved his headquarters in 1990.

John Hegelin, the director of the TM organization in the United States, told The Times on Tuesday that the Maharishi had a transformative effect on Western society.

"He brought meditation to the West. He encouraged scientific research on it and made meditation mainstream," said Hegelin, who is among 300 world leaders of the movement who have been meeting in Vlodrop since last month.

In Fairfield, Iowa, a town of 9,700 where the Maharishi University of Management is located and where close to 3,000 residents practice TM daily, Mayor Ed Malloy credited the guru with changing "the perception that meditation was something that someone did to renounce the world. He said that meditation could be added to an active lifestyle and enhance all elements of life."

Meditation, Malloy said Tuesday, "is taken for granted now, but back in the late 1950s and early '60s, he was the one who turned that perception around."

Known as the "giggling guru" for his high-pitched laugh, the Maharishi headed the TM organization for 50 years until Jan. 11, when he issued a farewell message. His devotees around the world were stirred by his announcement and believed that he was preparing for his death. TM officials said he was retiring to concentrate on silence and studying the ancient Indian texts that had inspired his spiritual teachings.

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Later, critics labeled TM a cult and likened its meditation techniques to hypnotism.

In 1986, Robert Kropinski, a former TM follower, sued the Maharishi University in Fairfield for \$9 million, charging fraud, neglect and emotional damage.

He also alleged that university officials had used "fear and intimidation" to try to prevent him from leaving the school. A jury awarded him \$138,000.

Networks of disaffected TM practitioners began to appear, offering similar stories. Many former TM employees claimed that they were ousted because they refused to adhere to the Maharishi's strict rules, which forbade teaching other forms of meditation.

Among those who broke away was Deepak Chopra, who had been one of the Maharishi's top assistants before he launched his own career as a bestselling author and lecturer on natural healing.

Even some former followers continued to admire the Maharishi, however.

"He was very charismatic. He had an amazing aura," said Susan Shumsky, who worked on the Maharishi's personal staff for several years in the 1970s, until she left the organization. She's now a minister in New York. "Whenever you were with him you felt you were in a timeless place and that you were being lifted to a higher consciousness. Some skeptics might say it was all hypnotism. I believe there are people with higher consciousness, and I believe he was one of them."

He will be succeeded by Maharaja Nader Raam, a Lebanese doctor who studied with the Maharishi for 25 years.

The Maharishi's body will be returned to India after a memorial ceremony in Vlodrop on Thursday, Roth said.

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The Maharishi dies peacefully

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CIA chief confirms use of waterboarding

He cites the three past cases in arguing for coercion as an option.

By GREG MILLER
Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — CIA Director Michael V. Hayden said publicly for the first time Tuesday that his agency had used the harsh interrogation technique known as waterboarding on three Al Qaeda suspects, and

he testified that depriving the agency of coercive methods would "increase the danger to America."

In the most detailed public comments on a CIA program that had been shrouded in secrecy for years, Hayden said the agency had used simulated drowning to extract crucial information from terrorism suspects in 2002 and 2003.

He also testified that only three detainees were ever subjected to the method: Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the alleged mastermind of the Sept.

11 attacks; Abu Zubaydah, an Al Qaeda operative tied to the Sept. 11 plot; and Abd al Rahman al Nashiri, a Saudi suspected of playing a key role in the bombing of the U.S. Navy destroyer Cole in Yemen in 2000.

Appearing before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Hayden said the CIA had crossed using waterboarding nearly five years ago, but he made a vigorous case for preserving the agency's ability to use "enhanced" interrogation techniques.

Information provided by

two of the waterboarded prisoners, Mohammed and Zubaydah, accounted for 29% of the human intelligence reports circulated by the CIA on Al Qaeda in the five years after the Sept. 11 attacks, Hayden said.

And at a time when Congress is considering imposing sweeping new restrictions on the CIA, Hayden warned of potentially deadly consequences.

"If you create a box, we will play inside the box without exception," he said. "My view is that would substantially in- [See Interrogation, Page A12]

RELIGION • ETHICS

SATURDAY, MARCH 29, 2003

Spirituality

Word has many often conflicting definitions

By Elaine Jarvik
Deseret News staff writer

The idea probably seemed innocuous enough: Teach some yoga exercises to third-graders as a way to help them stretch their bodies and maybe calm their minds. But a pilot yoga program in an Aspen, Colo., elementary school quickly drew fire earlier this year from some of the town's clergy.

The brouhaha raised questions not only about whether yoga is a "spiritual" practice — why allow yoga at school when you don't allow prayer, the ministers asked — but also a more complicated question about spirituality itself. What is it that people mean by the word? What is it that they mean when they say, as people often do, "I'm not religious but I'm spiritual"?

In some circles, in fact, religion and spirituality seem to have taken on nearly divergent meanings, a hierarchy that elevates spirituality as the more enlightened of the two. "Our society extols a sort of independent spirituality while criticizing organized religions," notes Huston Smith, author of the seminal "The World's Religions," in a recent issue of "The Sun" magazine. "In my years of teaching at U.C. Berkeley, I found that *spirituality* is a good word on campus while *religion* is not."

Religious leaders hear it all the time, this insistence that spirituality does not require religion and in fact might be a loftier choice. "I just had a guy tell me that yesterday," says Mike Menning, pastor of Mountain Springs Community Church in Sandy. "He said he worships at the church of the open slopes." Not that you can't find spirituality on the slopes, Menning adds. When a person's thoughts go toward God and creation, that can be spirituality, he says.

But what if God isn't part of the equation? What if the man just wanted to enjoy the feeling of his body hurtling through powder? Can that also be called spirituality?

There are as many definitions of spirituality as there are people, says Charlotte Bell, who teaches yoga in Salt Lake City. "The word has been overused and abused, frankly."

The spectrum of definitions for *spiritual* range from the very act of living itself, on the one hand, to a more proscribed way of living that reflects the teachings of Christ, plus plenty of all-encompassing definitions in between. "In its broadest sense, anything that causes all good everywhere and no good nowhere" is spiritual, says Jay Gardner, president of All Things Spiritual ("your gateway to spirituality on the Internet").

Pagans can be spiritual, notes Cindy Akana, director of campus ministries at Westminster College. Salt Lake psychic Judy Whipple defines spiritual as her ability to communicate

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"with beings on other levels and other dimensions." The word can even be used to refer to demonic worship, says the Rev. Menning, "because you're dealing with the spirit world."

"If everyone who claimed they were spiritual were in fact acting spiritually the world would be a much different place," says Kay Zahn, of another spirituality Web site, spiritualnetwork.net.

Bell's definition is this: "For me, a spiritual experience is one where I feel not just connected to my small self." Anything can be a spiritual experience, from playing the piano to, yes, yoga "if you approach what you do with intention, appreciation, gratitude, mindfulness."

That's the conundrum that spirituality poses, says Gregg Anderson, pastor of the Interfaith Chapel in Aspen. Anderson defended the yoga-in-the-schools program in his town, arguing that much of what is taught in school could be said to have religious origins

(sports, the music of Bach, the history of the Puritans, for example, he says). Besides, he says, "I like to think all of life is spiritual and sacred. That's where the yoga thing gets complicated." At the same time, Anderson says, it's possible to do yoga and not feel anything spiritual.

The etymology of the word itself is "spiritus," he says, derived from the Hebrew word for *breath*. "The energy or force or breath of God."

"No one likes the word *religion* anymore," says Anderson. His church often uses the word *spiritual* if there's a choice, as in its "spiritual paths and practices" worship series last winter. *Spiritual*, he says, "doesn't have the baggage *religion* does."

But it's impossible to separate spirituality from organized religion, argue most clergy. To define yourself as *spiritual* without being a part of a religion might simply be "justifica-

tion" for not wanting to attend church, says E. Brian Hare-Driggs, pastor of First United Methodist Church in Salt Lake City. "It doesn't go beyond their own personal belief. It's like saying, 'I'm going to find myself.'"

"There's no such thing as a solitary Christian," says Hare-Driggs, quoting Methodism founder John Wesley. A serious Christian, he says, would participate in weekly church worship, daily private devotion, and sacraments such as baptism and holy communion and would "serve those in need." Yes, you could have a relationship with God without religion, "but it's less than what it could be."

For Orthodox Christians, says Father Basil of Sts. Pet and Paul Orthodox Christian Church in Salt Lake City, spirituality has four components: its Christ-centered, holiness-centered, is ascetical ("so that we no longer live by passions but by the light" of Christ) and mystical.

This mystical side — Father Basil defines it as an *experienced* communion with God — is central to many people's definition of spirituality, although some may prefer the term "divine" rather than God, or may bypass either notion altogether.

Dr. Stephen Proskauer is a former psychiatrist and Zen priest who currently practices what he calls "spiritual therapy" in Salt Lake City. Spiritual therapy, he says, is "an individual exploration of the inner world of the self," out of which arise compassion and wisdom. Breathwork (deep sustained breathing) and meditation can help people have mystical experiences "that take you beyond the limits of consensual reality," he says. A lot of his clients are devout Latter-day Saints and Catholics, he says, adding that "most people do not find that organized religion encourages or nourishes their mystical experience."

Even an atheist could be spiritual, argues Rick Prafer, author of "Bridge to Supercon-

sciousness," who defines a spiritual person as one "who works to develop their full human potential and helps others to develop theirs, recognizing that we are all one." Not true, argues Salt Lake atheist Marilyn Welles. Spirituality, she says, "usually means something connected with being a charlatan and preying (for profit) on the passions of those who

are in a state of ignorance of the universe."

She would likely be surprised by Susan Shumsky's view of spirituality. If you've ever felt inner peace, "you're having a spiritual experience," says Shumsky, author of "Divine Revelation." Any experience that has given you goosebumps and left you feeling uplifted is a spiritual experience, she says.

Which may or may not bring us back to yoga.

The spiritual-paths.com Web site defines "spirituality" as follows:

"Spirituality, which doesn't surprise Steve Woodrow, pastor of First Baptist Church in Aspen and a vocal critic of teaching yoga in elementary schools.

"You can't separate spirituality from yoga," argues Woodrow. "It's tied to the Buddhist or Hindu world view." Eastern philosophy, with its belief that all roads lead to God, has already had too much influence on America, he says. Listen to the language of yoga, he urges — "energy, empty yourself, center yourself" — these are all "clearly spiritual terms" and are incompatible with the Christian world view, he says.

"Nirvana is oneness with the world around you. The Christian world view is that you are uniquely made. God has a plan for us as individuals," Woodrow says.

The Aspen school board has decided to keep on with the pilot yoga program, paid for by the Aspen Center for New Medicine. But Woodrow says this isn't the last word about yoga. He predicts the issue will become a national one and will eventually go all the way to the Supreme Court.

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BOB LANGRISH

The Detroit News

THE FINAL WORD

see daily for home delivery; see outside 6-county metropolitan area 35¢

SPECIAL REPORT:
CULTS

Cultists' traits familiar to experts

Heaven's Gate members fit usual pattern: similar looks, clothes, thoughts.

By Mark Puls
The Detroit News

Look closely at the video footage of Marshall Applewhite's followers as they laid out their plans for suicide, cult experts say.

Signs point toward a powerful religious cult that controlled its members' hopes, thoughts and lives.

The cult members' identities are washed out. They wear uniform clothing, uniform haircuts. They speak in the same monosyllabic tones, using euphemisms such as "containers" for their bodies and "a higher level" for suicide.

One cult member speaks and another fidgets nervously.

"They sound like they are giving themselves pep talks and trying to convince themselves," said Stephen Martin, a cult prevention specialist with the Well Spring Retreat near Albany, Ohio.

The suicide shocked the nation, but the markings were predictable and familiar to anyone well-versed in cults.

"There is a lot of emotional damage in someone who comes out of a cult," said Martin. "They are wolves in sheep's clothing."

At least 2,500 known cults exist across the county, with only a small percentage advocating suicide.

Their beliefs often differ, but their

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CULT

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methods are astonishingly similar, cult experts say.

"They are psychologically abusive and controlling," Martin said.

They use whatever they can to weaken the member, whether it's sleep deprivation or breaking ties with family or controlling finances.

Michael Langone, executive director of the American Family Foundation in Bonita Springs, Fla., said religious seekers are often blinded to the traps cults set, especially since faith is a part of all religions.

"Cults are predators in the name of religion," he said.

To make matters worse, harmful cults can be difficult to separate from other religious groups because they use the same language as traditional religions: faith, obedience, sacrifice. Many cults are Bible-

based.

"Usually, traditional religious groups are not centered around one dominating personality," said John Saliba, a professor of religious studies at University of Detroit Mercy.

And that leader may be very sincere — but deluded.

The problem is that many followers are seeking some map to God's will. That's the reward the cult leader usually offers in exchange for obedience.

"In a cult, a person becomes an intermediary between the cult member and God," said Susan G. Shumsky, author of *Divine Revelation. Her book outlines "nine steps to prevent psychic deception."*

As cult members accept direction for their life, they submit to control. Often they are encouraged to cut ties with family, give up possessions and take information only from the group. Peer pressure compounds the dependence.

"The group does not tolerate dissidence," said Ron Burks, a former fringe-church member who now counsele cult members at Well Spring Retreat. His story is typical of former cult members.

He wanted to worship among a tight, close-knit group similar to the early church described in the New Testament, including a disciple-mentor relationship.

"It made sense to me that there should be some accountability and that reporting to an older Christian made sense," he said. "And I wanted a built-in network of friends who believed the same as I did."

But he found that church leaders convinced him that he was unable to make choices for himself. His initiative died and he passed on career opportunities. Instead of gaining a higher life, he found he had given his life over to other people.

"All my decisions, even my finances, were subject to approval,"

he said.

The tell-tale sign that separates cults from more benevolent religions is the amount of control the group seeks. Members often are kept busy and are not allowed to question teachings.

"If you ask questions, they convince you there is something sinful about you asking," Martin said.

Cults often start using euphemisms, exchanging unobjectionable words for objectionable ideas such as "discarding this container" for "committing suicide."

Cult and religious experts advise spiritual seekers not to give up their own decision-making process. The should not allow anyone to come between them and God, and should never give up the right to disagree.

"Whenever you are not allowed to doubt or challenge ideas, that is wrong," Burks said.

Applewhite wouldn't have been able to preach his message if mem-

Telltale signs of a cult

- It revolves around a charismatic leader.
- The group tries to isolate members from family and friends.
- It refuses to tolerate questions or doubts.
- The group seeks control of members' physical needs and finances.
- The leader becomes absolute intermediary between member and deity.
- It emphasizes uniform thought and appearance.

bers of his group had put it to key spiritual tests, Shumsky said.

"A divine message does not do harm to you or ask you to harm others," she said.

Divine Revelation, by presenting "The Nine Tests to Prevent Psychic Deception", offers an intelligent counterbalance to any cult influences, even those experienced in daily life from common social institutions, such as the corporation, the entertainment industry, advertising, schools, religious groups or other group mentality. *Divine Revelation* supports each person's individuality and free choice.

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HB photo/Perry Reichanadter

Self-proclaimed wandering hermit and author Susan Shumsky will conduct two workshops about tapping in to your inner voice at Camp Chesterfield today and Saturday. Shumsky emphasized her workshops are open to everyone.

If you go...

Dr. Susan Shumsky, author and spiritual teacher, believes people need a road map to their inner life. And she wants to help draw it.

Shumsky is offering the following two workshops at Camp Chesterfield this week:

■ 8 p.m. today, "Transforming Your Life Through Spiritual Healing," \$10 donation. This seminar will feature seven methods to heal your mind, body and soul.

■ 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, with a one-hour lunch break, "Divine Revelation Workshop" and "Becoming Spiritually Street Smart," \$60 in advance or \$70 at the door. This intensive workshop will offer nine tests to prevent psychic deception.

During her workshops, Shumsky said she will help tune people into their own spirituality through meditation and prayer.

"It will help you learn how to receive answers clearly and at will," she said. "You'll feel deep peace, love, and you'll feel safe. You'll have a feeling of ownership and wholeness."

Of course, once you're tuned in, you have to be discriminatory, she said.

"You have to learn the difference between the voice of your spirit and whatever else is in your mind," she said. "You have to practice safe spirituality."

Shumsky emphasized her workshops are open to everyone.

"Any experience level, any belief, any lifestyle," she said. "All you need to do is follow the simple instructions I'll be speaking."

Author wants to help people tap in to inner voices

BY JENNA M. MCKNIGHT
Staff Reporter

CHESTERFIELD - Susan Shumsky, 53, has a message for those seeking God.

Skip the Sunday sermon. Go straight to the source.

"I'm a wholesaler in the divine revelation business," she said. "You don't need a church, the scripture, a pastor. Cut out the middleman. Go direct."

Shumsky, a self-proclaimed wandering hermit and author of the bestselling book, "Divine Revelation," believes intuition is the best spiritual guide you have, although you have to be weary of your own psychic deception.

It's a message she'll be sharing today and Saturday during her two workshops at Camp Chesterfield.

"People everywhere are opening up their psychic abilities, but the trouble is, they're opening up without discrimination," she added. "That's like inviting a stranger into your home. People have to learn how to

become spiritually street-smart."

Shumsky, a Colorado native, has been practicing spiritual disciplines for 35 years. A bona fide hippie, she said she got turned on to Eastern wisdom in the late 1960s while living in the Berkeley, Calif. area. She was 19 years old and dissatisfied with conventional Western religion.

"Traditional orthodox religions, they don't give people the direct experience, direct contact with the divine," she said. "That's what I wanted - that direct experience."

That yearning led her to secluded spiritual retreats, called "ashrams." For 21 years, she lived in ashrams in the Himalayas, the Alps and the United States, where she indulged in deep meditation. For seven of those years, she served on the personal staff of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, an Indian spiritual master who founded transcendental meditation.

Later, she received a divinity doctorate from the Teaching of Intuitive Metaphysics, based in California.

And what to do with all that enlightenment? Share it with others, of course.

"Teaching is my greatest fulfillment. I always learn more than the students," she said. "It's so spiritually elevating to teach."

Through workshops and seminars, Shumsky said she's taught thousands of students how to listen to their inner voice for guidance. She's also led tours to sacred places. For instance, in January, she took 28 people to the Kumbh Mela celebration in India, a Hindu festival that she hailed as one of the largest gatherings of humanity in history.

"There were 100 million people on the banks of the Ganges," she said. "It was really an amazing experience."

Next month, she'll be taking people to Mount Shasta, known to be a profound spiritual vortex, she said.

Asked about her home base, she laughs. "Since 1989, I've lived in a trailer, a van or a motor home," she said. "I'm kind of like a gypsy, a sannyasini, a traveling guru."

Suzanne Sasser, the office administrator at Camp Chesterfield, said they are certainly lucky to have Shumsky visiting. Sasser herself is working toward her clairvoyance

licensing, and due to stress, she's recently hit a block.

She's confident Sasser can purge her negative thoughts, she said.

"The timing could absolutely not be better," she said. "With her experience in the Himalayas, and being able to come back here and publish and share... It's just phenomenal."

Decades ago, Shumsky probably wouldn't have been so well-received.

She said Americans today are more tolerant of alternative spiritual practices and ideas - and more intrigued by them. Take, for instance, the blockbuster movie "The Sixth Sense," which is one of the most rented videos, she said.

"The world has been transformed. It was a lot more stressful in the '60s," she said. "There was a density to the atmosphere... There's been a lifting of the dense vibration of the planet."

"The fact is people are more into spirituality," she added. "It's improved the consciousness of the planet."