



**An English Translation of  
Transcendental Meditation's Initiatory Puja**

*Invocation*

Whether pure or impure, whether purity or impurity is permeating everywhere, whoever opens himself to the expanded vision of unbounded awareness gains inner and outer purity.

*Invocation*

To LORD NARAYANA, to lotus-born BRAHMA the Creator, to VASHISHTHA, to SHAKTI and his son PARASHAR,  
 To VYASA, to SHUKADEVA, to the great GAUDAPADA, to GOVINDA, ruler among the yogis, to his disciple,  
 SHRI SHANKARACHARYA, to his disciples PADMA PADA and HASTA MALAKA  
 And TROTAKACHARYA and VARTIKA-KARA, to others, to the tradition of our Masters, I bow down.

To the abode of the wisdom of the SHRUTIS, SMRITIS and PURANAS, to the abode of kindness, to the personified glory of the LORD, to SHANKARA, emancipator of the world, I bow down.

To SHANKARACHARYA the redeemer, hailed as KRISHNA and BADARAYANA, to the commenta-

tor of the BRAHMA SUTRAS, I bow down.

To the glory of the Lord I bow down again and again,  
 at whose door the whole galaxy of gods pray for perfection day and night.

Adorned with immeasurable glory, preceptor of the whole world, having bowed down to Him we gain fulfilment.

Skilled in dispelling the cloud of ignorance of the people, the gentle emancipator, BRAHMANANDA SARASVATI, the supreme teacher, full of brilliance, Him I bring to my awareness.

Offering the invocation to the lotus feet  
 of SHRI GURU DEV, I bow down.

Offering a seat to the lotus feet  
 of SHRI GURU DEV, I bow down.

Offering an ablution to the lotus feet  
 of SHRI GURU DEV, I bow down.

Offering cloth to the lotus feet  
 of SHRI GURU DEV, I bow down.

Offering sandalpaste to the lotus feet  
 of SHRI GURU DEV, I bow down.

Offering full rice to the lotus feet  
 of SHRI GURU DEV, I bow down.

Offering a flower to the lotus feet  
 of SHRI GURU DEV, I bow down.



Offering incense to the lotus feet  
of SHRI GURU DEV, I bow down.  
Offering light to the lotus feet  
of SHRI GURU DEV, I bow down.  
Offering water to the lotus feet  
of SHRI GURU DEV, I bow down.  
Offering fruit to the lotus feet  
of SHRI GURU DEV, I bow down.  
Offering water to the lotus feet  
of SHRI GURU DEV, I bow down.  
Offering a betel leaf to the lotus feet  
of SHRI GURU DEV, I bow down.  
Offering a coconut to the lotus feet  
of SHRI GURU DEV, I bow down.

#### *Offering camphor light*

White as camphor, kindness incarnate, the essence of  
creation garlanded with BRAHMAN,  
ever dwelling in the lotus of my heart, the creative  
impulse of cosmic life, to That, in the form of  
GURU DEV, I bow down.

Offering light to the lotus feet of SHRI GURU DEV,  
I bow down.

Offering water to the lotus feet of SHRI GURU  
DEV, I bow down.

#### *Offering a handful of flowers*

GURU in the glory of BRAHMA, GURU in the glory  
of VISHNU, GURU in the glory of the great LORD  
SHIVA, GURU in the glory of the personified tran-  
scendental fulness of BRAHMAN, to Him, to SHRI  
GURU DEV adorned with glory, I bow down.

The Unbounded, like the endless canopy of the sky,  
the omnipresent in all creation, by whom the sign of  
That has been revealed, to Him, to SHRI GURU  
DEV, I bow down.

GURU DEV, SHRI BRAHMANANDA, bliss of the  
Absolute, transcendental joy, the Self-Sufficient, the  
embodiment of pure knowledge which is beyond and  
above the universe like the sky, the aim of "Thou  
art That" and other such expressions which unfold  
eternal truth, the One, the Eternal, the Pure, the Im-  
moveable, the Witness of all intellects, whose status  
transcends thought, the Transcendent along with the  
three gunas, the true preceptor, to SHRI GURU DEV,  
I bow down.

The blinding darkness of ignorance has been removed  
by applying the balm of knowledge. The eye of  
knowledge has been opened by Him and therefore,  
to Him, to SHRI GURU DEV, I bow down.

Offering a handful of flowers to the lotus feet of  
SHRI GURU DEV, I bow down.

#### **Commentary**

The ritual of initiation is the most impor-

tant stage in the process of learning and prac-  
ticing Transcendental Meditation (TM). The  
heart of the initiation ritual, in turn, is the  
"puja," a Sanskrit hymn of worship which  
the initiator recites as a prelude to imparting  
the initiate's *mantra*, the secret Sanskrit word  
upon which he is to meditate. All TM instruc-  
tors learn the *puja* by rote and recite it *in*  
*Sanskrit* without deviating from the pre-  
scribed pattern. Even the physical movements  
which accompany the recitation are choreo-  
graphed in detail and carefully memorized.

#### **English Translation of the Puja**

The English translation of the *puja* is never  
revealed to the ordinary initiate—even if he  
asks. It is only available to those who are in  
training to become teachers and initiators  
themselves. It is considered vital that all pro-  
spective teachers of TM be personally trained  
by Maharishi. At the end of a teacher-training  
session, those whom the Maharishi has quali-  
fied receive a secret, anonymously authored  
and uncopyrighted handbook on the *puja* en-  
titled *The Holy Tradition*. This little booklet  
of less than thirty pages contains the *puja* in  
both Sanskrit and English, as well as exten-  
sive verse-by-verse commentary on its signif-  
icance. It is this English translation of the  
*puja*—the "official" TM version, as printed on  
page 5 of *The Holy Tradition*, that we have  
reproduced in this publication (see above).

#### **The Form of the Puja**

The content of the *puja* indicates that there  
are three distinct phases of the ceremony.

The first phase consists of a recitation of  
the names of those beings of legend and his-  
tory who are believed to represent the line of  
"apostolic succession" through which the  
"holy knowledge" of the TM mantras has  
been passed. Beginning with the creator-gods  
of sacred legend, the list progresses through  
a sequence of historical and semi-historical  
personages; it concludes with several verses  
of praise to the most recently deceased rep-



representative of the tradition, Maharishi's own spiritual master Brahmananda Sarasvati (Guru Dev). It is important to realize that each person named in this phase of the *puja* is regarded not as a merely human being, but as a fully realized expression of divinity. Thus, they are exalted as deities in themselves who are worthy of worship. *The Holy Tradition* plainly attributes deity to Shankara in portraying him "in the status of the Absolute" (p. 16). The *puja* itself ascribes the same status to Guru Dev (whose image adorns the altar of the initiation ritual) and *The Holy Tradition* affirms that ". . . He was worshipped by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of the Indian Union" (p. 25).

The second phase of the *puja* concerns the actual offerings placed before the image of Guru Dev. A succession of 17 different items are offered in turn, to the accompaniment of a repeated verbal formula which concludes with the words "I bow down." It is during this phase that the *candidate's* participation in the ritual is most obvious, as the handkerchief, flowers and fruit which he has been instructed to bring to his initiation are individually presented upon the altar during the prescribed course of the ceremony.

The third and last phase of the *puja* is literally a hymn of praise and adoration to Guru Dev in his status as deity. This section of the *puja* is unabashedly religious in character and worshipful in intent. In the opening stanza of this section, Guru Dev is successively identified with the three major deities recognized by classical Hinduism (i.e., Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva). Homage is then offered to all three in the person of the guru.

At the end of the *puja*, the teacher actually bows before the altar, thus physically affirming his repeated declaration ". . . I bow down." Simultaneously, the teacher makes a carefully rehearsed gesture toward the candidate which invites him to bow down beside his initiator. Following this climactic act of reverence to Guru Dev, the teacher verbally imparts a *mantra* to the initiate, making certain that he understands how to pronounce it properly.

The initiate is then allowed to actually meditate for the first time.

In all three of these phases, the content of the *puja* illustrates TM's inseparable connection with the ceremonial practices of classical Hinduism. A comparison of TM's *puja* with Hindu religious *pujas* of traditional format reveals a striking parallelism. One prominent scholar observes that:

The major change in religious practice from Vedic to late Puranic and modern times was the gradual replacement of *yajna* ("sacrifice") by *puja* as the principal form of worship . . . Though the specific acts vary with the circumstances of the ritual or the ritual tradition being followed, the usual complete sequence includes invocation of the deity, offering him a seat, offering water for washing his feet, water for washing his hands, and water for sipping, bathing the image, offering a fresh garment, offering a sacred thread, anointing the image with unguents or sandalwood paste, offering flowers, offering incense, offering a lighted lamp, offering food or a gift, making obeisance to the deity . . . verses of praise, and bidding the deity farewell . . . Worship of a deity in the form of an image by means of *puja* is a direct expression of popular theistic religion. At its most basic level, its meaning is summed up in Krishna's statement to Arjuna in the *Gita*: "He who offers me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, that devout offering of a pure minded one I accept . . ." The image in *puja* is treated as one would treat the god himself in person, for the image *is* the god in person: it is his *murti*, his "form" made manifest for his worshippers. This sense of the deity as a person and the image as his representative form is fundamental to the meaning of *puja* and is always preserved in *puja* rituals.

(Thomas J. Hopkins, *The Hindu Religious Tradition*, Dickenson Publishing Co., 1971; pp. 110-112).

### The Function of the Puja

A major function of the *puja* is to establish and preserve the link between the individual meditator and Maharishi's tradition of Hinduism by formalizing the transmission of the *mantras*. The religious significance of this link becomes clear in Maharishi's own statement that "the holy tradition of great masters which is responsible for reviving the teaching,



after every lapse has captured the minds and hearts of lovers of Truth in every age. It is not merely held in high regard, *but has come to be actually worshipped* by seekers of Truth and knowers of Reality. A verse recording the names of the greatest and most highly revered masters has not only inspired seekers, but has been a joy even to the fulfilled hearts of realized souls passing through the long corridor of time" (*Maharishi Mahesh Yogi on the Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 257, emphasis added). The verse referred to is, of course, the verse that the initiator sings in phase I of the *puja* ritual.

In fact, it is in the initiation ceremony that the "worshipful response" of subjective attitude manifests itself in terms of concrete and formalized action; it is here that the religious substrate of TM "crops out" in its most obvious form.

Despite the bold and repeated disclaimers of TM propagandists,\* it is clear that the candidate for initiation is involved in the initiation liturgy both actively and passively. He involves himself actively by bringing his offering of handkerchief, flowers and fruit (as he is instructed to do) for use in the ritual. He is also *invited* by his teacher to participate actively by: (a) removing his shoes before entering the initiation room, (b) bowing alongside his instructor at the end of the *puja*. He involves himself in a passive way merely by being present and hearing the *puja*. The Sanskrit hymn is a lengthy mantra in its own right which is specifically intended to produce an altered state of consciousness in both the instructor who recites it and the candidate who hears it. Although the candidate is never warned that his state of mind is being manipulated in such ways, a commentary in

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\* For example: "First of all the person learning the TM technique doesn't involve himself in the ceremony at all, he merely witnesses it. Secondly, as any teacher of the TM technique will tell you, it is not a religious ceremony at all. In no way does it involve religious belief, or even any belief at all." Jonathan Shear, professor of philosophy at Maharishi International University, in an article headlined "MIU Prof Tells Views on Religious Controversy," *Fairfield (Iowa) Daily Ledger*, June 26, 1975.

*The Holy Tradition* expresses this intent in unmistakable terms:

The details of the procedure for invoking the Holy Tradition are so perfect that the whole personality of the teacher becomes one-pointedly centered on the dignity and greatness of the Masters. Ego, mind, heart, senses, body and atmosphere having thus become permeated with the essence of divine wisdom, the teacher begins to teach. The purpose of this Invocation is to attune the active mind by directing it toward the great Masters, to the essential nature of their knowledge of Absolute being. From that level the Mantra is picked up and passed on to the new initiate, *thereby leading his consciousness to that same field of transcendental Being.*

By this means, the initiator's awareness is taken to the level of inner Being, then brought out to the relative in order to instruct the initiate. *Through this instruction the initiate's awareness is led to the Absolute several times so that more and more of its abundance is incorporated into his life.*

(*The Holy Tradition*, p. 6, emphasis added).

### The Centrality of the Puja

It is significant that the prospective meditator commences his involvement with TM in this way; not until the ceremony is completed does the initiate receive his *mantra*, the secret Sanskrit word used in meditation. That the religious quality of this liturgy is not mere extraneous ornamentation, but is of the essence of TM is shown by the fact that no one is initiated except through performance of the ceremony and participation in the obeisances described in the *puja*. If the candidate, for reasons of conscience, declines to bow or remove his shoes, it will be no barrier to receiving his *mantra*; but *if he refuses to bring an offering or if he totally objects to the enactment of the ritual, he will not be initiated.*



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