



Institute for the Awakened Mind

Meditation, The Silent World

By The Max Cade Foundation

Meditation and Passive Lucid Awareness * The Practice of Simple Awareness * The Sensing of Self *
Buoyancy and Ease * Exercises: Sensory Awareness/Voice of the Silence and The Silent World Sequence

Introduction

The terms “third room”, “fourth room” and “fifth room” used in this paper refer to states of consciousness. Measurements of the patterns of electrical brain activity from the cortex allow distinctions to be made about the quality of awareness or consciousness of the person being measured. For example, in the degree of symmetry of activity in the two hemispheres of the brain and relative levels of beta, alpha, theta and delta waves.

Max formalized a model of the Eight States of Consciousness on this basis.

The more traditional term “third room” corresponds to state 3 – “Normal Waking Awareness”, with predominately beta activity. The term “fourth room” covers both state 4 – “Meditation” (i.e. introspective meditation), with predominately alpha and theta activity and state 5(b) – “Lucid Awareness” or Sabikalpa Samadhi, with alpha, theta and beta activity, but still passive rather than active in nature. The “fifth room” corresponds to state 5(a) – “Awakened Mind”, or Nirbikalpa Samadhi, the active or “self actualizing” form of state 5 and all the states higher than this level.

A more detailed explanation of these states and the model of the Eight States of Consciousness is given in the paper in this series entitled “Biofeedback and the Higher States of Consciousness” and in the book “The Awakened Mind” by C. Maxwell Cade and Nona Coxhead (third edition published in Great Britain in 1989 by Element Books Ltd).

The legitimate road to the fourth room of consciousness and the fifth lies through the silent world, the world of simple awareness, beyond words, beyond thoughts.

How can the aspirant learn to stop the wheel of the imagination, to halt the flood of inner conversations, arguments, mere chatter, with which the cortex, by its useless overactivity, floods the awareness from dawn to dusk? While this noise persists, no deep awareness is possible. So, for one who really wishes to practice, the first rule is very simple; enter the silence as often as possible; remain there as long as possible. STOP THOUGHTS!! [Note 1]

In the quiet that follows, permit the impressions brought by each separate sense to float on the surface of a calm awareness. The eye rests on the objects of sight, not naming them, not desiring them, passing no judgments. As with sights, so with sounds. In the healing silence that follows the stopping of thoughts, all sounds take on a new significance. Nature produces echoes, reverberates through a rich spectrum of tonalities formerly unperceived. There are inward sounds also, not only the almost imperceptible throb of the heart, but subtler sounds, scarcely sounds at all, originating through who knows what interactions. As with sight and sounds, so with odours...

Stopping thoughts, the practice of simple awareness; these are the keys with which a man can unlock the fourth room. To one who has never tried to use this simple method, it might appear all too easy. What could be simpler than to impose silence on the gibbering cortex, which, like a badly designed radio, generates so much noise that every message is distorted? [Note 2]

Few disciplines, however, are more uncongenial to contemporary man than the intentional silencing of the "noise machine". This chattering mechanism ceaselessly pours out its flood of inner conversations, arguments, schemes and aimless chatter, and has come to occupy so large a place in man's awareness that he often regards it as his very self. If this noise is switched off accidentally, or if he switches it off intentionally, he has an uneasy feeling of non-existence.

Contemporary man fears inner silence and avoids places that induce inner silence, be they deserts or mountains or empty stretches of ocean.

To enter the silence as often as possible, and to remain there as long as possible is the goal of all followers of the Way, be they yogis, Zen Buddhists, Sufis or Christian mystics.

The practice of simple awareness is possible without control of attention. Attention is to awareness as the oil in a lamp is to its flame. While there is oil in the lamp, the flame persists. Once the oil is exhausted, the flame goes out. Control of attention is the one function that man possesses that may be said to confer on him a certain amount of free will. He can "direct his attention". But his power to do this depends upon his possessing a certain kind of energy the supply of which is limited. Each day, on awakening, he has just so much of this energy. His inner work each day depends on the conservation of this energy. Once it has been squandered, it is hard to replace.

A man's level of consciousness can be measured by the freedom of his attention. In the state of identification, he has no "freedom to attend". HE THINKS HE HAS, but this is one of the illusions that this state imposes. "Waking sleep", "hypnotized sleep", "walking sleep", "I identification", are all different names for the third room. Our ordinary state of consciousness – the third room. This is the state in which one has no freedom to attend.

Only when a person learns to withdraw from the task in hand, to maintain a certain thread of awareness that remains apart from thinking, feeling, sensing, does he begin to get the taste of the fourth state of consciousness. In this state, he IS; he exists objectively for himself. He is aware of the room in which he is sitting, of himself, as one of the objects in that room, of his "inner space" and of his outer space, not in specific details but as a totality, as a presence. In this state the self is not separate, and the attention, though directed to whatever task in hand, is at the same time flexible and open, not rigid and narrow.

This sensing of self as not-self but merely as one of the objects of the environment removes at one stroke all fears, all tensions, all anxieties. A condition of buoyancy and ease, a delightful indifference, falls to the lot of one in whom such a condition has been induced. He is in harmony with Tao, the unconditioned, unnameable source of all reality.

There is no tension in this watchfulness. It is flexible, pervasive, an invisible shield, an instrument that catches and holds impressions before these impressions can set the inner machinery in motion.

Poise, balance, inner harmony, the "creation of an island that no flood can immerse" – all this can be achieved by one who has learned to handle his impressions. Between the moment when an impression strikes and the reaction to that impression elapses a time so short it can hardly be measured by man's ordinary awareness. Yet much may depend upon what happens in that brief interval. [Note 3]

Accept or reject – this is the basis of the inner work that leads to the genesis of a truly free being. A man's health, as well as his inner development and level of being, depends just as much on how his impressions are metabolized as on how his food is metabolized. The way in which impressions are metabolized depends on the level of attention and on the quality of attention.

Notes:

1. Max was emphatic that although psychedelic drugs may "lead one into the silent world, and give a taste of the wonders it contains", they cannot keep one there. Only by work, by a steady, unremitting effort can one "hold the treasure of silence".
2. The word "cortex" has replaced the original term "roof brain".
3. In quotation marks – quote from the Dhammapada.

Exercises

This paper was often used as a talk within a workshop, which would be followed by practical exercises. There are many exercises which are apt for this topic. The first exercise given below gives practice in sitting in stillness with the mind attentive. The second is a sequence, which lasts about 30 minutes. This has a series of stages which involve various “props” and is designed for a group, with a group leader organizing it.

All these exercises are practiced with an upright posture, normally seated in a chair. Breathing should be from the abdomen – a relaxing breath, filling the lungs no more than three-quarters full, so the rib cage will remain still.

The presentation of these types of exercise to a group obviously requires a level of experience in maintaining rapport, appraising the state of the group, timing and so on. Some instructions have been included in square brackets throughout the exercises.

Exercise 1: Sensory Awareness/Voice of the Silence

“We say to ourselves: ‘I am going to meditate’, but every person’s ‘I’ is usually fifty to a hundred different people. Another ‘I’ takes over with each passing thought. Most of us run around all day long with our brains working unceasingly – although not always very constructively. Some of the thoughts are of course good or useful, but when we do a special job we have probably progressed far enough to enable our thoughts to be concentrated on the work in hand. FOR A TIME! – Then something distracts us; we look up; a thought flies into the mind and off we whirl again into fantasy or speculation or a rehashing of old scenes, which do not even come out fresh and true. What we need is a chief ‘I’, one NOT at the whim of the desires of the lower, subconscious self.

“Now gather your awareness, your conscious self and let us practice an exercise...

“With your eyes open, of course or you won’t see very much, concentrate on what you can see...putting your whole awareness into it...” [1 minute]

“Then, STILL HOLDING THIS AWARENESS OF SEEING, listen to whatever sounds there are...a motor car passing by, or an aeroplane and so on, listening without the need for words, just listening...” [1 minute]

“Still holding both these senses fully in your awareness, become aware of smell – the aroma of flowers, incense, whatever there is...Consciously be aware of all three things, sight, hearing, smell, AT THE SAME TIME” ... [1 minute]

“And in the same sort of way, add taste and finally touch...For a little while, become aware of all of these...” [1 minute]

“Now remember your proprioceptor sense; be aware of the position of your limbs, your feet, your hands, your head and so on, whilst continuing to maintain full awareness of each of the other senses...” [1 minute]

“If you hold complete awareness of, and concentration on, ALL these senses simultaneously, you are now, in that moment, A FULLY CONSCIOUS PERSON. Keep this attention, and practice keeping it as often as possible. Dr. Rolf Alexander said: ‘Consciousness is an extremely alert state of vivid awareness, and has nothing to do with words or thoughts – which will make it disappear’” [1 minute]

“Now....listen to the sounds of the body....” [30 seconds]

“Listen to the sounds of the mind...which may still be talking to you...” [30 seconds]

“Listen to the sounds of the environment...Are there noises come in from the street?...” [30 seconds]

“Now stop off the ears of the body...and the ears of the mind...and with the ears of the soul..listen to the voice of the silence...as if you are listening for a distant footstep in the silence of the night...yet without taking up an attitude or actually expecting anything at all...Just be utterly quiet in the body and mind...and listen to the voice of the silence...” [2 minutes]

Exercise 2: The Silent World Sequence

“Permit the eye to rest on the objects of sight, not naming them, not desiring them, passing no judgements upon them...As with sights, so with sounds...In the healing silence that follows the stopping of thoughts, all sounds take on a new significance...As with sights and sounds, so with odours...and touch...” [3 minutes]

[Hand out objects – anything interesting that will hold someone’s attention]

“A man’s level of consciousness can be measured by the freedom of his attention...Study the object, the Kasina object which you have been given...You are to adopt a state of physiological and psychological equipoise in which your attention catches and holds impressions, before these can set the inner machinery in motion...Accept or reject – this is the basis of the inner work that leads to the genesis of a truly free being...The ‘creation of an inner harmony that no flood can immerse’ – study the (strobe) light with complete control over your impressions.”

[At this stage, the strobe is used in the alpha/theta/delta ranges for about 5 minutes. The model used in class is the Therapeutic Strobe from Audio Ltd. This really assumes that the group is familiar with this instrument. If not, a naked flame such as a candle could be used instead.]

“If the calmness of the mind becomes disturbed, supply the agitated mind with a firm prop. One method is REPETITION. Listen for a while to the repetition of the mantra, ‘OM NAMAH SHIVAYA’ and repeat the mantra either to yourself or aloud...”

[The chant often used here is a tape of this mantra led by Swami Muktananda, for about 3 minutes. Other mantra could be used instead. Alternatively, the tape could be dispensed with and the leader lead the chanting out loud.]

“Now find a prop of your own. After the fashion of the ‘Cloud of Unknowing’, using ‘Lord’, ‘Light’ or ‘Peace’ calm the mind by repetition...” [2 minutes]

“Let your mind become still...I would like you to visualize a candle burning; a tall, gleaming wax candle. See the blue inner and the golden outer flame; the thin plume of black smoke; the little pool of molten wax around the base of the flame. Now smell the burning wax, notice the flickering shadows; but above all, be aware of the brightness of the light...” [1 minute]

“Imagine, now, the light being brought into your heart – just the cool, clear brilliance of the light. Imagine that light becoming brighter and brighter, shining up through you and illuminating your body. Now imagine it shining down through you, becoming still brighter; illuminating your whole body. Your whole body is alight and aglow, like a luminous figurine in purest crystal...” [1 minute]

“Imagine another person filling with light...and another...and another, until the whole group has been transformed to glowing golden crystal figures filling the room with radiant splendor. See the walls, the floor, the ceiling and every object in the room aglow...” [30 seconds]

“Now the room is filled to overflowing with a flood of light, and the light is overflowing through the doors and windows and out into the streets...See the light running through the streets, filling people, vehicles and buildings with its joyous, golden brilliance...” [30 seconds]

“Now the whole earth is bathed in light...” [30 seconds]

“And the light fills the solar system and spreads into outer space...” [30 seconds]

“And now the light fills the entire universe...” [music, for 2 minutes. This should be calming but uplifting, for example ‘A Calmer Panorama’ (Tim Wheater), ‘Emperor Concerto’ (Beethoven), or baroque style (various)]

“ENTER THE SILENCE. Listen first of all to the music. Then when the music stops, listen to the silence. Then just BECOME the silence.

[Fade music, then silence for 2 minutes]

Maxwell Cade Foundation – Biography of C. Maxwell Cade

C. Maxwell Cade, known by friends and students simply as “Max”, was a highly respected teacher of meditation and a pioneer of Biofeedback. In an age of over-specialization, Max was both specialist and eclectic, bringing his knowledge of science, medicine and psychology and the practice of meditation together to make a bridge between the Eastern and Western philosophies.

Max was a fellow of the Institute of Electrical Engineers and the Royal Society of Medicine and member of the Institute of Physics and the Institute of Biology. He wrote and presented many scientific and technical papers, and his book “The Awakened Mind” records the nature of his work in the development of biofeedback and its applications in relaxation, healing and the search for self-realization.

Max’s extraordinary personality and unswerving direction helped many people to understand their inner lives and find the inspiration for its true expression. The Maxwell Cade Foundation was established by former students to support the continuity and development of his work and ideals.