



Institute for the Awakened Mind

The Anatomy of Meditation

By The Maxwell Cade Foundation

MEDITATION AND CONCENTRATION

In its beginning, meditation is an exercise in control of the attention. Attention is not an achievement. Attention has no border, no frontier to cross; attention is clarity, clear of all thought. Thought, as Krishnamurti emphasizes, can never make for clarity, because it has its roots in the dead past; so thinking is an action in the dark. Awareness of this is to be attentive. The Bhagavad Gita states: "The mind is the slayer of the real; therefore we must slay the slayer". This is not the doctrine of despair or of mindlessness; it means that, as Kenneth Walker wrote in Diagnosis of Man: "By means of sensuous perception of inference, we shall never stand face to face with reality".

To know something, as distinct from knowing about it, or knowing some of its attributes, we need the higher mental power of the intuition. Krishnamurti puts it like this: "Meditation is not an intellectual process – which is still within the area of thought. Meditation is the freedom from thought, and a movement in the ecstasy of truth."

We must be very clear that meditation is NOT concentration. Concentration comes before meditation; a long way before. Christmas Humphries writes: "Before a man can fence, he must learn to handle a rapier, so that the rapier, hand and eye can follow the will as one. Before a girl can dance, she must train her muscles until the body as a whole will express the beauty in the mind. Before a man can use his mind to develop his inner faculties, to increase his understanding and to integrate the vast range of related parts which make up 'self', he must develop and learn to control the instrument involved."

The best analogy is the searchlight. Here is an efficient and impersonal machine. It can be directed to a given object at will, moved rapidly from one object to another, focused as needed and equally well

turned off at will. The light employed comes from a supply that has no ending and is drawn on by the skill of, but not from the person of the operator. So with the mind. The more perfect the instrument and its control, the more clearly will the light of consciousness be focused, without wavering, on the chosen field...It is not my light or yours. It is the light of consciousness.

When I decide to change the object of attention, I change it; when I am tired, or the time has come to do something else, or to rest, or the doorbell rings, I turn it off. WITHOUT SUCH AN INSTRUMENT, THUS HANDLED AND CONTROLLED, ONE CANNOT MEDITATE, FOR THE MEANS IS LACKING FOR THE CHOSEN END.

“In brief,” says Christmas Humphries, “no man can meditate until he has learned to concentrate; let him who denies it try.” Hence our insistence that, although the aim of meditation is eventually to transcend the intellect by development of higher mental powers, FIRST ONE MUST HAVE AN INTELLECT TO TRANSCEND.

MEDITATION AND BE-ING

It is enormously important that we should be quite, quite clear in our minds concerning the distinction between the absolutely essential mental development exercises which precede true meditation and meditation itself. Krishnamurti says:

“If you deliberately take an attitude, a posture, in order to meditate, then it may become a plaything, a toy of the mind. If you determine to escape from the confusion and the misery of life, then it becomes an experience of the imagination – and this is not meditation. The conscious mind and the personal unconscious mind must have no part in it; they must not even be aware of the extent and beauty of meditation. If they are, then you might just as well go and buy a romantic novel.

“IN THE TOTAL ATTENTION OF MEDITATION, THERE IS NO KNOWING, NO RECOGNITION, NOR THE REMEMBRANCE OF SOMETHING THAT HAS HAPPENED. TIME AND THOUGHT HAVE ENTIRELY COME TO AN END, FOR THEY ARE THE CENTRE WHICH LIMITS ITS OWN VISION. At the moment of illumination, thought withers away, and the conscious effort to experience and the remembrance of it, is the word that has been.”

“Meditation,” says Claudio Naranjo, “is concerned with the development of a PRESENCE, a modality of being, which may be expressed or developed in whatever situation the individual may be involved. This presence or mode of being transforms whatever it touches. If its medium is movement, it will turn to dance; if stillness, into live sculpture; if thinking, into the higher reaches of intuition; if sensing, into a merging with the miracle of being; if feeling, into love; if singing, into sacred utterance; if speaking, into

prayer or poetry; if doing the things of ordinary life, into a ritual in the name of God or a celebration of existence.” (Notes 1 & 2)

Just as the spirit of our times is technique oriented in its dealing with the external world, it is technique oriented in its approach to psychological or spiritual reality. Yet, while numerous schools propound this or that method as a solution to human problems, we know that it is not merely the method, but THE WAY IN WHICH IT IS EMPLOYED that determines its effectiveness, whether in psychotherapy, art or education. The application of techniques or tools in an interpersonal situation depends upon an almost tangible “human factor” in the teacher, guide or psychotherapist. When within the self, as is the case with methods of meditation, the human factor beyond the method becomes even more elusive...

The question of the RIGHT ATTITUDE on the part of the meditator is the hardest for meditation teaches to transmit, and though it is the object of most supervision, it may be apprehended only through practice. It might be said that the attitude, or “inner posture” is both the path and the goal of the meditator. For the subtle, invisible HOW is not merely a HOW TO MEDITATE but a HOW TO BE, which in meditation is exercised in a simplified situation. And precisely because of its elusive quality...the attitude that is the heart of meditation is generally sought after in the most simple external or “technical” situations – in stillness, silence, monotony, “just sitting”.

Just as we do not see the stars in daylight, but only in the absence of the sun, we may never taste the subtle essence of meditation the daylight of ordinary activity in all its complexity. That essence may be revealed when we have suspended everything else but US, our presence, our attitude, beyond any activity or lack of it. Whatever the outer situation, the inner task is simplified, so that nothing remains but to gaze at a candle, listen to the hum in our own ears or “do nothing”. We may then discovered that there are innumerable ways of gazing, listening, doing nothing (and also, innumerable ways of NOT just gazing, NOT just listening, NOT just sitting). Against the background of simplicity required by the exercises, we may become aware of ourselves and all that we bring to the situation, and we may begin to grasp experientially the question of ATTITUDE.

While practice in most activities implies the development of habits and the establishment of conditioning, the practice of meditation can be better understood as quite the opposite: a persistent effort to detect and become free from all conditioning, compulsive functioning of mind and body, the habitual emotional responses that may contaminate the utterly simple situation required by the participant.

This is why it may be said that the attitude of the meditator is both his path and his goal; the unconditioned state is the freedom of attainment and also the target of every single effort. What the meditator realizes in his practice is to a large extent HOW HE FAILS TO MEDITATE PROPERLY, and by becoming aware of his failings he gains understanding and the ability to let go of his wrong way. The right way, the desired attitude, is what remains when we have stepped out of the way.

NOTES

1. From "On the Psychology of Meditation" by Robert Ornstein and Claudio Naranjo.
2. Max comments further: "Naranjo's commentary is enormously illuminating, if only because he highlights the paradox that, in learning to meditate, it is necessary to work in a manner that is contrary to the ultimate aim. As Naranjo says, meditation is most readily learned in a simplified situation, away from the hurly-burly of life. Yet, as the Japanese Zenist, Lin Sai says, 'To
3. concentrate one's mind, or to dislike noisy places and seek only for stillness is the characteristic of heterodox Dhyana. It is easy to keep self-possession in a place of tranquility, yet it is by no means easy to keep mind undisturbed amid the bivouac of actual life. It is true Dhyana that makes our mind sunny while the storms of strife rage around us. It is true Dhyana that secures the harmony of heart, while the surges of struggle toss us violently.'

"The same paradox arises in relation to training in the production of alpha rhythm states. Most students find that, at first, opening the eyes, forming mental images, thinking in a focused, logical manner, all cause the alpha rhythm to disappear. Usually it is necessary to have a quiet environment and to keep the mind very still and restful in order to learn to produce 'continuous alpha'. Yet it is only by slowly and painstakingly training oneself to maintain alpha while the eyes are open, while the mind is forming images, while one experiences emotions, while one solves problems, that one eventually gains 'fifth state' consciousness, in which one's everyday state of mind is infused with continuous bilateral alpha rhythms of a particularly persistent and self-perpetuating kind.

This complete contradiction between the approach to learning quiescent mental states and the approach to their utilization is the cause of a great deal of confusion to students of meditation. They often ask 'What are the ultimate benefits?', and the teacher must truthfully reply that they are largely in the form of better and more effective mental and physical interaction with the everyday world. Yet their early lessons are often in the form of both physical and mental retreat from the world!

"Also, we must remember the words of Krishnamurti: 'Do not think that meditation is a continuance and an expansion of ordinary experience...'. It is not, and in its higher reaches, where it passes over into mystical experience, it is ineffable and therefore cannot be discussed at all except with someone who has had the same experience. Perhaps the worst effect of this is that it makes the student cling, still more, to outward forms and to believe that SOMEHOW, if he could only see how, meditation could be understood 'scientifically' through a study of the techniques."

EXERCISES

The above paper was often used as a talk within a workshop, which would be followed by practical exercises. There are many exercises which are appropriate for this topic; for the first part, emphasizing concentration as a pre-requisite to meditation and for the second part, emphasizing the internal state, or “attitude” conducive to effective meditation, both in the quiet and “in the battlefield of life”.

All of the (following) exercises, if practiced correctly, will bring about a level of relaxation in the body. In the biofeedback workshops, participants monitor this change using the Electrical Skin Resistance meter. (The model used in Max’s workshops was normally the “Omega 1”, manufactured by Audio Ltd.) In order to avoid drowsiness, participants are seated in an upright posture. 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 exercises 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: Stillness of Mind and Body

“Before one can learn to meditate, it is desirable – one might almost say essential – to learn to concentrate. In orthodox yogic training it is not left to the whim of the pupil to decide whether or not he will learn concentration before proceeding to meditation; he is obliged to learn concentration – Dharana – first. In many parts of India, the learning of Dharana is by means of the Kasina exercises, which are still largely unknown in the West. Without possessing a certain degree of Dharana, a person would hardly be able to live at all, and certainly could not work properly. Hence, without even being aware of the fact, everyone is continually practicing Kasina exercises, by which their energy is directed towards a single goal.

“First of all it is necessary for you to realize that if you are relaxing properly, your mind is WIDE AWAKE and AWARE, even though your body is deeply relaxed and almost beyond movement . . . Take a few moments to become centred and relaxed . . . breathing easily from the abdomen . . . relaxed lips, tongue and throat, but keeping eyes open . . . (1 minute)

“Now hold one of the Kasina objects in your hand . . . [an object is given to each member of the group. Max had a basket of coloured alabaster eggs for this purpose, and each participant chose an egg as the basket was offered. Other objects could be used instead.]

“I want you to study your chosen Kasina object carefully, with both your hand and your eyes . . . Feel it and note its smoothness, or occasional flaws, its temperature, its texture . . . Study it with your eyes and

note the colour, the shadings, the patterns . . . Concentrate on it completely, losing all awareness of your body in the process, yet remaining fully awake and aware . . .” (5 minutes)

Exercise 2: Concentration on The Hands of a Watch

[This exercise needs a watch with a second hand (not digital display). Alternatively, a clock with a second hand can be used provided it can be placed fairly near.]

“Holding the watch before you, allow your attention to focus on the face of the watch and the movement of the second hand . . . Maintain an awareness of your body, breathing easily, from the abdomen, relaxed. Without words, keep your concentration on the face of the watch for 1 minute . . .” (1 minute)

[Once the attention can be maintained, without internal dialogue or distraction, the time for the exercise can be gradually lengthened.]

Exercise 3: Zazen

[Participants seated in chairs]

“Draw yourself up as if a piece of string were attached to the back of your head, and pulled upwards towards the ceiling. Now, gently allow the tension to release, keeping the spine quite straight and relaxed – the shoulders in line with the ears, the nose in line with the navel. This prevents unnecessary tension on the neck . . .

“Breathe out – through the mouth – just this first time, getting the lungs completely full of air . . . Let the air bounce back, thus setting the level of air in the lungs . . . Now breathe out slowly and steadily, counting ‘one’ to yourself as you do. Breathe in again and out, this time counting ‘two’ on the out breath and continue until you get to ten. Then you start again at ‘one’.

“Breathe always through the nose, inhaling just as much as you feel you need, pushing forward the lowest part of the abdomen – at the level of the navel – to draw the air in on the in-breath and pulling the lowest part of the abdomen in to expel the air on the out breath. The rib cage should remain still while breathing in this manner. If necessary, loosen tight clothing to allow this movement freely. This breathing is called ‘diaphragmatic breathing’ or ‘abdominal breathing’.

“See your breath as forming a circle, like the rotating wheel of a bicycle. Imagine a point on the rim of the wheel. As this point moves upwards, you breathe in, until at the top the inhalation is complete . . .

and the out breath begins. This continues as the air is expelled until, when the point reaches the bottom of the cycle . . . the next inhalation begins. This way, the in breath and the out breath are of the same length and there is no sustained holding of the breath between.

“To check the manner in which you are breathing, place one hand lightly on the top of the rib cage, just below the throat and the other on the abdomen, at the level of the navel, and become aware of the movement while you breathe. For Zazen, the top of the chest should remain quite still. The abdomen moves out on the in breath and moves in on the out breath, like a pair of bellows causing the air to be drawn into the space vacated by the movement of the diaphragm and expelled by its return movement.

“Continue counting on each out breath, from ‘one’ to ‘ten’, and then starting again at ‘one’. There is no need for thinking . . . just be aware of the gentle easy breathing . . . The eyes can be open or closed, but to start with, the meditation is normally easier with eyes closed . . .

“Gradually, you will become able to concentrate with more and more success on the numbers of your breaths. Your mind may wander, and you may find yourself carried away on trains of thought, but it will gradually become easier and easier to bring your mind back to the counting of your breath . . .”

[Continue for 5 to 10 minutes. Max often played a tape of ‘Zen’ music, which is a Japanese music with no words and no overt rhythm. With those new to this way of breathing, it is well worth checking the pattern of breathing and correcting as necessary.]

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.