
Silence

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Silence (*mauna*) is characterized by the complete absence of sound. This is a state more powerful than that of the word because all the sounds and the words originate in silence. Silence is such a sky that generates *nāda* (sound) and words. Because of its being powerful, very few people can put up with it easily.

Āchārya Rajanīsha has said, “The word has come out from outside, not from within. When you were born, you were without words. When you came you were unblemished, dispassionate and bereft of thoughts. When the Ganges descends, it doesn't come with banks, the banks are found outside.

“A border comes from outside. You are limitless. When you come into this world you are silent. Then, the courtyard of words raises walls around you. Someone is a Hindu because he has a wall of Hindu words. It is covered with the tiles of Vedas. Someone else is a Muslim. The only difference is that of words. In silence you are all equal. Silence has no adjectives.”

“spiritualism Is a study center of silence or wordlessness. Then, spiritualism frees you from words. Therefore, Spiritualism can neither be Hindu, nor Muslim, nor Buddhist, nor Jain. Of course, there can be sects. Sects are associated with words and spiritualism with silence.”

It is a candid analysis of words and silence. Word is the expression of society whereas silence (*mauna*) is the expression of an individual. Silence is both an expression and a tool. Silence is the biggest tool for the quest of truth – which is the basic quest of *Adhyātma*. In this sense the meaning of silence becomes very wide. A

word has to be mastered. Similarly, silence has to be practiced. While speaking an individual never pays any attention to either his body or intellect. But as soon as one observes silence, everything, every activity becomes crystal clear. Subjects relating to thoughts, their movement and direction appear clearly. So also feelings, their absence, depth and situation of the disposition become apparent and intelligible. Multiple options of each word and subject become visible. Life appears as large as the banyan tree which is normally absent at the time of speaking. While speaking an individual is hemmed in by arrogance and attachment. He is dominated by the external and materialistic goals. In such a state he is hardly aware of the inner world. In silence both the outer and the inner are clearly visible.

People are in the habit of clutching at words and grappling with them. They neither look within nor around them. Even the gaps between the words are also moments of silence.

Words have in them vibration, they have both movement and rhythm. They also have music in them. A word that comes out of silence also contains stillness within. A word can be said to be the cover of silence just as *Brahma* is immanent in the world He has created.

Silence is always the gateway to solemn reflection and *upāsana* (worship). In fact, it is the main entrance. The occurrence of silence between words is the way to silence. Only through its practice can an individual reach a state where words cease to exist. It is then that he is beside himself. As a matter of fact, he is on his way to perceive the truth. He is an ascetic. Unlike the word there are no deceptions in the state of silence. In fact, deceptions are done away with. The possibility of tension doesn't increase. It, rather, decreases.

Silence is, in fact, a state of mental prayer. An individual comes out of the state of *vaikharī* (words spoken around) and begins to wander in a state of *madhyamā* (humming sound). Entire thinking is affected by the activity of the mind. Through this practice wisdom is also activated. Silence is the workshop of the mind and wisdom. Here man's natural abilities and *samskāras* sprout. In silence alone the abilities of wordless communication are developed. One experiences contentment at

the feet of a saint even without speaking. A child has no words to communicate but his mother is able to guess the correct situation.

The mind is restive and the only way to calm it is to restrain the senses. Speaking is one of the most destabilizing activities. Speaking and thinking do not go together. If one is there, the other is not.

Therefore, speaking without thinking can lead to argument and discussion and can cause enmity. It is also said that if there is an argument between two individuals, one of them must remain silent. This brings about an end of the argument. Silence puts an end to the unnecessary movement of thoughts. Here, it stabilizes thoughts. As a result reactions go on diminishing. Every word also has its own reaction which begins even before one speaks. After one has spoken, the reactions of the listener are also equally important. The echo of every sound continues for a long time. In silence all are quiet.

The most important achievement of silence is one's ability to acquire knowledge about oneself, one's structure and one's abilities. We are aware that our body also has an independent language but no one listens to it. Food is ready: the body is saying that it doesn't want to eat curd but we are not listening. An unknown person is visiting us. The body is warning us to be careful because the visitor doesn't seem to be a good person. But we ignore the signals. Similarly intellect and mind also have their own languages.

Mind is our greatest guide. It never tells a lie. But do we pay heed to it? We generally follow the signals emitted by our intellect. Many times we have to repent even though we do not listen or we do not know that they also communicate. The more an individual practices in silence, the more he is able to understand these subtle communications. He begins to understand himself extensively. Everyday new wonders begin to take place before him. He begins to discern his personal abilities of which he was not aware. Many new thoughts begin to arise in his intellect for the first time. Now he is able to understand that though external knowledge is necessary for survival, it is of no help as regards the way of living. Its real definition lies in the knowledge attained by inner awakening.

Silence is also a medium to conserve energy. We spend a lot of energy in speaking. We also feel tired. Our throat also dries up. Silence saves energy. Many times even telling the truth doesn't seem proper and the mind is not ready to tell a lie. In such moments silence is considered the best way out. One can easily bypass contentious issues.

Where the word itself is *Brahma*, there the power of *Brahma* is reflected in the word in the form of silence. It's not possible in a gross word. Therefore, in *upāsanā* (worship) and meditation the word is lowered into the path of silence. The journey continues till one attains the state of thoughtlessness. Here the gross word is left behind and one enters the psychic world. Here the individual is with himself. He can talk to himself as well as to his deity. He also reflects upon the questions of life. There is complete silence outside; the inner life is governed in a fully controlled way.

Then one begins to comprehend the pervasion of emptiness in the cosmos. In this vast expanse, new paths, new answers, emerge. It is in this infinity that masks or coverings appear in the form of *samskāras* and again it is here that one finds a way to purify and radiate the path. The distinction between what is necessary and what is unnecessary takes a permanent form. Deviation and instability begin to disappear. The individual abandons the basis of speech and regards entering silence as auspicious and excellent. Even minimal speech which is restricted to the speaking of the truth and sweet words comes to an end. It too is a permanent form of silence. If there is life one cannot live without words but despite being engrossed in the worldly affairs one can feel the peace which only ascetics experience.

The Creator Himself is silent ...

स यदुपांशु तत्प्राजापत्यं रूपम् – शतपथ ब्राह्मण, 1.6.3.27