

Chapter 33
Silence Is Golden

Mind and Emotions Are Calmed As We Observe Mauna, Restraint of Speech

Any think of silence simplistically, as just the absence of noise, or not speaking words. But silence, like life itself, is more complex and subtle than that. We all talk and communicate in a manner that the thoughts and feelings we have and the lessons from life’s experiences. Usually our quest for quiet is an outer search. We vacation to paradise or hike into the hills to escape the daily din. While Hindus believe pursuits do emphasize the importance of serene surroundings as an aid to introspection, they stress more the cultivation of silence within. Outer peace is simply a means to help us find inner silence. Ultimately, we learn to maintain and enjoy our innate serenity within. Outer peace is simply a means to help us find inner silence. 

As aesthete of the mind by self-observation, self-awareness and inner attention. Empty accordance with the eternal law of nature, and be silent.” He did and studied well the world’s religions and philosophies. In the hills to escape the daily din. While Hindu saints and scriptures, aspirants and householders alike, throughout India and the world are tamed by a true practitioner of mauna. All this is the basis of the Hindu practice of mauna, the vow to remain silent, and it is why some subdue speech altogether. Mauna is not the exclusive province of the sage. Brilliant orators and well-to-do intellectu-

els also have chosen to curb their speech. Mahatma Gandhi was perhaps the most prominent public figure to observe mauna. He tamed his tongue every Monday, communicating on that day only through writing. The late Swami Nirmalananda of Karnataka had served the Army Postal Service in Europe during World War II. He later held various government posts in India. He traveled the globe and studied well the world’s religions and philosophies. In the end, his burning search for truth culminated in silence. “If you desire to live in peace,” he said, “hear all that falls on your ears, see all that appears before your eyes, realize that everything is in accordance with the eternal law of nature, and be silent.” He did not speak for eleven years, and thereafter spoke sparingly. When he did, it was with clarity and conviction. 

Wisdom is to me not a set of rules but a clarity and emptiness of the mind. Emptiness is the only self-observation, self-awareness and inner attention. 

Thus make the mind shine like a mirror. Nothing is seen or known but the limitless radiance of eternity. This is a wonderful source of ever-renewed joy and inspiration beyond words. Mauna is practiced in varying degrees by spiritual leaders, ascetics, aspirants and householders alike, throughout India and the world. There are times when I have been holding the vow of silence can be followed only by ascetics and sages, that it lies beyond the capability of ordinary mortals. Hridayananda Tatt West corresponded, Choodie做不到 this misperception. “I have observed ordinary people observing mauna in daily life. A very orthodox elderly cook in our house during my school days strictly observed mauna one day of the week. No matter how much we joked about her stony silence, she never budged. So, too, my great-grand-aunt Kadakula, observed mauna on certain days of the week. She instructed that we children keep perfect silence at least during meals. Of course, despite our valiant efforts, our childish giggles could not be contained.” 

And also those who take the vow of silence include those who will descend to communicate with others by gesture or by writing things down. Speech has limitations, silence is objective. Speech makes friends or foes, silencebefriends all. Speech demands respect, silence commands it. Speech has regrets, silence none. Speech has limitations, silence is boundless. Speech needs effort, silence a lot more. Silence is a state of the mind, then to introspection, then to self-cleansing, finally to Liberty. 

Prema Pandurang
some silence is golden, others are silver and a lot prove out to be just heavy metal—copper, iron, zinc or tin. A few kinds of silence are brazen brass. Silence can be learned. Let us begin at the bottom, by silencing the brass. To do this there is a sadhana, spiritual discipline, the first of the Seven Sadhanas of Silence.

The brass sadhana is to conquer jealousy, which bemoans, “She has more than I do. He gets everything he asks for, while I get nothing or very little. It’s unfair.” This noise goes on daily in the mind of those in the jealousy chakra (svadhishthana), located in the knotty, which has to stop spinning in the astral areas of the inner mind to make way for peace of mind. How do we do this? It is easy. Just begin to stop talking to yourself about what is unfair.

Let all mental arguments go. Drop the subject. Be silent about the issue. Such a silence provides a place for harmony of minds, while too many people, complaining about “me and mine” gives no room for others.

The silence of the tin is an even worse din. Have you ever heard a child beat on a tin can? That’s how the force of anger sounds, “clank, clank, clank.” Not musical, not melodious, not even nice. The noise of anger, which vibrates in the svadhishthana chakra located in the thighs, has to be quieted to enjoy even the smallest sliver of silver peace. How do we do this? Well, it is expensive. A monetary sum is paid for each outburst or even unexpressed wave of anger. A jar, labeled “angry penance,” is established in the shrine room, into which a monetary sum is placed each time anger is experienced—the greater the expression, the larger the sum. The money collected is sent to the charity of one’s choice on the first day of each month.

The silence of zinc comes next. It is quieting the force of fear. Yes, fear can produce a very noisy mind. But it is not beyond being controlled and courted into obedience. Fear creates. Often we create our own fear, by saying, “I can’t do this. I can’t do that.” This noise goes on and on and on. It is important for seekers to silence the tendency to rationalize, to explain away, to excuse and defend the ego. To silence this saundhitha chakra, located at the kidney level, some basic yoga must be done to empower the higher self. Controlled breathing, pranayama, helps harness and slow down the prana, energy, that spins this chakra, as does hatha yoga. Sit quietly with the spine in a straight line. Breathe naturally, as a baby breathes, by using the diaphragm to push the stomach wall out, as the lower lungs inflate. The diaphragm pushes the stomach wall out, as the lower lungs inflate. Exhale slowly, relaxing the diaphragm, the air is expelled. Then pull the diaphragm in to push out the last bit of air. Nine counts in, hold one count out—this is a basic sadhana for the silence of copper.

With the intellect quieted a bit, we can seek the silence of silver, the stillness of willpower. How to quiet willpower? This means to use willpower positively to establish in the shrine room, into which a monetary sum is placed each time anger is experienced—the greater the expression, the larger the sum. The money collected is sent to the charity of one’s choice on the first day of each month.

The silence of silver is the worship. Sit quietly with the spine in a straight line. Breathe naturally, as a baby breathes, by using the diaphragm to push the stomach wall out, as the lower lungs inflate. Exhale slowly, relaxing the diaphragm, the air is expelled. Then pull the diaphragm in to push out the last bit of air. Nine counts in, hold one count out—this is a basic sadhana for the silence of copper.

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