

SILENCE IS A SIGN OF MANY VIRTUES SUCH AS A STRONG INTELLECT & WISDOM

Soon silence will have passed into legend. Man has turned his back on silence. Day after day he invents machines & devices that increase noise & distract humanity from the essence of life, contemplation, meditation. Tooting, howling, screeching, booming, crashing, whistling, grinding, & trilling bolster his ego. His anxiety subsides. His inhuman void spreads monstrously like a city smog. **Silence is now an endangered species.**

There is, of course, a place for noise, as there is for daily lives. There is a place for roaring, for the shouting exultation of a cricket game, for hymns and spoken prayers, for orchestras and cries of pleasure. Silence, like all the best things, is best appreciated in its absence: if noise is the signature tune of the world, silence is the music of the other world, the closest thing we know to the harmony of the spheres. But the greatest charm of noise is when it ceases.

In silence, suddenly, it seems as if all the windows of the world are thrown open and everything is as clear as on a morning after rain. Silence, ideally, hums. It charges the air. In Tibet, where the silence has a tragic cause, it is still quickened by the fluttering of prayer flags, the tolling of temple bells, the roar of wind across the plains, the memory of chant.

Silence, then, could be said to be the ultimate province of trust: it is the place where we trust ourselves to be alone; where we trust others to understand the things we do not say; where we trust a higher harmony to assert itself. We all know how treacherous are words, and how often we use them to paper over embarrassment, or emptiness, or fear of the larger spaces that silence brings. “Words, words, words” commit us to positions we do not really hold, the imperatives of chatter; words are what we use for lies, false promises and gossip. We babble with strangers; with intimates we can be silent. We “make conversation” when we are at a loss; we unmake it when we are alone, or with those so close to us that we can afford to be alone with them. In love, we are speechless; in awe, we say, words fail us.

An important factor in the successful quest for understanding: self-discipline. To cultivate and maintain self-discipline, the naturalness of the state of solitude is requisite. Silence is a bit of heaven that comes down to earth. Silence is the language of nature. When one observes silence one finds oneself at one with nature, and surely there is no higher plane

on which the human soul may exist.

One cannot, of course, remain silent in the absolute sense. When one appears to be silent, one is so for others, not for oneself. Remaining silent as far the external world goes, one starts conversing with one’s internal world. Observing silence is a great act. When one is silent one’s attention is diverted more to ‘heavenly’ matters than to ‘down-to-earth’ ones. One’s ears are turned more to the whispers of angels than to those of men. One’s focus becomes one’s own self rather than extraneous matters. One eschews superficiality & engages with deeper realities.

When we speak, we are in a limited domain, but when we are silent we find ourselves in the unlimited vastness of the universe. Language can only deal meaningfully with a special, restricted segment of reality. The rest, and it is presumably the much larger part, is silence. Release your soul upon the rain that streams against your window. Or upon that moonbeam. Upon that ray of sunshine. Or upon the night sky & its twinkling stars...breathtaking isn’t it...no, not the stars, the quietness. You ought to be prepared to be able to be sufficient for yourself. To be your own companion.

Quiet Prayer: An antidote to the rampant unraveling of the very social fabric which has held us together for ages. Its tenets of reflection & contemplation encourages a disciplined unity while discouraging overindulgence in the physical world. It gently promotes a life of quiet contemplation and a gentle aesthetic principle that underscores a meditative approach. Prayer demotes the role of the intellect & promotes an intuitive feel for life where relationships between people & their environments should be harmonious. By embodying the spirit to remind itself of its own mortality, it can elevate the quality of human life in a world that is fast losing its spirituality. One of the biggest drains on our energy & emotion, and one of the greatest hindrances to peace, is our inability to be silent. We are constantly robbing ourselves of peace, because we choose to meddle in the affairs of others. We slander. We gossip. We have a difficult time dealing with blank spaces.

Noise Annoys: Loud “music” if it can be called that, brings “solace” if it can be called that, to those who have holes where once their souls occupied. Wild animals are more “civilized.” You’re “Christian” then investigate Isaiah 32:18: “...my

people dwell in a peaceful abiding place & in residence of full confidence & in undisturbed resting places.” Living in a permanent irritation of dissonance. Half-a-hundred thoughts wrestle for our attention. The world is constantly encroaching. Life is devoid of silence, then devoid of joy. Life’s meaningfulness is then lost. Life is flat & tasteless. We’re emotionally insensitive. We’re desensitized. We’re numb.

There is need to escape our over-entertained and over-informed world – to escape from the dissonance of too much of everything. We need oases of quiet in which sounds that nurture our sense of peace, compassion & imagination: like falling water, rustling foliage & birdsong – become audible again. If your silence is interrupted by the pounding madness emanating not from huge speakers, but in reality from the minds of those driven to insanity by Satan, then you’re being hampered from life’s most important pleasure...reflection. Loud “music” is an overwhelming mess of sound, designed to drive thought & growth out of our minds & God out of our hearts. Noise allows us to hide our uncivilized ways. Many driven to despair because of inaction by politicians, police. All are impotent to bring “quietness” because they themselves are inundated with the din of the world.

They need God...of the One Who Speaks through the words of Silence. Use this Silence & you truly live. Truly blaze with the radiance of intelligence. We are satisfyingly nourished & blessed when we are surrounded by quiet. Silence allows us to acknowledge the limitations of our grasp on what lies within & without us, the knowledge that there’s something beyond the self. Our tranquil thoughts & silent imaginings determine the course of our hearts & behaviour. Now, damn it, turn off that Surround Sound. Ahh...silence is a friend; silence is comfortable; **silence is welcomed.** Silence is the sweetest melody. It is the element in which great people fashion themselves. Like Muhammad (p) in the silence of Cave Hira. “Hold your peace...” is not silence just for the sake of silence. Quranic silence is for contemplation, to understand & enhance your learning. It is blessed. **Why do u continue to speak OVER the Voice of God?**

Is there a wicked silence? When wrong has been committed & your lips are sealed...When truth is replaced by silence, the

silence is a lie.

SIT & LISTEN TO THE FULLNESS OF THE QUIET, AS AN ANTIPODE TO FOCUSED BUSYNESS



THE SOUND OF COMPLETE SILENCE IS BREATHTAKING

It’s in these quiet moments that you breathe deep of Spiritual Oxygen

Human solitude is an essential method for acquiring the highest knowledge. **Silence is the think-tank of the soul.** It is in solitude, contemplation & a connection with nature that we transcend the frenzied & desperate existence imposed upon us by the **distortions** of a commodity culture. It is clear that nowhere in commercial life, save perhaps the graveyard, is there a space **not** polluted by electronic voices. Silence is **anathema**, perhaps dangerous, as it might invite boredom, or, worse, introspection, and by God the public must not be bored or suffer self. The “smartphone” & whichever other **electro-leeches** at hand are key in this mess. Like little tyrants they screech & demand a hearing; like infants they wail at all hours & must be assuaged. We plug them in our own faces like pacifiers. **With our cell phones constantly ringing, our incessant, nonsensical twittering, our foolish social networking status updates, we will find ourselves retiring to mental institutions & hospitals for medications.** Be quiet. **It was the Prophet’s practice to retire often to a cave in the desert for Meditation. His public presence grew from private silence.**

SILENCE HAS BECOME A STRANGER. AND SO HAS GOD.

**“WHEN THE QURAN IS READ,
LISTEN TO IT WITH ATTENTION,
AND HOLD YOUR PEACE, SO THAT
YOU MAY RECEIVE MERCY”
THERE IS A SAYING: “WHEN I AM
SPEAKING, I AM NOT LISTENING,
AND WHEN I AM NOT LISTENING,
I AM NOT LEARNING.” THIS
SAYING HAS THE SAME MEANING
AS IS EXPRESSED IN THE
AFOREMENTIONED VERSE.**

BE QUIET & FIND GOD

Cave Hira. Silent. The city, Mecca. A cacophony of sound. One man. Steps out of the boundaries of this noise, walking upwards. Into the silence of the mountain, where the eye ranges freely through the still, pure air & fondly traces out the restful contours apparently built for eternity. Enters the cave. It's Quiet. It's Perfect. Perfect for a life-changing experience. The soul that has re-created itself in isolation has gained something of the humility of the grass, the rocks, the winds. All that lives is holy unto it; and it realizes, taught by the innumerable voices of Nature, a certain ultimate equality in everything that draws breath.

Glimpses of sky, motions of leaves, flickerings of sunlight & shadow, voyagings of clouds, roof-edges against infinite space, it is upon these things that we fix our eyes – consciously /unconsciously – while we are struggling to take a grim & stoical, rather than self-pitying, view of any particular circumstance. Wasn't the Prophet (p) perturbed over the condition of the people? He lived

during the time of tribal wars & the worship of idols which formed the heart of his reflections on how an intelligent person copes with a world gone mad.

That's why the quiet of Cave Hira was important. For the total development of the human being, solitude as a means of cultivating *sensitivity* becomes a necessity. One has to know what it is to be alone, what it is to meditate, what it is to die; and the implications of solitude, of meditation, of death, can be known only by seeking them out. *Sensitivity* means being sensitive to everything around one – to the plants, the animals, the trees, the skies, the waters of the river, the bird on the wing; and also the moods of the people around one, and to the stranger who passes by. This sensitivity brings about the quality of uncalculated, unselfish, response, which is true morality & conduct.

Solitude is the companion of spiritual exaltation. Silence remains, inescapably, not just a form of speech but the best of speeches. Solitude helps the mind to see itself clearly, as in a mirror, and to free itself from the vain endeavour of ambition with all its complexities, fears & frustrations, which are the outcome of self-centered activity. *This freedom from personal vanities cultivates a better self, a universal self.* Solitude gives to the mind a stability, a constancy, which is not to be measured in terms of time. Such clarity of mind is character. *“And indeed you, O Muhammad, are on a character most lofty.”* Surah Al-Qalam (68:4)

And when that sought silence was broken, witnessed only by the Prophet (p) the sound that burst forth from the heavens has continuously consoled us & counseled us to regulate our life & our death.

So let's contemplate these words of *Pico Iyer* to understand silence as growth, as the soul's success. Every one of us knows the sensation of going up, on retreat, to a high place and feeling ourselves so lifted up that we can hardly imagine the circumstances of our usual lives, or all the things that make us fret. In such a place, in such a state, we start to recite the standard litany: that silence is sunshine, where company is

clouds; that silence is rapture, where company is doubt; that silence is golden, where company is brass.

But silence is **not** so easily won. And before we race off to go prospecting in those hills, we might usefully recall that fool's gold is much more common & that gold has to be panned for, dug out from other substances. “All profound things & emotions of things are preceded & attended by Silence,” wrote Herman Melville, one of the loftiest & most eloquent of souls. Working himself up to an ever more thunderous cry of affirmation, he went on, “Silence is the general consecration of the universe. Silence is the invisible laying on of the Divine Hands upon the world. Silence is the only Voice of our God.” For Melville, though, silence finally meant darkness and hopelessness and self-annihilation. Devastated by the silence that greeted his heartfelt novels, he retired into a public silence from which he did not emerge for more than 30 years. Then, just before his death, he came forth with his final utterance – the luminous tale of Billy Budd – and showed that silence is only as worthy as what we can bring back from it.

We have to earn silence, then, to work for it: to make it **not** an absence but a presence; **not** emptiness but repletion. Silence is something more than just a pause; it is that enchanted place where space is cleared and time is stayed and the horizon itself expands. In silence, we often say, we can hear ourselves think; but what is truer to say is that in silence we can hear ourselves **not** think, and so sink below our selves into a place far deeper than mere thought allows. In silence, we might truly say, we can hear Someone else's voice.

Or simply breathe. For silence is responsiveness, and in silence we can listen to something behind the clamour of the world. “A person who loves God, necessarily loves silence,” wrote Thomas Merton, who was, as a Trappist, a connoisseur, a caretaker of silences. It is no coincidence that places of worship are places of silence: if idleness is the devil's playground, silence may be the angels'. It is no surprise that silence is an anagram of license. And it is only right that believers all but worship silence, for it is

the place where everyone finds their God, however they may express it. Silence is an ecumenical state, beyond the doctrines and divisions created by the mind. If everyone has a spiritual story to tell of their life, everyone has a spiritual silence to preserve.

So it is that we might almost say silence is the tribute we pay to holiness; we slip off words when we enter a sacred space, just as we slip off shoes. A “moment of silence” is the highest honour we pay someone; it is the point at which the mind stops & something else takes over (words run out when feelings rush in). A “vow of silence” is for holy men the highest devotional act. We hold our breath, we hold our words; we suspend our chattering selves & let ourselves “fall silent,” and fall into the highest place of all. A vow of silence is observed by both Zakariah & Maryam after their vision of the angel.

It seems that the world is getting noisier these days: in Japan, which may be a model of our future, cars/buses have voices, doors/elevators speak. In a doctor's waiting room, for heaven's sake, **a doctor**, you have to listen to piped music. Some of it have the effect of fingernails scraping down a blackboard. It's all over this “piped noise,” this psychological manipulation (supermarkets, malls, airports, cafes, hospitals, even in the funeral homes). At business expos the pounding decibel would delight none other than Jezebel. It makes you shuffle about like a creature from Dawn of the Dead. Cheap stupid marketing.

The answering machine talks to us, and for us, somewhere above the din of the TV; the MP3 player preserves a public silence but ensures that we need never – in the bathtub, a mountaintop, at our desks – be without the clangor of the world. White noise becomes the aural equivalent of the clash of images, the nonstop blast of fragments that **increasingly agitates our minds**. As Ben Okri, the Nigerian novelist says: “When chaos is the god of an era, **clamorous music is the deity's chief instrument.**”

He who speaks more commits more errors. He who commits more errors becomes shameless.

He who is shameless will have less fear of God. He whose fear of God is less, his heart dies.

He whose heart dies enters the fire.

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