

Silence

Dasarath

"The experience of silence alone is the real and perfect knowledge."

Sri Ramana Maharshi

Silence is the key to intuition, to listening, to humility. It is the doorway to both actualization and transcendence. It is the most profound, and yet the most simple and practical of tools for the conscious workplace. Silence can show up at work in many ways. I am beginning more of my one-on-one and group sessions with a few moments of silence as a way for people to "arrive," relax, let go of the previous meeting, and be present to our task. We also use it in preparation for certain self-reflective exercises or to collect our thoughts before a group dialogue. I find that more and more people appreciate the practice for these simple benefits alone.

In a more subtle way, silence shows up at work in the willingness to be quiet when we have nothing to say. It is reflected in our openness to new ideas, our wish to clean out the accumulated encrustations of older ways, theories, premises, to be empty and allow creativity to arise. It is supported by developing a workplace culture that encourages people to admit they might not always be right, to not have easy answers to everything, to realize that it's okay to be wrong and to admit it. In that organizational silence a new voice can arise, new visions can appear, innovation and new directions can occur.

Initially, we may experience silence as the absence of sound. It is quiet, peaceful, a big relief. We love, it, we seek it. It is a clear contrast to the noise of our life and the chatter of everyday mind.

So we cultivate it. We learn to let go of thoughts and focus on the silent spaces between them. Here we find peace. In my experience, I saw clearly that I don't have to quiet the mind or restrain my thoughts. In listening to the silence between the thoughts it pulls on me with the force of a blackhole. It has a magnetic attraction that generates in me a willingness, a yearning, to listen more deeply, to be immersed in it. It's like making love with silence, both a full embrace of it and a surrender to it. This listening is consciousness turning to itself, sensing the gravitational pull it has on itself.

It is wonderful, yet we may start to judge our efforts when we have noisy, busy thoughts. Then we think we're not doing it well, we are not quiet. You discover you cannot make yourself quiet. The quiet is already here. As you practice, you begin to notice that as you dwell in the quiet space between the thoughts, it expands and deepens. You see it is really space-inner space, outer space are the same all-pervasive context-the emptiness in which everything exists. The infinite space in which the planets and galaxies exists, in which all universes exist, is the same space in which all mental activity comes and goes. This space is silence.

The magnificence of this silence allows for everything-sound, thought, and action-to occur within it. Thoughts take place in the silence. They come and go, and the silence is always here, just as the sky is the context for

weather. Weather comes and goes. It's the transient, changing, ephemeral. Silence is the unchanging, the timeless. Like empty space, it is qualityless.

Then you realize that silence is the source out of which everything arises, abides in, and to which it returns. It's the formless underlying essence that is constantly giving birth to form-thought, voice, sound-like the ocean forever giving birth to waves. Ever changing, the waves arise from the ocean, are always the expression of the ocean, and when they return to the ocean they have gone nowhere. Wave and ocean are one. Silence, thought, and activity are one. Silence is not some passive antithesis to action and thought, but the ever-present spacious background of active life.

Finally, you realize that nothing obstructs this silence, that thought is no disruption of your silent Being. You see that all thought arises in this ocean of silence and does not disturb it. Why should the ocean mind if it has waves, if it is turbulent or smooth? The depths are unaffected by the surface.

So live from the depths of being-awareness and enjoy the surface activity without clinging. Love the entire activity of our humanness, our thoughts, feelings, physical experiences. Allow them as expressions of our deep true nature which is always clear and unstained. In this silent being-awareness is the pure knowing that knows itself.

"Just be quiet. This quiet does not involve talking or not talking. It does not involve any doing whatsoever. Just let the mind fall into silence. This is enough."

Sri. H.W.L. Poonja

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