

INTROSPECTION

WHY SILENCE IS IMPORTANT



B.K. SHEILU

Those of us who live in a city are usually exposed to noise of some kind. There is the sound of vehicular traffic, construction work, the whirl and hum of appliances and gadgets, and television and music players. Such noise has become so much a part of urban life that many people do not even notice it unless it is too loud for comfort. What they also do not notice are the sounds they do not hear because of the pervasive noise – that of wind blowing

through trees, the buzz of insects, the chirping of birds...

Noise pollution is often overlooked compared to other forms of pollution, but it can do significant harm to human health and the environment. Continuous noise can disrupt sleep patterns, leading to insomnia, fatigue, and increased stress levels. Chronic exposure to noise pollution has been linked to elevated levels of anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues.

Nevertheless, some people are addicted to noise. Silence makes them uneasy. They have the television on all the time, even when no one is watching it, because they find the constant noise from it reassuring. It gives them the feeling that they are not alone. Then there are the other gadgets that science has given us, including the mobile phone and the portable music player. Many people seem to have earphones



In silence we can become aware of the subtle process by which our thoughts and feelings arise.

on all the time. They appear to be in a world of their own, heedless of what is happening around them. Sometimes this has tragic consequences. People have been run over when crossing roads, with

their earphones making them deaf to the sound of approaching vehicles.

Physical noise apart, the buzz within our minds too can do great harm. When we are pulled by desires, agi-

tated by anger, or otherwise distracted by a weakness, the commotion within does not allow us to notice the finer aspects of our thoughts and feelings. We are unable to calmly examine why we

are thinking or feeling in a certain way. Are our motives clean... are we jumping to a possibly erroneous conclusion on the basis of limited information or prejudice... could I have spoken

or behaved in a better way in a particular situation? Such self-examination and the learning and maturity it brings are impossible if we are always distracted by thoughts and feelings which we cannot control.

This is why silence – both physical and mental – is important. When we travel from a city to a quieter place in the countryside, the sounds of nature become more audible. These sounds soothe the mind and calm the senses, relaxing both body and mind. The experience is therapeutic. Mental calm can have a stronger effect. It can be experienced in any place at any time. We do not have to make a long trip to find it. All it requires is the will to make time for it and practice it.

Sitting quietly, reflecting on what is going on in the mind, makes us aware of the subtle process by which thoughts and feelings arise. Honest

introspection enables us to identify our weaknesses and find ways to become free from them.

Meditation is a step further than silent contemplation. We create positive thoughts for the self and others, based on recognition and acceptance of the fact that every human soul is originally good, regardless of the story they are going through at present. When we do this regularly and purposefully, the results are rewarding. The quality of our consciousness changes. We become a friend and guide to the world, open, helpful, and trusting – and also trustworthy. We are no longer defensive or on the offensive, out of fear or suspicion. We find that life is a lot less complicated and much more enjoyable than we had made it.

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ATTITUDE

The art of transforming the atmosphere



SARAH FITZGERALD

“You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of a difference you want to make.”

Jane Goodall

Atmosphere is subtle and constantly transforming and mutating. What we may not be truly conscious of is that on the one hand we carry an atmosphere from within us, everywhere we go, and not only that, but our presence also changes every situation.

What is it that creates our individual atmosphere, our individual vibration? It is based on our individual mindset and personality traits. These inform how we handle stress and affect our decision-making process. When we find ourselves in difficult situations that demand our instant attention, it sometimes turns out

that we fall back on a mindset that we either were not aware we had, or had been trying to control or hide. For example, people who are in positions of huge responsibility, often fail to act in the most appropriate or even the most honourable way, because they find that the instinct for self-preservation overtakes their sense of integrity.

All of us would like to behave with integrity, decency, honesty and clarity. What is needed is a practised awareness, based on understanding. Our attitude creates the atmosphere and it is awareness that informs our attitude. Our attitude is the foundation which gives us the ability to think and act in the most powerful way, and it is our attitude that can empower others. Many were saved after the attack on the World Trade Center, because of the attitude of those who remained calm and guided others down to safety.

We can create this kind of awareness by taking a step back, seeing the bigger picture, and recognising the physical world for what it is. The physical world is in constant flux. None of us can predict with accuracy what will happen next. If we base our awareness on this transitory and temporary state of the physical world, there will be constant insecurity.



If we have a powerful attitude and awareness, we can change the atmosphere in moments.

ty. Insecurity leads to unstable attitudes and unstable actions.

The key is to be aware that we are, in fact, visitors here. We are visitors to this physical world. It is not our home. With this awareness, we can prepare for all eventualities. Daily meditating on this reality, we come to the realisation that as visitors, we cannot own anything, and therefore cannot lose anything either. We are here on a journey, the world is a gift for us to enjoy, we are just passing through. This awareness brings:

- A perception of the bigger journey, the larger map.
- A feeling of lightness, of travelling with less, of feeling carefree.
- An appreciation and at-

titude of gratitude.

● An understanding that there is nothing to lose, nothing to own, no-one is a possession.

● A sense of taking care of what we are temporarily holding, like a trustee or a custodian.

This is the spiritual perspective. If we are visitors here, on a journey, then we must have a home. Our home is the primary atmosphere. It is an extremely nourishing atmosphere of unconditional love, a safe and sweet place. We all have a deep reference point for the qualities of the home, the peace, the love, the sense of belonging. That is why we constantly search for it here in the physical world, which is

not our home. We have lost the true awareness. All the world's a stage... We are here playing roles and have forgotten it is a play. Or it is as though we have gone on holiday, and at the beginning are enchanted by our new experiences, but as time has gone on, we have become so enthralled by the place we have forgotten we are visitors. We have become so absorbed in the play or the holiday destination, that we make decisions based on the attitude of belonging here. We have become the role we are temporarily playing.

We need to step back into our spiritual awareness. Because, in that awareness we have all we need. Within us is the peace, love, joy, sense of

belonging and pure feelings that we need. This attitude can empower others. When we see someone in distress, if we too become distressed, we feed that atmosphere, we trap that atmosphere and extend its duration. If we have a powerful attitude and awareness, we can change the atmosphere in moments and bring calm and solace to the one who is distressed. People love to be around those with this awareness. We are empowering the self and others, and everything will conspire to assist us, based on this premise. Meditation or yoga based on this awareness and understanding can transform any atmosphere.

*“It is with the power of yoga that you can make the atmosphere peaceful. Yoga is the only way for you to give the world the inheritance of peace. You remember the bome and the Supreme Friend in order to spread peace throughout the whole world.”*

From the teachings of Rajyoga meditation

We always have the option of reminding people around us of the primary atmosphere, the home of all souls. The art of transforming the atmosphere is within us all.

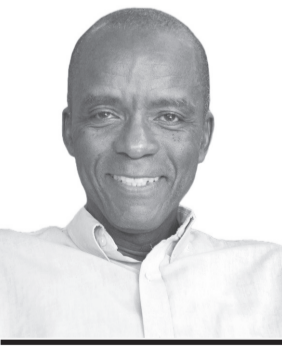
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A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

When I make a mistake, ego makes me defensive, preventing me from learning valuable lessons. When I resolve to learn from my mistakes, I conquer ego. Even if 99 per cent of a mistake involves another person, I can first be honest with myself and see what part I played. Only then can I learn. By becoming a humble learner, I free myself from ego. Today let me bypass ego to gain wisdom from my mistakes and accelerate my self-development.

CHANGE YOUR AWARENESS

WHAT KIND OF A WORLD DO WE WANT?



ANANTA ALVA

We want a better world than the one we have. A world that works for everyone. A world of peace. First, we must ask the question: How did we get here in the first place?

It was not by accident, but rather, by design. The world we are experiencing is not surprising, given that we chose individualism over community, consumption over conservation, and competition over cooperation. This modus operandi was

bound to lead to a world of perpetual wars, perpetual greed, and perpetual corruption.

We are not accepting that the problem is us. Human beings are so deeply flawed yet are attempting to solve this problem that we ourselves created. Albert Einstein said that you cannot solve a problem with the same mind that created it.

We continue to kneel at the physical altar in all its forms, completely oblivious, indeed ignorant of the spiritual. In essence, we are spiritual beings. Cliché though it has become, we are spiritual beings having a physical experience, not the other way around. To make us right side up again, our investments must now be made in favour of the spiritual rather than the physical. We will find there the answers to all our challenges. We will discover that the soul has



It is in the right awareness that we will find our salvation.

neither wants nor needs, is whole, complete, and abundantly endowed. It finds joy in giving, has no need to take,

and has no fear of dying. We discover that we are perennial joy and have no need for passing pleasure, the pursuit

of which has left us spiritually bankrupt and devoid of the love and happiness we are looking for in all the

wrong places.

The fear, anxiety, and the myriad other maladies we are currently overwhelmed

with, are a function of this confusion, indeed ignorance that has given rise to attitudes, vision, perspectives and actions that are ruining the planet and giving us empty lives without mean-

*We are aware that we are aware. We are not aware, however, of who we truly are. We are conscious of ourselves as a body (body conscious), rather than as the immortal soul (soul conscious).*

ing and purpose. Instead of looking within, our focus is without.

It is in the right awareness that we will find our salvation. We are aware that we are aware. We are not aware, however, of who we truly are. We are conscious of ourselves as a body (body conscious), rather than as the immortal soul (soul conscious). When this latter

informs our living, the right attitudes, vision, perspective, and actions naturally flow from that awareness. Right solutions can only come from the correct diagnosis. The world was once a

garden. It has now become a wilderness. It is up to each one of us, with the awareness of being a soul, the seed, to nurture our spiritual lives and water the roots of a new way of thinking. If we take on that responsibility, imagine what our world could grow to be.

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