

## SOLITUDE

## The sweetness of silence



BILL SIMO

undone, conversations that could have gone better, and worries about the future, we are unable to find calm or silence, even if we find the space and time to be alone. For some, silence is equated with boredom or fear, dryness or loneliness, because those superficial thought processes are full of sorrow, pain, or uncomfortable feelings. Silence in the soul though, is very, very sweet.

The sweetness of silence is the experience we have when we go deep into the spirit. It is like entering a very sacred space. A place where we can see new perspectives and open ourselves to new possibilities. For this we need to move beyond the noise of the mind. The tool to reach this space and experience this sweetness, is through meditation. It is in this that we need the power of thought, not the lack of thought. We can take one spiritual thought and make it the key to move into silence. This is not analytical thought, we do not need problem-solving skills, we need to allow ourselves to go beyond the waves of the surface thoughts. Firstly, we need to move

In a world where it is difficult to find a space or a moment of time that is free from a cacophony of sound, it is refreshing to know that silence can be reached by simply going within, even when surrounded by movement, discordant noise, and agitation.

We can use the analogy of the ocean. If we are sailing on the surface of the ocean, we are subject to the movement of the waves, the currents, and the force and direction of the wind. However, if we dive below, and steadily enter the depths and wonder of the deep, then what tranquillity we can experience. In the same way, if we only hear our superficial consciousness, with all the clamour of things to be done, things left



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beyond physical sensations. This is not as easy as it may sound. We are spiritual beings, not physical, but we are

combined with the body. We need to move beyond that. One of the ways to help that, is to make sure the body is in

balance and comfortable as we start to meditate.

Then we have to go beyond the many things on the sur-

face of our consciousness. There will be echoes of the reverberations of the events

of the day; conversations,

events and actions all reverberate as we start to meditate. The reason for this is that we are not completely detached from the outcomes of the actions we perform. We are invested in certain outcomes, and so when we sit to meditate, all these thoughts surface. The biggest hindrance are the noises in the mind that are negative. Thoughts of resentment, for example, towards someone who has made us feel offended. These kinds of thoughts, unless we are very careful and aware of them, cause difficulties, if we allow them to expand and become louder and louder. There may also be memories of the past surfacing, event from a distant past, which created an impact, even a traumatic impact. This all creates a noise in our minds. There are also things left unresolved; the pain and hurt we may have caused will also be remembered, all of the unsettled karma. If we are able to watch all this as a detached observer, we will see it all clearly.

However, one way we can help reduce this kind of noise is by living our lives, each day, based on spiritual principles. This will keep

the noise at a lower level and then we can become absorbed in the sweetness of silence in a shorter time and more deeply.

Solitude is our best friend in all of this. Solitude is not necessarily being physically alone; solitude is an inner solitude which gives us the deep, loving, nurturing experience of silence. The wonderful thing is that the more we spend time in this solitude and sweet silence, the more we become aware of the existence of a source of spiritual energy. The energy of the Divine, the Supreme, the Being of Light that is so easy to connect with in this experience of silence, because that is the wavelength that the Supreme Being operates on. We can tune into this most powerful source of spiritual energy, and we can replenish ourselves. Once we have experienced this, we realise how essential this experience is. Then we give ourselves the opportunity, again and again, to taste the sweetness of silence.

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## EMPATHY

## SPIRITUAL ANTIDOTE TO BEING JUDGMENTAL



B.K. DR. SAVITA

behaviour, or beliefs, we limit our understanding of who they truly are. We may assume that someone who dresses differently from us or has different political or religious beliefs is inferior or despicable. By making such an assumption, we deny ourselves the opportunity to learn from and appreciate the diversity of others.

We also create misunderstandings and harm relationships by putting up a barrier between ourselves and others, making it difficult to establish a genuine connection. For example, if we assume that someone is dishonest or untrustworthy, we are likely to treat them with suspicion or contempt. Such an attitude can foster a negative and toxic environment and lead to conflict. By judging others harshly, we also invite others to do the same, which can lead to a culture of criticism and negativity that erodes trust, respect, and empathy, which

Most of us tend to make judgments about the world around us. It is a part of our cognitive process to analyse, interpret, and label information in order to make sense of our environment. To this extent, it serves a useful purpose. However, when the judgments become critical and negative, taking the form of adverse assumptions or opinions based on limited information or preconceived notions, the consequences can be harmful. When we judge someone based on their appearance,

## PERSPECTIVE

## Seeing straight in a crooked world



NEVILLE HODGKINSON

agree. It is unrealistic to believe we can find peace and harmony everywhere. A naïve longing for unity can make us become frustrated, confused, and defensive when others do not think along the same lines as ourselves.

When this sort of over-sensitivity develops, we no longer see clearly. We react badly to criticism, finding it difficult to acknowledge our mistakes, and always trying to prove ourselves right. We become over-critical of others, and blind to different points of view.

We might even suffer from a kind of spiritual diabetes, in which we cannot tolerate genuine sweetness in others, seeing it instead as a chance to exploit them!

When these patterns of thought and feeling continue over a long period of time, the brain and other bodily organs become conditioned

Most of us are at our happiest when we are able to cooperate, supporting each other with positivity, encouragement, and genuine consideration. We strive to do this in our families, our workplaces, and in any other kind of group we are part of. When we work together, the outcomes are usually good as well. We often forget, however, that to cooperate does not mean we always have to



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are essential for healthy relationships. Being judgmental also harms our own mental health. Our judgements are often a projection of our insecurities, and our notions

of superiority or inferiority can lead to negative emotions such as anger, frustration, and resentment, or feelings of guilt, shame, or inadequacy, which will harm our emotional well-

being. It is clear that all this has negative consequences for society as a whole. When we judge others based on their race, gender, or religion, we contribute to the existing

divisions and inequalities in society, unwittingly fueling discrimination, harassment, and even violence. This perpetuates the cycle of hate and intolerance that has plagued the world for

centuries. But how do we become more inclusive, tolerant, and compassionate in the face of adverse circumstances and people whose behaviour seems irrational and harmful? The key is to recognise our true identity and our connection with all the other people in the world. We are souls - that is our eternal identity. The body is the physical medium through which the soul expresses itself. It is the soul that thinks, feels, and acts.

The body, whatever its colour, shape, size, or features, is the costume in which the actor, the soul, plays its role in the drama of life. When we recognise and accept this reality, we begin to connect with other souls, the actors, and stop judging them by their costume. It also dawns on us that as souls, the children of the Supreme Soul, we are all part of one human family.

Understanding this spiritual kinship fosters better understanding, and bonds of love. Where there is genuine love there is empathetic discernment, not judgment. There is appreciation, goodwill, and support to help the other person overcome any weakness they may have. It helps to remember that just as we are not perfect and have our flaws, others too may have some weaknesses, but they do not define those persons. Would we like to be judged solely on the basis of our defects? So, how fair is it to do the same to others?

Understanding this helps to create an environment of mutual respect and trust which gives strength to souls and to their relationships. This is the foundation of a more tolerant and compassionate world.

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In today's world, differences of opinion are inevitable, but we need to respect the value of each individual.

to seeing and responding to the world in that crooked way. Fear, hurt, anger, worry,

resentment, and a sense of losing out become part of our habitual responses, which

become our character. We only need look in the mirror, when feeling any of these emotions, to see the negative impact on the body. This insidious drift of thought patterns does not mean I am a bad person, but that my innermost needs are not being met. They are a signal of a need to change. Fortunately, both science and spirituality are converging in providing an understanding of how that change can happen.

At the frontiers, science is telling us that our brains and bodies are a reflection of a non-material, informational reality. The mind is at a deeper, more creative level than the brain. It is a faculty of the soul. And spirituality tells us that the soul is a part of a unifying consciousness that underlies all creation. Through meditation and spiritual study, we can renew our relationship

with a Supreme Being who is like a reference point for all that is highest in ourselves. Renewing this relationship fills the mind with truth, strength, love, and peace. With practice, that positive power enters my heart and brain and life, displacing negative tendencies. I start to see straight again. Not trying to pretend that differences of perspective do not exist - in today's world, there are always going to be lots of different ideas and opinions - but respecting and appreciating the value of each member of the group, whatever their individual contribution. With this appreciative vision of each other, there is a much better chance of finding clear ways forward together, even in the midst of all the different points of view.

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## A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

Fixed lines of loyalty and kinship often define who we are willing to help. Historical and tribal boundaries are crossed when there is need. When extreme difficulties occur, people reach beyond the comfort of their perimeter (neighbourhood, race or culture) to help others. It is uplifting and inspiring to witness this and feeds a growing sense of unity in our human family. Today let me stretch my heart and mind beyond my zone of comfort.