



Sathya Sai International  
Organisation

**SILENCE**



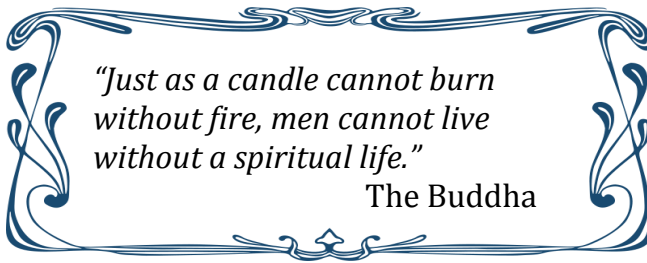
# SILENCE – A MEANS TO EXPERIENCE DIVINITY

*“The voice of God can be heard only in the depth of silence.”*  
Sathya Sai Baba

## The Goal of Spiritual Life

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1. A fundamental view of ourselves is that *“We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience.”* – Pierre Teilhard de Chardin
2. In Eastern traditions, spirituality aims at awakening in man the awareness of the divinity inherent in him, so that he may manifest the Divine Cosmic Consciousness that is present within and outside him. It involves destroying the animal nature in man and developing divine tendencies in him. In Hinduism, the Bhagavad Gita provides the paths of spiritual evolution to enable the seeker to realize his true self in God (Ch. 4, verse 10).



3. In Christianity, it is believed that the time will come when all things will be subject unto God, and God will be all in all (1. Corinthians 15:28) – St. Augustine’s prayer proposed communion of life in God. In Islam, spirituality, or *rabbaniyat*, is the quest of discovering and experiencing God, to whom man is accountable,

through contemplation. In Judaism, material is always potentially spiritual and God is ever-present.

4. Although there may be philosophical differences, every major religious/spiritual tradition seeks to provide a pathway towards establishing one's self in God.

## **The Spiritual Journey**

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5. The spiritual path is sometimes treacherous and one is well advised to 'Always Be Careful'. All our spiritual practices are performed through the mind but the mind is subtle and expansive, it is restless and deluded by its association with the material world and the joys it seeks therefrom.

*"Your living is determined not so much by what life brings to you as by the attitude you bring to life; not so much by what happens to you as by the way your mind looks at what happens."*

Khalil Gibran

*"It is a futile waste of one's life to go after such transient pleasures. Realizing the meaninglessness of such pursuits, the sages practiced self-control as the means to enduring happiness. They evolved the technique of turning the senses and the mind inward to seek the source of lasting bliss." – Sathya Sai Baba*

6. A research study by Killingworth & Gilbert from Harvard University published in 2010 revealed that

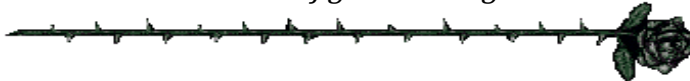
the human mind is a wandering mind (or a 'monkey mind', according to Hindu sages) and that "A wandering mind is an unhappy mind". The authors recognised that many philosophical and religious traditions teach that one can find happiness by living in the moment and 'being present'.

7. Thich Nhat Hanh, a renowned Vietnamese Buddhist monk, says the present moment is the only moment there is for us to be alive, and he recommends watching the breath every time the mind wanders away in order to bring it back to the present.
8. The goal of life in Buddhism is Enlightenment, which is a state of perfect wisdom where suffering is overcome. In Buddhism, mindfulness meditation involves knowing the mind, training the mind and freeing the mind.
9. In the Bhagavad Gita, it is taught that the mind can be mastered by systematic practice, ardent self-enquiry and detachment. The goal is to fix the purified mind single-pointedly on God, and eventually to transcend the mind. Spiritual practices like prayer, recitation of the Lord's name, study of scripture or meditation purify the mind, intellect and heart, and prepare one to receive the Lord's grace for the ultimate purpose of identifying ourselves with God. Thus, spirituality is an inner journey of self-transformation.
10. However, there are varying approaches. Craig Dykstra, an ordained Presbyterian minister in the Reformed tradition, wrote: *"Christian practices are not activities we do to make something spiritual happen in our lives ... Rather, they are patterns of communal action that create openings in our lives where the grace, mercy, and presence of God may be made known to us. They are*

*places where the power of God is experienced."*

11. In Islam, the human soul is Allah's *Khalifah* (appointee) in this world and is vested with authority and responsibilities and obligations. The body is used for the soul to carry out these duties. In this way, man is obliged to act in accordance with Divine will and the better he performs his duties the closer he will be to Allah. This is spiritual development. Faith, subservience, Allah consciousness and godliness are central on this road of spirituality.
12. In Judaism, it is said in the Book of Jonah (Chapter 1) that we hide from God by not being more open to Him. Jacob teaches that God is everywhere and spirituality is about finding larger meaning in life and letting God in.

*"Silence is the source of great strength." – Lao Tzu*



13. Thus, in every tradition, one has to withdraw from the pleasures and impulses of a materialistic life to seek communion with God. Three practices appear to be universal: in prayer or in meditation, **Silence** (always be attentive to the word or form on which we contemplate), **Stillness** (of mind to reduce desires) and **Simplicity** (in our being).

## **Observing Silence as Spiritual Practice**



14. Sathya Sai Baba said, *"You feel the presence of God when silence reigns. In the excitement and confusion of the market place, you cannot hear His footfall."* Silence is the speech of the spiritual seeker. It is perhaps little

wonder that in just about every faith tradition, prayer is offered with eyes shut and in silence, and contemplation is done in silence. The sanctity of places of worship is often characterized by their relative silence.

*"Let silence take you to the core of life." - Rumi*

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15. The ancient sages practiced silence to maintain purity of speech; they knew that excessive talk could lead to sins like hurting others, speaking falsehood or creating emotional excitement. Benjamin Disreali said, *"Silence is the mother of truth."* It is said that a wayward tongue will not proceed far on the Godward path.
16. Reduce social contacts to a minimum and carry an atmosphere of quiet contemplation with you. Soft, sweet speech is the expression of genuine love; the bond of brotherhood will be tightened if people speak less and speak sweet. *"Silence is holy. It draws people together ... this is the great paradox."* – Nicholas Sparks, American novelist.
17. Energy within is wasted with too much talk; when the mind is peaceful and silent one has extra energy. Solutions are revealed in silence.
18. Silence also means getting beyond the influence of the senses. Withdraw the mind from its subservience to the senses so that it may follow its real master, the intellect. When the eyes, ears and tongue are under control and used for self-improvement, the mind and the hands can be easily controlled. Exercise discrimination to fix one's desires on what is permanent.
19. Beyond this, remember silence is not just the absence

of speech; it is also the absence of thoughts. The mind is a bundle of thoughts and to achieve absence of thoughts, still the mind (remove the disturbance of emotions, desires, feelings, unnecessary thoughts, etc.) – be vigilant of your thoughts and emotions. Purify the mind to cognize God in everything. Have only sacred thoughts. Over time, this purity of mind naturally manifests as kindness in thoughts, words and deeds.

20. Reduce unnecessary thoughts by linking focusing on the breath. In Eastern tradition, where it is believed that man is a part of God, link the breath to Soham (meaning: “I am He”). Soham reminds us that we are connected to God. “So” as we breathe in and “Ham” as we exhale, while contemplating on our oneness with God.
21. Withdraw the mind from the external world. Contemplate on God always; chant the Lord’s Name. Dwell always in the thought of God, whose voice is heard when all other voices cease. This is true meditation.
22. When the activity of the mind is reduced, the inner-Self manifests itself. It is possible to experience God only in the depth of silence. Dwell in the noiseless inner calm. Eventually dissolve the mind.



*“In the silence of the heart God speaks. If you face God in prayer and silence, God will speak to you. Then you will know that you are nothing. It is only when you realize your nothingness, your emptiness, that God can fill you with Himself.”*

Mother Teresa



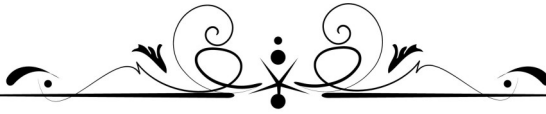


23. A disciplined life and constant effort is required.

### **Practice and Persevere – things we can do**

- 24. Practice silence for at least half-an-hour every day. Sit in complete silence and listen for the voice of God. Be patient, success will come if you persevere. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa silently waited for God to come and shower His grace.
- 25. Observe silence whilst going about daily chores. He explains that when the tongue is active, the ears are also alert for responses and one absorbs all sorts of vibrations that can affect the mind adversely.
- 26. Continue to consciously cut out unnecessary talk throughout the day.
- 27. As a spiritual discipline, switch off your gadgets for a while each day and free your mind of its bondage to the outside world.





*"Silence is not a matter of resolve. It is always there. Silence is the constant, endless flow of pure God into you, while in the world."*

Sathya Sai Baba

