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S. Narendra

Theme of this Issue
Sound of Silence

Guest Editor
S. Narendra

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PR-e-FACE: From the desk of Strategic Editor Silence and Communication go together



Silence has always played a very crucial role in our lives. In fact, the importance of silence (especially in its spiritual form called 'moun vrat') has been described

in the earliest of our epics. Many spiritual leaders of puranic days are regarded to have communicated to their disciples through their silence clarifying the doubts of their disciples, through their meditation.

Silence and communication. Do they not sound contradictions? No, rather need not at all. After all, what is the objective of communication? To give a message, to say something, make others understand, simply express something? If this could be achieved, just by being silent just by observing or just by looking, is that not communication by silence? Actually, in these days of hypes and over-kills, making excessive noises of trivial issues, sensationalizing silly incidents and making mountains out of mole hole in the journalistic garb of startling exposes and stunning revelations, it is quite odd that silence is taken as a means of communication. But still, it is. In the

pages to come, we will be seeing this its wider ramifications, the entire gamut of silence as a weapon to communicate, an instrument of expression, a tool to make a point even effectively.

When words do not speak, deeds do. Often the body language does. Frequently silence does. We do not use any language, no words, no gestures but still do we not communicate just by being silent? Silence is concurrence, they say. But, quite often, it has been true otherwise too. Hence it is quite appropriate that we have taken "Silence as Communication as the theme of this issue. Quite silently.

Humans are social animals and communication is the core of human life. Silence too is an integral part of humans. But how do we remain silent and still communicate and how can silence be a communication tool?

Enjoy reading this issue, in silence and communicate your views to the editorial team by any means, including silence!

Rajendran

Guest Editor



Mr S Narendra was the Information Advisor to various Indian Prime Ministers for nearly 7 years. He was also the Chief spokesperson of the Government of India. He has closely worked with various Indian Prime Ministers during challenging times including Mr P. V. Narasimha Rao, who opened up Indian economy. Mr Narendra can be reached at sunarendra@gmail.com

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PR-e-FACE: From the desk of Guest Editor

Circumspection and Silence go together in Governance

Effective communication can take place without sound or gestures; and, silence, used wisely, could be more eloquent. To quote Keats: "unheard melodies are sweeter" ('shruta gana abhirama, ashruta gana abhirama tarām'). When decision making through loud sound-bytes has become the political norm, employing the art of silence as a communication weapon is rare and criticized. Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, used this weapon very effectively and received his share of criticism from the loud mouthed.

Ever circumspect that he was, he cautioned against creating hype about the mere fact of his cabinet giving nod to any new proposal. His advice was that when the proposal got implemented, it would create its own communication.

Some times by not expressing any opinion on an item coming up before the cabinet and deferring the subject, Rao would signal a powerful message.

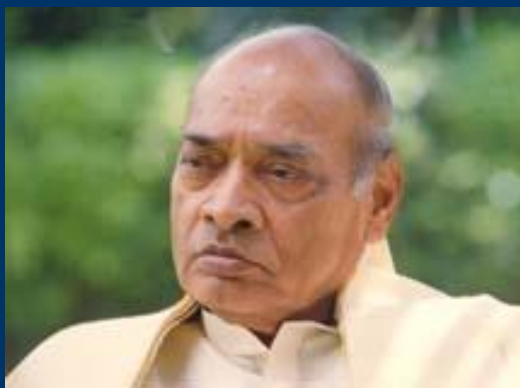
The finance ministry was keen to drastically cut most government subsidies, including the subsidy to food grains supplied through the ration shops. This was at a time when there were misgivings within the ruling party over liberalization and when there were demands to strengthen the social safety net for protecting the people affected by

economic policy changes. Every time the proposal to increase the price of food grains issued through ration shops came up before the cabinet, without a word Rao would shift to the next agenda item. Through this stratagem he avoided a political storm within and outside the government. Economic liberalization was not very popular within his own party as well as a section of the private business. Without picking up a fight with them, he quietly allowed the loosening of bolts and nuts holding the weight of state control over economic activities. When these started bearing fruit, liberalization won many votaries.

He preferred action to words. Here is an example: the minister in charge of power sector excitedly rushed to him with an announcement in

1994 that a Hong Kong based tycoon offered to sign a MOU with India for generating 10,000 MW. Rao's suggestion to the minister was to sign the MOU but let the foreign tycoon make the announcement along with its details. The minister preferred the sound byte. And nothing more was ever heard about this MOU. **(Gestation time of power projects is long and people feel their impact over time. In the meanwhile, the short term pains to be endured by power consumers are many. Therefore, in Rao's view merely announcing an MOU was not expected to**

Governance through silence



P. V Narasimha Rao
Former Prime Minister of India

fool any one. If a private party makes the relevant announcement, it would be held accountable rather than the government. The latter's announcement of MOU could be used for manipulating the company share market).

In 1996, almost at the end of its term, the government took an in-principle decision to buy Sukhoi fighter jets from Russia that would put the Indian air-force on par with neighbors having American F-16 fighters. This was a very significant decision taken on the election eve and many of his colleagues wanted the government to make an announcement in order to derive political mileage. Rao was not in favour not only because of security reasons. The deal involved payment of an advance and other procedures, including approval of the deal by the successor government after the poll. Actual induction of these fighters was a long way off. He was prepared to forego the temporary political advantage in order to protect the deal. As and when these Sukhois took to the skies flying the Indian tri-colour, the message was very clear.

Scamster Hershad Mehta had announced through a press conference that he had
A

delivered a crore of rupees in a suit case to Rao at his high security official residence. Media went hyper. Party colleagues, sycophants and civil servants rushed to advice him to issue immediate denial. Rao's reaction: "Don't hustle me. A crook has made the allegation. Onus of proof is on him'. **More than 24 hours elapsed for releasing an official denial.**

Contrast this with the Bofors Howitzer gun controversy, where the government came out with a total denial barely a few hours after the Swedish radio alleged that there was a pay off to middle- men contravening the contract terms. Buying time through silence for getting facts and assuring people that the government was concerned and would get to the bottom of the developing scandal could have saved it the ensuing embarrassment. Circumspection and silence mix like salt and pepper to make any communication more palatable and prevent the possibility of one having to eat crow.

S. Narendra

Communication through 'Silence' – A Westerner's experience

In the book "A Search in Secret India", Paul Brunton, a British Philosopher and Guru, narrated his experience with Ramana Maharshi, a South Indian Saint as follows:



**Ramana
Maharshi**

"Maharshi turned and looked into my face. I, in turn, gazed expectantly at him. I become aware of a mysterious change taking place with great rapidity in my heart and mind. The old motives, which have lured me on, begin to desert me. The urgent desires, which have sent my feet hither and thither, vanish with incredible swiftness. The dislikes, misunderstandings, coldness and selfishness, which have marked my dealings with many of my fellows, collapse into the abyss of nothingness. An untellable peace falls upon me and I know now that there is nothing further that I shall ask from life."



PRestige:

Actions should speak louder than words – Walk the talk!



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Please listen to his podcast interview at www.prpoint.com/nvittal

The idea of 'Sound of Silence' appears to be an oxymoron or contradiction in terms. Silence means absence of sound. Then how can there be something called 'Sound of Silence'. We can think of only what Bernard Shaw said. He knows the golden virtues of silence as he can talk eloquent and virtues of silence for hours. He can make lot of sound about silence but we are not talking about 'Sound of Silence' in that sense. What we are trying to see is in the context of corporate management, whether it can have any value. The simplest point one can understand is that when it comes to effectively influencing people we all realize that action speaks louder than words. So when we say 'Sound of Silence' what we mean is that we must be able to walk our talk. Mere talking without implementation of the idea or the policies is of no use and make only sound.

Sound of Silence is Action:

In a managerial context the 'Sound of Silence' at the basic level means implementing the policies in action. The values of those actions bring much better results and influence people much more than flourishing words can do. When we

talk about silence we are looking at one's human aspect. When we speak we articulate in sound the ideas we have in our mind. But all of us know our minds are active all the time and it's difficult to think of situation where the mind is totally calm and free of ideas. And this has been researched for many years by many spiritual leaders in India which has a long spiritual tradition about controlling the mind.

Silence – A better medicine for stress:

The first step of controlling the mind is to make the mind free of ideas or any disturbance and that is how the whole process of meditation starts.

Even today in our modern context, business enterprises and operation of business cause more stress. One method of de-stressing is observing a period of systematical silence. There are techniques evolved about how to meditate and Maharishi Magesh Yogi in 60s popularized the concept of meditation for de-stressing. The yoga has become very popular. It not only focuses on controlling the body but it also focuses on controlling the mind. It ultimately stills the mind out of

Mere talking without implementation of the idea or the policies is of no use and make only sound.



unnecessary thoughts or distractions and this very process helps in concentration.

Silence for better management:

In a managerial situation when we are stressful, we are likely to become angry and judgment can be faultier. In those situations observing silence is a simple method of avoiding managerial mistakes. Secondly, there are situations in managerial context where the choice is not obvious between different options and in such situation observing silence is the best choice.

One of the most successful Prime Ministers in recent times in India was P.V. Narasima Rao who was well known for his silence. Even though he was in politics which requires constant articulation and talking, he had control over his tongue and also observed silence effectively in many situations. He was the man who was popularizing the idea that not taking the decision itself was a decision. When you are silent it means that you can have the choice later on and it also gives you flexibility in your managerial operations.

Another important area where silence is strength is what we are experiencing today, especially in the context of terrorist activity. The committed terrorists are extremely good at observing silence and not revealing the secrets. This may not be an example for 'Sound of Silence' but when we are looking from the point of view of achieving the objective of maintaining secrecy it is a best example. After all, in business commercial secrets

have to be observed. Observing commercial secrets is a strategy required for success and that is why, in the great spiritual book of Hindus 'The Bhagavath Geeta', lord Krishna says that he is silent when it comes to secret.

Another impact of silence is as explained by Bertrant Russel, how when he faced difficult situations and problems, he used to sleep and in sleep his unconscious mind begin to act and next morning when he woke up he found the solution. The unconscious mind is silent but it has very strong ideas. Carl Jung, noted Swiss Psychiatrist, talked about the collective unconscious about how many times probably through silence we can tap the unconscious mind and make it work. We

can therefore see that there are many dimensions when we explore the world of silence and there are so many sound ideas that can come from this. All of us, speak not only through our tongue but also by every part of the body through gestures, body language communicate

ideas. By observing silence we gain by not committing ourselves in any course of action. If we are stressed, we will not make decision by observing silence and at the same time depending upon the degree of intimacy we have we communicate through body language our ideas so that without articulating we can make the ideas known and get results.

Silence develops leadership qualities:

We are not talking about 'Sound of Silence' in an abstract form. In our life we have seen very eminent leaders who

In our life we have seen very eminent leaders who motivated a large number of people using the power of silence.



motivated a large number of people using the power of silence. Mahatma Gandhi, the leader of the Indian freedom movement, observed every Monday as a day of silence that gave him not only the power to plan and collect his thoughts but also the discipline which made him spiritually stronger. He was thus able to influence the whole nation of more than 300 million people in his time.

Great spiritual leaders communicated through silence

Another spiritual leader of the Hindu religion was the Paramacharya of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam in South India. He was a person who was observing silence very frequently. He was able to communicate with others through his spiritual insight, his views and was able to motivate them. Former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi used to call on Paramacharya whenever she came to

Kancheepuram. There were occasions when she came he was observing silence, but even in that silence she was able to derive inspiration from him and able to take on the challenges of running the government.

Another great spiritual leader in India about whom a westerner Paul Brunton commented is Ramana Maharishi who lived in the early part of the 20th century without opening his mouth. With the silence he was able to answer many of the unasked questions in the mind of Paul Brunton. Here in this case, we find silence can transcend culture, religion and even talk. I began by mentioning that ultimately action speaks louder than words. When we speak we are only making noise and sound but in life what matters is action. As a father, I have found that my children were more influenced by my action on the values I cherish.

Albert Einstein's 'Success Formula'

Albert Einstein had a formula for success. Can you believe that? One of the greatest minds of all time developed a math formula for success! This may be the most important math equation that you may look for:

'If A equals success, then the formula is: $A = X + Y + Z$.

X is work.

Y is play or relaxation.

Z is keep your mouth shut.

The person who talks the least, says the most



**Albert
Einstein**





'Silence' will open up many closed gates of the mind

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When the work proceeds on expected lines one feels great. When it is interrupted by bottlenecks we need to generate new ideas to overcome the humps. New ideas come from different sources- articles, from our mistakes, from our boss/peers/subordinates etc. But many of these could be outdated or weather beaten ones which may not excite and may not be really new. Fresh and new ideas must emanate from inside. One has to create a conducive atmosphere for this to happen.

Fresh ideas and new thinking are the backbone for growth be it a country, organization or individual. New ideas are not the old wine put in a new bottle but must be pristine. They must emanate from inside.

One has to create a conducive atmosphere for this to happen. Great discoveries had their roots inwards and this awakening can happen when the senses are restrained. Tongue among all the senses can dissipate a lot of energy and by talking too much we waste a lot of creative energy. Creativity will receive a fillip when we observe silence. In Yoga we believe that *silence* is an active practice which can transcend the mind to new levels and open up many closed gates unraveled by the mind so far.

Traditional Indian guru is Dakshinamurthy, a teacher par excellence. The saying is (in Sanskrit)

Gurostu mounam vyakhyanam sisyauste cinna samsayah

Which means:

The teacher's(Dakshinamurthy) explanation is in the language of silence (Mounam) and all the doubts (samsaya) of the students are clarified.

This is a communication in silence, where the speaker is ready to send the message and the listener is tuned in to receive the message. When this harmony is achieved between the speaker and the listener there is no need for flowery words and phrases, there is no need to raise one's voice to be heard.



PRince

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How to practice active silence

D. V Sridhar, Director, Yogaraksanam

How to practice active silence.

- § Choose a conducive place in the house which is quiet.
- § Sit in a comfortable seat and easy posture.
- § Move your arms from front and side-wards in a rhythmic fashion to ease you in to the seat.
- § Repeat this a few times till you are comfortable.
- § Start breathing actively with force. Listen to the sound of your breathing.
- § Concentrate on this sound and increase the effectiveness of this sound.
- § Slowly make this breathing more and more subtle till such time the breathing becomes noiseless.
- § Choose a sound for repetition. It can be from your religion (Eg. Ohm) or a simple sound Aaa.

Chant this sound:

I Stage

- i. *'louder' for length of about 5 seconds*
- ii *Repeat this 'softly'*
- iii. *Repeat this sound 'mentally' without opening the lips.*

Go over this cycle – say 6 rounds

II Stage

Drop i. and repeat the ii. And iii. 6 times

III Stage

Repeat iii. 6 times

Stay quiet listening to yourself for the next 5 minutes.

This exercise should be done early morning or late in the night before going to bed.



Silence can be perceived this way also!

Listening, which is a very important component of communication, is based on silence. Profound listening creates open space and allows for non verbal communication.

Silence can create problems too. Extended silence is rude. So that needs to be avoided. It can be seen as putting pressure on the other person and can create a perception of a one sided conversation. This is practiced quite often by interviewers, and often the person spills more than he should. Silence can indicate hostility. This happens usually in internal communication, where questions do not elicit answers. Silence can be used to indicate disagreement, anger, fear or embarrassment. Loss of words due to these emotions converts into silence. One can empathise using silence. When one does empathise, it is best communicated without words.

By Bhuvana, Head Western Region, Brand Comm b_huvana@yahoo.com

Silence – A subtle and powerful medium of communication

As sensitised beings, we exist in a realm of vibrations that interconnects us with every other living being, the Universe and the Higher Being. Our attitudes, thoughts and behaviour reverberate from our aura of energy to the aura of other people in constant unspoken communication. And so we have people who walk into a room and the atmosphere 'lights up' with their positivity, creating what the practitioners of Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP) call 'rapport'. Rapport plays a critical role especially in personal communication.

Telepathy is a message in silence, communicated through the ripple effect to people in rapport. Ancient books of wisdom and scriptures contain philosophies, anecdotes and illustrations of this sublime yet powerful mode of communication.

One's action is another silent mode that can speak louder than words. For instance, in the corporate world, how a company actually performs overrides its publicised claims. We also come across leaders like Aaron Feuerstein, CEO of Malden Mills, USA, whose actions speak of his values on corporate ethics, more convincingly than any verbal proclamation.

Today however, we are caught up in a cacophonous network of communication thrown across the world with information overload in a dog-eat-dog existence. Maybe, we have come full circle and need to step back and look at some less polluting means of striking the right chord of effective communication through the sound of silence.

By Susan Koshy, Former GM, IDBI and presently Corporate Consultant
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PRETTY

Sound of Silence in a mid-night customer call

Customer : Hi, I am Raj, I have a problem with my computer. I need your help urgently.

Help-desk: Good Morning, this is Seva here, I would sure help you, can you tell me what the issue is ??

Customer : I wanted to make a purchase in e-commerce site to purchase an External Sound Card, I selected the required Sound Card and opted for payment through Credit Card.

Help desk : Ok, then ???

Customer: The screen asked me to enter my Credit Card and I did.

Help-desk: Oh Ok, then ???

Customer: Since then, I have not got my credit card back. I am really upset on this

Help-desk: You selected your product, right. Now, can you please tell me what was the message when the screen wanted you to enter the credit card details?

Customer: Exactly, I clicked the button called 'BUY NOW' Then I selected payment through credit card option. Then the screen wanted me to enter the credit card. I did it. But the system has taken the same and till now I have not received it back. I want my card back right now.

Help-desk: Mr Raj Kindly recollect, the system told you to enter your card details only, isn't it? Where did you misplace your Credit Card ??

Customer: No I told you that I entered the card and I did not get it back.

Help-desk : (Suddenly becoming alert)..Now I understand, Did you not enter the card number? where exactly did you keep your card?

Customer : I did not enter the number. I entered the card in the computer.

Help-desk: (shocked) In the computer ? but Where ?????

Customer : Inside that damn thing where you enter the normal black square cards...

I WANT MY CARD BACK RIGHT NOW !!!!!

Help-desk: Now I really could guess where you have inserted the card. I will send a hard-ware engineer to open it and give it you. Don't worry.



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