

All the great teachers advocated silence: Orpheus, Pythagoras, Confucius, Buddha, Jesus, Apollonius of Tyana, Ammonius Saccas. The Pythagorean students who went to his school in Crotona were required to burn all their belongings and give away all their money. Then they stayed for three to five years in silence, immersed in deep study.

After a period of profound and sustained silence, people are able to break through in great ways. For example, Nelson Mandela, imprisoned in 1964, was able to experience prolonged silence until he was released in 1990. After his release, he plunged himself wholeheartedly into his life's work, striving to attain the goals he had set out almost four decades earlier. He is an icon of Black history.

All the great teachers had their moments of silence. Gautama Buddha sat under the Bodhi or pipal (fig) tree, where he vowed never to arise until he had found the Truth. Jesus spent forty days and nights in the wilderness. Mother Teresa said, "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. Souls of prayer are souls of great silence."

**Identifying the Silence:** Most of us have not made any noise for a very long time, but now we are going to make noise, not really noise but a sound for two seconds. It does not have to be loud but at least make a sound, any sound of your choice that you feel most comfortable with will do, Make it as loud as you feel comfortable doing. If you want to shout, fine; you are allowed to do so. For example, I will make the sound WAAAA! So at the count of three, let us all make some such noise in unison. O.K., 1, 2, 3 ...  
WAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!

(After silence for a few seconds:) That was good. Let's do it again. (Repeat the noise.) Right there is the silence we are looking for. You may have noticed immediately at the end of the noise, there was a silence. Just before the mind starts to churn out more thoughts, a profound silence lasted for almost a second. At that moment, you could not tell what was happening, because you were stuck in a kind of limbo, a silence that you temporarily got lost in. You could not measure the moment of that silence. You could not differentiate between yourself and the silence. You could not define your