

Silence and the Mysteries

by

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Silence and the Mysteries—An Introduction

It is not one's place here to go into elaborate etymologies showing relations, actual or otherwise, between the hieroglyph of the mouth and words such as mouth, myth, mystery, mystic, mum(b), mute, mutter, etc. The word dumb which resembles mum(b) in form appears to be a homologue if not an analogue of the Hebraic dumah ("My soul had almost dwelt in silence," Psalm 94, 17). Rather shall we deal with the form of Silence itself.

a. The first form is the Silence-on-oath and even that takes on two aspects. Thus the Silence of the Ku Klux Klan members now on trial and this Oath-Silence has a certain value but apart from the Mysteries. The oaths of the Masonic and other orders seem to be related to one or two things, the Holy Words and the Rituals. And it has been the part of Initiates not to reveal the Rituals.

Sacred Phrases have been repeated at all times and in at least two instances there has been a protest. One we do not relish to refer to came from Jesus Christ who said we should not use vain repetitions "as do the heathens" but this does not tell us what the heathen do. More explicit is Aristophanes in the "The Frogs." Many of us know:

Breckety-kex co-ex, co-ex,

Breckety-kex co-ex, co-ex,

Wabbo, Waboo, Hullabaloo.

I do not know the origin of the first lines but it is obvious that the last is Phoenician and Hullabaloo is nothing but the Punic form of Hallelujah, both meaning "Praise be the Eternal Lord."

b. Silence as a Discipline. This has taken on at least three forms:

I Silence in society;

II. Silence in the solitude;

III. Silence at holy places and shrines.

I. Silence in society was a discipline of the ancient Pythagorean community. The neophyte had to stay a number of days in the school of discipline without uttering a sound. Then he became an oath-human, and after passing the required tests of having the requisite visions he became a full Initiate.

Philo claims that the Essene and Therapeutic communities inherited the Pythagorean disciplines but it is probable that the latter was an independent outgrowth of Egyptian rites, as it continued mostly in the Nile basin.

At a much later date Jelal-ud-din Rumi, at Konia in Turkey, founded the Mevlevi School of Dervishes. Applicants had to serve a number of days, even three years without speaking a word. In this school one had to have the required “visions” or changes in states of consciousness to become a full Initiate. The details of this school appear in a work by Efiski [sp?—Ed] which has been translated into French and in the American Brown’s book *The Dervishes*.

II. Silence in solitude was an essential part of the Norm of Dharma of ancient India. It was a requisite part of the third Ashram or stage of existence when people, having parented children to adulthood, retired to the forest and chanted sacred phrases until they too had the requisite visions or changes of consciousness after which they became sannyasins, or detached free persons.

But it was open for those who did not choose to marry, or became widowed, to live as Sadhus, free from family cares, and go through similar disciplines before the real or theoretical spiritual experience made it possible for them to function as Sannyasin. Or again there are many schools of discipline, especially among the Vedantists, which utilize silence along with other forms purported to enable them to reach the desired goal.

III. There are many schools of all kinds connected with various religions which have shrines and monasteries wherein people keep silent. The Trappist Order is the best example of the day but Catholics and Sufis both use seclusion as means of discipline.

c. Silence as a Methodology. There is a picture of the Tibetan Saint Milarepa with his hand to his ear (left) as if listening. There is the theory that one can gain some sort of “wisdom” out of the silence and also that this comes especially in forms of Music and Poetry. The Myths of the world, especially those dealing with Creation bear this out.

One cannot, of course, prove this to those who have not practiced it. When Akbar was Emperor of India, he required his household to remain silent and receive his orders without any words of command. If he had to speak, they were dismissed from their posts.

There is at the present time more metaphysical excitement than calm scientific investigation into the fields of what we may verbalize as telepathy, super telepathy and metapsychics.