

TUNHĪBHĀVA, stands for the maintenance of "silence". In a debate situation in the ancient Indian setting at the time of the Buddha, such silence was a sign of defeat, indicating that the opponent was unable to reply. The discourses vividly depict such defeat with the opponent being reduced to silence and seated in dismay, with shoulders drooping and head hanging down, depressed and unable to speak (e.g. *D. III, 53*). Silence in a debate situation could also be an attempt to evade defeat by avoiding to answer a question. Yet, one who maintains silence when asked a rightful question up to the third time by the *Tathāṅgata* risks that his head will split into pieces (*D. I, 95*).

Here it needs to be noted that the famous silence of the Buddha in regard to a set of proposals that appear to have been a frequent topic of debate and discussion among his contemporaries, the unexplained questions (See AVYĀKATA), was not really a true silence, since he did answer by refusing to take any of the stances inherent in these questions. An occasion when the Buddha did maintain silence was in reply to a query after the existence of the self by the wanderer Vacchagotta (*S. IV, 400*). In this case the Buddha's silence was a teaching strategy, as he explained to Ānanda once Vacchagotta had left, since a reply given to that question would have only increased the confusion of Vacchagotta.

Another discourse in the *Samyutta Nikāya* reports that the Buddha remained silent when being reviled by a Brahmin. The Brahmin concluded that this silence was a sign of defeat, thinking that he had achieved victory over the Buddha (*S. I, 163*). But the Buddha explained that his silence was not a sign of defeat, being rather an expression of his aloofness from anger. On another occasion, the Buddha's silence in reply to a question by a wanderer was apparently also in danger of being misunderstood as a token of defeat, causing Ānanda to intervene in order to clarify that the Buddha's silent reaction was not due to any inability on his part to answer (*A. V, 194*).

Not only can one be reduced to silence in a debate situation, but also when being in the minority. Thus when evil monks are in the majority, well behaved monks will keep silent (*A. I, 68*). On one occasion Sāriputta, on being publicly contradicted by another monk three times and finding that the other monks did not support him, remained silent (*A. III, 194*).

Silence can act as an expression of disagreement, such as when King Ajātasattu did not approve of proposals made by his ministers (*D. I, 47*). The same sense of disagreement recurs when Ratthapāla silently refused to give up his plans to become a monk in reply to the entreaties of his parents (*M, II, 58*); or when the Buddha silently refused to perform an act considered auspicious by his host (*M, II, 92*). Another occasion where the Buddha expressed disapproval through silence was when an evil monk was seated amidst the order on the night of the observance day, at the time when the code of rules was to be recited (*A. IV, 204*).

Silence could also be an expression of anger. A discourse in the *Samyutta Nikāya* describes an angry Brahmin who approached the Buddha and stood in front of him in silence, presumably so upset as to be unable to speak (*S. I, 164*). Similarly, when the Buddha addressed Potaliya with an epithet that the latter felt to be inappropriate, the latter reacted by expressing his irritation about the Buddha's mode of address through silence (*M. I, 359*). A monk who is reproved might also vex the order through his silence (*A. IV, 194*).

To remain silent can also be just an expression of distance, such as when a group of visitors approaches the Buddha and, while others pay their respect or proclaim their names, some just silently sit down to one side (e.g. *D. I, 118*). On other occasions, silence can express approval and agreement, perhaps mixed with a nuance of embarrassment, such as when monks remain silent on being asked by the Buddha if they have any doubts (*A. II, 79*), or if they delight in the holy life (*M, I, 463*). The most common occurrence of silence as an expression of agreement is when an invitation is accepted by remaining silent (e.g. *D. I, 109*).

Silence can become an aspect of proper monastic conduct, such as when a monk stands silently in front of a house when begging (*S. I, 174*). Silence also forms part of proper behaviour in general, since when being in any assembly one should know when it is time to just keep silent (*A. IV, 115*). After partaking of a meal, the Buddha would remain seated for a short time in silence (*M. II, 139*).

The disciples of the Buddha were known among their contemporaries for the high regard they had for silent behaviour (e.g. *M. I*, 514), and the *Kandaraka Sutta* reports how a visiting wanderer expressed his admiration for the silence of the congregation of monks (*M. I*, 339). The silent behaviour of the Buddhist monks caused suspicion to arise in the mind of king Ajātasattu, who on being led to the vicinity of a large assembly of Buddhist monks feared being ambushed, as he could not imagine that such a great congregation could maintain total silence. On finding out that his suspicions were unfounded, he was so impressed by the silence of the monks that he wished for his son to be endowed with similar calmness (*D. I*, 50).

Even the gods knew about the reputation for silence of the disciples of the Buddha, and on one occasion Sakka praised the Buddhist monks as wise and silent ones, *dhīrā tuṇhībhūtā* (*S. I*, 236). Such silent behaviour of the Buddhist monks would have been in accordance with an injunction by the Buddha that they should either converse on the Dhamma or else keep noble silence, *ariyo tuṇhībhāvo* (*M. I*, 161). "Noble silence" in its true sense, however, would require attaining the second *jhāna* (*S. II*, 273), since it is only when the last vestige of mental activity has been abandoned through overcoming initial and sustained mental application, *vitakka* and *vicāra*, that total inner silence has been attained.

Yet, silence for its own sake was not approved of by the Buddha. According to the *Mahāvagga* of the *Vinaya*, he criticized a group of monks for having spent the three months of the rainy season together in silence, comparing their behaviour to dumb sheep (*Vin. I*, 159). This passage needs to be examined in conjunction with the *Cūḷagosiṅga Sutta* and the *Upakkāḷesa Sutta*, two discourses in which the silent cohabitation of a group of monks met with the Buddha's explicit approval (*M. I*, 207 and *M. III*, 157). This shows that it was not the fact of observing silence as such that the Buddha found objectionable in the case of the monks in the *Mahāvagga*. A helpful detail is provided by the (Mūla-)Sārvāstivāda *Vinaya*, according to which these monks had taken a vow to live together in silence in the sense that they would not criticize each other even in the case of a breach of conduct (*T. XXIII*, 1044c16 or Derge 'dul ba ka 222a1). This suggests that the Buddha's criticism was directed

against the foolish idea that to live together in harmony is to simply turn a blind eye on improper behaviour.

What becomes clear from the criticism voiced in the *Mahāvagga* is that the observance of silence needs to be paired with wisdom, a requirement that also becomes evident in the circumstance that, according to the *Satipatthāna Sutta*, clear comprehension should be practised when keeping silent (*M. I*, 57). As a verse in the *Dhammapada* points out, one does not become a sage by dint of mere silence (*Dhp.* 268).

Though silence undertaken just for its own sake and without wisdom was not encouraged, silence as an expression of deeper realization was certainly valued in early Buddhism. A discourse in the *Samyutta Nikāya* reports the complaints of a deva that a monk, who earlier was regularly reciting the Dhamma, had fallen silent. In reply, the monk explained that he had stopped reciting because he had reached realization (*S. I*, 202). According to another discourse in the same collection, a group of monks had come to the Buddha and complained that a newly ordained monk was keeping silent to himself, without taking part in communal activities such as sewing robes. The Buddha exonerated the monk, explaining that he was an arahant and was spending his time attaining *jhāna* (*S. II*, 278). Abiding in such a mental condition, the monk in question would have indeed reached what according to early Buddhism is silence in its ultimate sense.

Anālayo.

U BA KHIN, 1899-1971, a Burmese lay meditation teacher and government official. Through the efforts of his student S. N. Goenka, the *vipassanā* meditation taught by U Ba Khin has by now become one of the most widely practised forms of insight meditation in the world.¹ In courses taught on a pure *dāna* basis, meditators from any cultural, religious or social background are at first taught mindfulness of breathing to develop mental tranquility, followed by instructions in contemplating bodily feelings in order to develop insight into the impermanent and therewith unsatisfactory and selfless nature of all aspects of experience.²

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