

# *The Voice of Love*

Robyn Fitzgerald

I sleep, but my heart waketh:  
it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh...



...I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine.  
*Song of Songs 5:2*

*I invite you to recall a time when the voice of the beloved knocked on your heart with such tenderness, intimacy, love and affection, that it dissolved, melted, opened and awakened your heart. What was this voice like? Where did it come from? Are there words to describe its vibration? It's resonance? What did you "know" of the one whose voice you heard?*

*Now, I ask that you recall a time when it was the utterance of your own voice that touched and pierced, the heart of another. What was your voice like? Its vibration? Its sound? Where did it originate? What is it like to feel voice rise in you and find expression in another? How were you "known" in a new way?*

*As your own voice and the voice of your beloved resound as one voice, what is this point of resonance like? What can you say about its activity? Its qualities? Its awareness?*

*I invite you to remain here, enjoying and resounding Love, as the voice of Love, for as long as you feel drawn.*

Recently, in both the Voice Referendum and the Synod 2021-24, we have heard many people talking *about* voice, about “who should have it” and “who should not”. Some voices have been very noisy. Some have been deafening for their silence. The words of the Indian author and activist Arundhati Roy are salient:

There's really no such thing as the 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard<sup>1</sup>.

As a communion of contemplatives, we know that to be “voiceless” constitutes one of the most humiliating, agonising, and distressing experiences a human person can suffer. Our First Nations Peoples know this pain, “this torment of our powerlessness”<sup>2</sup> in unimaginable ways. We know the pain of voicelessness in our Churches. There is a savage ache, a profound lack of safety, a terrifying pain that such silencing and unhearing enacts on the human person.

Such impacts, whether intentional or unconscious reflect an absence of receptivity: “Every person we meet is a particular movement or arrangement of energy like a piece of music”, says Thomas Hübl, and it is only “through deep listening, by attuning and receiving that we can adjust the speed of our movement in order to meet and receive the other deeply and well”. Thomas is a brilliant voice in the movement towards healing and integrating the personal and collective trauma that lies at the heart of our inability to be receptive to the beautiful music that can be heard in the voice of another person.



Yet, voicelessness is not the opposite of voice, and never more than now have we needed to recover the wisdom of the mystical traditions that recall us to the original understanding of voice.

The mystical voice of Love is an expression of unity, a universal consciousness that speaks naturally and personally throughout creation, as creation.

The mystical voice of Love is very different to the voice that originates in the individual, autonomous person. Because this voice is self-referential, it comes from a place that separates and divides myself, and my voice, from the voices of others.

Yet, as we know, voice, like silence, cannot be divided up. Voice is not something we have; it is who we are and are becoming. Ultimately, there is just one all-embracing voice.

The mystical voice of Love is the Dreaming of our First Nations People and the tradition of Dadirri, which refines the ear of the heart of the listener to attune to this universal, radiant

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<sup>1</sup> Arundhati Roy, *Peace and the new corporate liberation theology*. Speech delivered at City of Sydney Peace Prize Lecture, The Seymour Centre, Sydney, 3 November 2004.

<sup>2</sup> The Uluru Statement of the Heart

voice of love. It is the sacred sound OM, the eternal sound of all Reality, which Lama Govinda describes as "the seed syllable (*bija-mantra*) of the universe...the all-embracing consciousness".<sup>3</sup> The Sufi mystic, Inayat Khan, affirms, "the knower of the mystery of sound knows the mystery of the whole universe."<sup>4</sup>

We each desire to speak with its voice, as Teilhard de Chardin affirms:

I would like to speak what I hear murmuring in me like a voice or a song which are not of me, but of the World in me.<sup>5</sup>

The Cistercian mystic, Gertrude of Helfta, captures the essence of the voice of Love in her naming of God's voice as the visitation. Derived from the Greek word *episkopé* (ἐπισκοπή, ἠς, ἠ) (derived from *epi*, "on, upon" and *skopéō*, "look intently"), the meaning of the word visitation gives us a hint as to Gertrude's spirituality of voice. Like the Japanese tradition of *Kōdō* (way of fragrance), which invites one to listen to the aroma of the incense to truly enjoy its fragrance, in naming God's voice as visitation, Gertrude is emphasising that when we truly open our hearts and deeply listen, our hearing becomes a seeing, that is a "divine contemplation...that takes place inwardly".<sup>6</sup>



For Gertrude, hearing voice becomes a seeing in contemplation, as we see the voice of God and the voice of God in others from within the light of the voice that "does not make a great noise, but it drips with the honeyed speech of God with sweetness and gentleness". These words are not just Gertrude sharing her ecstatic experience of God's voice. She shares them with us that we might live the deep truth and possibility of voice in our world today.



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<sup>3</sup> Lama Anagarika, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co Inc, 1960), 22.

<sup>4</sup> Hazrat Inayat Khan, *The Mysticism of Sound* (Published by Sufi Movement) Vol 2, Section 8.

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *A Book of Hours* (Orbis Kindle Edition, 2022), 212.

<sup>6</sup> Gertrud of Helfta, *Prologue in The Memorial of the Abundance of the Divine Sweetness*, 8-9.

Kerrie Hide writes beautifully of the awakening of spiritual senses in contemplation that we hear in Gertrude's words, whereby,

...wisdom arises from the spacious silence of pure presence, awakening Christic ground awareness that gradually flows through the heart senses into our conscious mind, as we see, feel, hear, smell and swallow God.<sup>7</sup>

The Visitation story offers a vivid illustration of how wisdom, when awakened from the ground of oneing awareness flows through the voices of both Mary and Elizabeth, and of their little unborn children, John and Jesus, as the voice of Wisdom.

Twice we are told that upon hearing Mary's voice, Elizabeth feels the little child in her womb leap with joy, capturing how receptive Elizabeth is to Mary's voice.

The sound, texture, tone, resonance and intimacy of Mary's voice, formed in her breath and body before being spoken out aloud, resound so deeply and unite so completely in Elizabeth that it pierces her womb, where the little living fetus, the life within Elizabeth, leaps with joy. Elizabeth has not simply heard Mary's greeting. She truly sees her, "Blessed are you among women!". In this exquisite moment of profound mutual receptivity, hearing, seeing and knowing have become one voice, one eternal sound, one Wisdom rising and finding expression through the voice of these two beautiful women.



Elizabeth's voice then pierces the heart of Mary, who in this transfiguring moment, gives birth herself, to a new identity, as the voice of Love sings within both women of her awakened identity, "My soul magnifies the Lord!", an identity of Love that both women have become. Openness to receiving, aligning and resonating within the voice of Love reveals how intimate transformation is present in its voice. For when we are truly in it, and speak from within it, all distinction between the one who speaks and the one who hears dissolves, and we are able to experience the arising of the Wisdom Word, unifying all things in an inner coherence, and making us whole.

As we prepare during November to open our hearts to the wisdom of Advent, I invite you to return to your contemplation with voice, as we sensitise in our CEN community to the voice of the Beloved knocking on our hearts. May we strengthen and amplify the voice of Love in our world in our contemplation. Part of this may include tending, healing and attuning our own voice, individually and communally, so as to reveal the deepest potential of voice, that is, not to be heard, but to be known in the fullest sense of the Word, that we be one in contemplation. May we be the honeyed silent voice of Love in our world.

With Love Robyn Fitzgerald

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<sup>7</sup> Kerrie Hide, *Love's Oneing: A Book About Contemplation* (London: Austen Macauley, 2022), 17