

AUM SHANTHI

Listening

Nat chinthanai - 003

The famous saying: learn to listen, listen to learn.

Though not learned, hear and heed
That serves as staff and stay in need - *Thirukural* - 414

We gain all our knowledge and experience through the five senses. Out of these, reading and listening outdo the rest. The power of listening is one of the greatest gifts, humanity acquired from God (Nature). In Hindu society, preacher-disciple system used it enormously for thousands of years. Even today, school systems all over the world use audio education as an effective means for productive results.

Valluvar - Our universal teacher - devoted a full chapter for the subject of 'listening' in the ThiruKural (Tamil Gospel). This in itself is ample proof, without doubt, the importance of developing and maintaining this habit of 'learning by listening' until the last breath. He never speaks nonsense - simple as that. Therefore no need to stress any further, the necessity of the proper use of the aural sense. According to him listening is the top most skill, a person can have and should have, because it brings in the best of all the wealths, called knowledge. Any amount of this treasure can be stored, as the brain capacity automatically expands to accommodate the amount of Giga-bytes accumulated. Further more there are no storage or membership fees, rent or tax payments, commission or any other hidden charges. These supremely excellent riches cannot be stolen or lost, to produce disappointment or grief.

Now, we will compare the audio food for thought with the plate of food for the gut. Listening to the learned, wise, elders, gurus, is very interesting: eating tasty edibles is enjoyable also. In this respect, both seem fairly equal. The first one, we can take in any amount without the fear of a failing health. Whereas, if the meal consumed is more than full, we are sure to fall ill. Epicures are trapped in the gluttony habit, to the detriment of their health. The thrill of the beautiful soothing voices we heard, we can recollect any number of times for our enjoyment. But the pleasure of taste is gone for good, once swallowed. Yucky, we don't want to taste the regurgitated food. After effects of the inspiring words we heard from scholars and virtuous souls, last a lifetime: the food we supplied to the stomach has to be replenished every few hours, otherwise the stomach will growl, beg, pester and bother!

Thus, an inquisitive student drills enormous amounts of Natchinthanai (food for thought) through the ears, and only during the intervals, throws in a trifling dole, through the mouth, for the pleading stomach.

Just hearing sound is not enough - the art of learning by listening is a skill that needs a lot of training and practice. Consider the type and amount of attention, you have to give a particular subject. A sample of five categories is music and drama, news and views, science and arts, instructions and counseling, preaching and discourses. Each one of the group, requires its own method of listening, analyzing, extracting, digesting, and adopting the life accordingly.

ThiruKural also establishes the fact that diligent listeners command dignity, humility, modesty and gentleness: and never utter foolish words, not even through inadvertence. In other words, diligent ears give birth to reverend mouth.

Therefore we should never scorn the power of listening, to the virtuous souls and our own inner voices. In the temple we have ample of opportunities to exercise this skill from one end to the other. This means listening to the words of wisdom and perennial truths of the great saints in our lineage and to the seemingly silly questions and comments of the smallest child devotees.

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