



Listen Up!

Q: I'm in the middle of a forty day practice of a breath meditation while listening to So Purkh in the background & it does not seem so simple to me!

I wondered if you could either do a newsletter on the art of listening (to the soul) or tell me what listening means to you spiritually & otherwise.

Hi, thank you for your great question and congratulations on committing to a 40 day practice of So Purkh!

Most people don't realize that listening to a sacred

mantra is a valid practice in itself. Your decision to add a breath meditation is very wise since it means more power to your practice!

For our readers, So Purkh is a "shabd" or divine hymn that women yogis traditionally do for the men in their lives to raise their consciousness and protect them. It's also a very good prayer to focus on when one wants to attract a committed, caring, loving partner. It is an example of what's called Gurbani Kirtan.

Through the use of mantras we can raise our vibration and elevate everything in our life. Many sacred texts, including the works of the 10 Sikh Gurus, are written in what's called "Naad." When we listen to or recite those words we are delivered to the same exalted state as the accomplished ones through whom those words were received.

Sound and the science of vibratory effect are huge components of Kundalini Yoga technology. This is based on the principles of Naad Yoga. Naad translates as "No beginning," and relates to the sound current, the vibratory effect that initiated the Universe and maintains it.

Listening is a skill and you can get better at it. As you listen to someone, listen as if for the first time. Receive their words without judgement. See their expression, their eyes, their body language. Notice something new about them. Take sometime everyday to sit in silence, or quiet. This is almost impossible, even as I (Ana) type here in a quiet room, I hear the sound of my keyboard, water trickling in the fountain, birds chirping, a plane overhead. My inhale and exhale. Notice the sounds within mundane sounds. Music in pipes as the shower runs. Inspired listening opens up a whole new Universe and enriches our lives

You may have heard that chanting opens the throat chakra. But, listening works on the throat chakra to the same extent. When someone is described as intelligent, what it really means is that they listen well. Listening leads to wisdom. Listening makes us intuitive. Most importantly conscious listening allows us to hear the subtle whisper of our soul.

Listening is being. Listening is understanding. Listening is where giving and receiving commingle. Listening is a form of direct perception. Listening is resonating in sympathy with. Listening is a form of embodiment. Listening is the foundation of compassion. Listening to the Truth affirms it. God uttered the primal word to bring everything into being and has granted us the power of inspired listening to follow that echo back to source.

Everything in this life: redemption, fulfillment, and meaning inevitably revolve around our interactions with other people and for those interactions to be successful it's important that we learn how to listen. Listening requires that we be open to new information. Listening is an art. Listening is NOT simply waiting for the other person to stop talking so that we can say what we've already decided is right and true. Listening / communication is an exchange, a process, and a sound dance.

In Guru Nanak's great poem Jap-Ji (the Prayer of the Soul) he beautifully describes the multi-dimensional aspects of inspired listening:

Suni-ai sidh peer sur naath: Listening, the siddhas, spiritual teachers, divine heros, and yogic masters.

Suni-ai Dharat Dhaval aakaas: Listening, the earth, its support and the akashic ethers.

Suni-ai deep lo-a paataal: Listening, the oceans, the lands of the world and the regions of the underworld.

Suni-ai pahi na sakai kaal: Through this sublime listening even death cannot touch us.

Suni-ai eesar barmaa ind: Listening, Shiva, Brahma and Indra.

Suni-ai mukh saalaahan mand: Listening, even the coarsest unprincipled people come to praise the Infinite One.

Suni-ai jog jugat tan bhayd: Listening, the technology of yoga and the secrets of the body are revealed.

Naanak bhagtaa sadaa vigaas: O Nanak, the devotees are forever in bliss.

Suni-ai dookh paap kaa naas: Listening, pain and ignorance are dispelled.

All effective communication is called Naad: harmonious speaking and harmonious listening. A merger of minds and psyches.

When there is synchrony between what we hear and what we communicate back then we are in alignment with reality as it is. Through this acquired ability when the Teacher speaks our soul hears. When a lover speaks the beloved hears and when the Universe speaks the inspired listener becomes intrinsic to that beautiful dance.

Listening is a stepping stone to the Logos (the Divine Word), the primal utterance (LO!) that brought everything into being. That word is still resounding and it's keeping the Universe manifest. It's said by the yogis that if the Universe stopped vibrating for even a trillion-th of a second, all life and worlds would disappear. Life and being rotate around the resonance of that Word that contains all music, all praise, the human symphony.

Each of our senses has a higher octave. For instance, the higher octave of smell is intuition. The higher octave of listening is attunement to vibration. This sensitivity helps us to be invested simultaneously with everything that's happening everywhere. From the tuning fork tingling deep in our essence to the beating heart of Creation.

Every moment we are speaking to our soul, whether we're aware of it or not. Our soul acknowledges our longing and most heartfelt prayers. Happiness comes when we learn to listen to our soul's response.

Yogi Bhanjan said:

"When my self hears my soul, that is the Anaadee Naad. That is what is called, "Celestial music." When self talks to its soul, that is where you find the taste, the juice, the beauty of life. The rest is protection. We build walls, defenses, denials, psychological interwoven escapes, rational escapes. We give distance to our destiny, and still something pulls us back to the center. Why do we come to that center? What is the pull? We want to hear our self. We want to hear that one word in experience, in taste, "I am, I Am."

"In the long run, the joyful, successful experience of life shall come to you when you can develop the capacity to hear your inner self, and that is the world. The beauty of the Naad is essentially the beauty of the Self. The resounding of the Naad is the taste of the Self. The vitality of life is the projection of the Naad, and the fulfillment of the life is the concept of the Naad. I hope you understand with that depth the most subtle subject of life, and you will gain from it. We are a simple, living, human being and we should watch our living, and hear our inner sound, which is pure love, pure life, pure existence."

Recently I (Ravi) was hiking in the canyon behind our apartment. A coyote stepped onto the dirt trail about 75 yds. from me. We assessed each other warily. I began to sing a mantra (the Mul Mantra) as soulfully and tenderly as I could. Despite every instinct to the contrary, the coyote stood transfixed. What did that canny canine's subtle sonar--that hears clouds passing overhead, the footfall of a rabbit a half mile away, the flapping of a butterfly's wings and the slightest perturbation in the pastiche of sounds that keeps the eco-system in balance--perceive in the layers this sacred formula? Was it the echo of the devoted ones who've chanted it through the ages? The tumblers aligning in the lock of the great door that separates us from the unseen? Was it the gentle rain of grace that blesses all beings wherever holy names mantras are chanted? After two full minutes he stepped off the path and was gone, a silent exit by a master of deep listening.