

GURU

The Catalyst factor

A Guru or a teacher has played a remarkable role in all our lives. But for a few of us we are our own Guru's. This issue covers the various characteristics attached to the Guru factor. Not always is a Guru responsible for all the success, at times he acts as a catalyst by just being a part and not participating. Contemplating? Read further and you'll find your true Guru

Gurus Speak...

T. M Krishna, Carnatic Classical Musician - one of the leading vocalists in the field of Carnatic music, has been performing for over 20 years. Belonging to a family of music connoisseurs, he has had a rich and intense musical training starting at the age of 6, and gave his first concert at the age of 12.

A "Guru" may be defined as one taking a person from darkness to light, but I think a Guru is far larger than just being a teacher. To me, every individual, everything that happens in life, is a Guru. For instance, if you are walking on the road and you find a beggar sharing his little morsel of food with somebody or a dog, you learn so much from that experience. From a musician's angle, Guru to me is a person who shows me what it is to realize music.

To share my experience as a disciple of Sri Semangudi Srinivasa Iyer, a legend in Carnatic classical music, I went to him when he was in his nineties. Though there was such a huge generation gap, we shared a very special relationship. He was more of a friend to me and we would discuss almost everything apart from music. He was able to do this because he was so young at heart and he treated me with so much of love and affection. I had this inhibition of being around with a legend, but he was so friendly and kind.

YOU ARE YOUR OWN TEACHER

It's not that a Guru is one who teaches me all the technicalities, calculations and grammar of music; well this is something that any person who has knowledge in music can do. But a true Guru is some one who makes you learn for yourself! He is the one who makes you realize that you are your own teacher more than anybody else! I think every individual after a certain point in life has to learn by himself/herself. I am not saying this in an egoistic manner or anything to say that "guru" is not required! That's not what I mean. It is just that you should realize that you are your own teacher and guru will only show you this fact. Unless you have this at the back of your mind, you can never learn

To speak on evolving roles of a guru from what it was to what it is today, I think it the contractual attitude that is more in vogue now. I agree that there are practical demands, but it is very important to understand that students will lose out on larger things due to this mindset. The approach now is first to ascertain what the gain is after learning. Again I am not



saying it is wrong but this should not be the driving force to learn. True learning never happens if you have this attitude. The most important thing that matters is the assimilation and absorption of the finer aspects than merely acquiring skills in order to achieve holistic development. Honestly if learning means only understanding your subjects, anyone with basic intelligent level can do this without even a teacher, but what you need to learn is to appreciate and assimilate the fineness of the subject and that is where a Guru plays a major role. If the relationship between the teacher and student goes beyond that chalk piece and writing that equation on the board to ensure that the student develops understanding to appreciate maths and science, it is only then that the role of the teacher has gone far beyond skills. I think this is what is missing in the education system also today.

I LEARN WHEN I TEACH

My students and I are like a family just like how it was for me with my Guru. We share a very special bond that goes beyond music. As a musician, I feel the best time to learn is when you teach. When I teach, I need to understand the student's capabilities and limitations and formulate my teaching based on this. No two students have the same skills and understanding. Have you observed that even if you give 4 numbers to add each person would add them differently? As a Guru, it is important for me to know how the student is hearing what I teach and the student does not hear it the way I think obviously, but will hear it the way his/her mind thinks. So I need to re-invent the same piece of music to teach different people which means my understanding becomes so much more holistic. So I learn incredibly when I teach.

And no matter which profession you are in, say I am a musician and that is only a manifestation of what I am as an individual, learning is a process of being a "human being"! This will reflect in your profession or your personal life. So eventually, a true Guru helps you to be a better human being.