



"Who is my Krishna?" - the guru / shishya relationship in the City context

A guru is one who is regarded as having great knowledge, wisdom, and authority in a certain area, and who uses it to guide others – according to Wikipedia. (Funnily enough that definition would probably put Wikipedia itself as a guru for many of us, but let's leave that for another day.) A shishya is simply a student, a devotee, a follower of the guru.

It is worth dwelling on the definition of the guru for just a minute. Increasingly in the Indian sense, the word has become interchangeable with 'teacher', giving it an almost exclusively academic taste. In the Western world, we are at the other extreme, where almost anyone with subject matter expertise becomes a 'guru', irrespective of his or her bhavna (loosely, 'attitude') to imparting the knowledge. In the Vedic (or Wikipedia-ic) sense, both parts – the beholder of knowledge, wisdom and authority; and the selfless impartation to guide others – are equally important.

Now, the next frequently asked question – is each shishya (the young man or woman working his or her way through life) constrained to having just one guru? The answer, in my mind, is a starch 'no'. Gurus, to me, come in two broad categories. First there is the academic or technical guru – your teacher at school or university – the one who equipped you with your technical skills. For the sake of this argument it doesn't really matter whether the academic guru is singular or plural. In today's world having a singular guru from year one at kindergarten to the end of university education can broadly be ruled out. At the spiritual level, the Advaita Vedantic will tell you that it doesn't matter because it is the qualities and the essence of the guru that the shishya aspires to, not the individual person. To that extent, both singular and plural are one and the same, so 'sub-gurus' are

fine.

Too deep. Let's move on to the second type of guru – the trade or business guru. No, not Lord Sugar or Peter Jones from Dragon's Den. The trade guru is more personal than that – a bit like the academic guru. The overriding role is to impart softer skills, such as influencing and creating gravitas, and to provide guidance or work as a sounding board in times of difficulty. Once again, it is the qualities of the guru that will attract the shishya – the aura, the character, the respect, the wisdom and the authority. It is no coincidence that these qualities overlap with our earlier definition of the guru. But just as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, these qualities will reflect differently to different shishyas, and it is up to the shishya to find their own trade guru. So maybe Lord Sugar does qualify as a trade guru to some of his apprentices. But not necessarily to all.

Is the concept of having two different gurus for technical training and for learning the tricks of the trade, as it were, a new phenomenon in an increasingly complex world? Not really. I avoided it so far, but it is almost impossible to complete a guru-shishya debate without discussing Dronacharya and Arjuna – probably the most discussed guru-shishya pairing in Hinduism. "Aha, so Arjuna just had one cradle-to-grave guru, right?" Right? Wrong. He had at least one technical guru in Dronacharya, who was the school master, if you will, combined with a university professor.

However, Dronacharya only taught Arjuna the art of warfare and theoretical war strategies. Chapter One of the Bhagavad Gita (verses 26 to 29) will tell you that Arjuna's limbs still quivered at the onset of the great battle of the Kurukshetra, his body trembled, his bow



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was slipping and his skin was burning. Later verses of the Mahabharata will tell you that time and again through Arjuna's battle, he had decisions to make where he himself may have erred if it wasn't for the timely guidance of Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna, Arjuna's trade guru.

Hence I decipher that Dronacharya and Krishna were both his gurus, and both in and of themselves, playing the roles they played, would have been inadequate for Arjuna's (and therefore the Pandavas') success in the Mahabharata.

The young man or woman entering the City today, or indeed one who has been in the City for a few years but is still seeking to become the "top dog", is no different from Arjuna at inception, and/or part-way through the battle of Kurukshetra. Asian culture today places emphasis in making the most out of academic life, and learning as much from the technical guru's knowledge as possible. The emphasis seems to have diminished on the trade guru. I would urge the ambitious young man or woman working, or about to start work, in the City, to remember to continually ask of themselves "Who is (are) my Krishna?" Don't let your ego, or the self-perception of weakness, get in your way. It may cost you your success in the City.

The City Hindus Network offers an informal mentorship program to amateur and mid-level professionals in the City. It also offers numerous networking opportunities with other City professionals through regular networking and educational events.

Tarang Katira is the Community lead in the CHN. You can sign up to be a member or find out more about the CHN at www.cityhindusnetwork.org.uk.

India on its path to discover its own car design identity

Rajesh Kutty, a Malayali man, with an MA in Automotive Design from Coventry University (2004), currently works with Bentley and was a part of a team that designed a train that will be used at London Olympics 2012.

Rajesh spoke exclusively to Asian Voice about growing up, his passion for designing cars, his future plans and the journey so far.



Rajesh Kutty

AV: As an Indian coming to Coventry to study automotive design, how different was it for you? Why did you choose Coventry?

I already had a background in Design from NID, Ahmedabad, also prior to this I had worked at a car studio near Coventry on a tractor that I had designed. Thus I was not alien to what I was to expect. I chose Coventry as I was already familiar with the place, and it is a pretty reputed place for Car Design in the world.

AV: You were the winner of The best Model of the Show' at the Uni, and runner up for 'Best Concept Design' at the Graduate show held at the British Transport Museum, Coventry in 2004. How important were they in your career?

For my final project, there is no doubt that I did eye to be up there as one of the better designs in class. So it did make me feel proud to be judged well amongst a bunch of very talented and hard working individuals. I felt rewarded for the effort I had put in during the year, and thus grew in confidence.

AV: Tell us something about your childhood, your family, where you grew up, what aspired you to be an automotive designer.

I was quite car mad as a child, and on hindsight I liked to draw more than other kids. My father worked in the Automotive industry, and he was a great influence for my love for cars. After graduating in Engineering I learnt more about the Design world, and realised that is where I wanted to be. This led me to post graduating in Industrial Design (at the time there was no Automotive design course in India), which then led me to a tractor design immediately after. While working on the tractor I pursued my ambition of working in the Car Industry with what I loved doing - Design.

AV: Being an Asian in the field, has it been difficult for you to make a mark?

I was looking to work in Europe as I like European Car Design. This however was not easy as it meant obtaining visas, which very easily limited my scope of getting a job in Europe. It took me a couple of months and lots of emailing to get the visas for my first car design job in Turin, Italy. This anyway was only for 3 months!! But as far as design was concerned it didn't affect me as I enjoyed what I was doing.

AV: Has the current economic climate affected your field of work?

I have been fortunate in this regard. But it could have very easily gone the other way.

AV: What is the latest trend in car designing?

Car Designers carry a lot of influence from other fields, be it furniture design, fashion, yachts, lights or lifestyle products. Similarly Product design and other fields look at cars for inspiration. Thus there is a lot of overlapping in terms of design cues etc, while focussing on the brand of the car.

AV: Are you the only Asian in the Bentley design team?

Indeed I was the only Non European in the Bentley Design team. Although last year the Exterior Design team inducted a Korean.

AV: Today's youth relate to car designing, as an extremely 'cool' job. Some also aspire to take the same path as you. Do you have any tips for them?

Please don't join Car Design if you think it is a cool job. While it is a thoroughly enjoyable thing to do, it's best to pursue it only if you are passionate about it. Also

even if you get Automotive Design at university is it really what you want to do? Especially since it is a highly specialised job.

I was once told by my teacher at Coventry that there are more Hollywood stars than there are Professional Car Designers!

The ones with the best skills get through while others may pursue other fields. So if you truly believe in your dream then you can get what you want with talent, the right skills and some luck. Once you get there then it's a pleasure working on what you liked since your childhood.

AV: Do you plan to go back to India and use your skills in designing there?

I would love to do that someday, when the time is right.

AV: How far do you think India has excelled in this field?

Car Design as we know it today is a 'western concept'. Thus obviously its way advanced in the western world than in India. However like many other things (non Indian) India is doing the catching up. There are various Design schools that have come up in the last decade, training Automotive Design amongst others. A lot of automotive companies boast of in house designers where it was almost non-existent a decade back. Also there are a quite a few Indians like me in other car studios around the globe, which is very encouraging. So we are catching up for sure.

AV: What do you think the future of car designing in India would be like?

As India is so unique, like every other foreign concept/product that gets introduced in India has to respect the culture and tradition to be successful there. Similarly, I think the Indian designer would have to be very sensitive to what is liked or preferred within India. It is a matter of time before India would get its own Car Design identity. Our own signature forms, use of colours and functions offered that we would portray to the rest of the world. Currently I think it is on the path to discovering it.

The Government of India has recognised the fine journalism of one of our reporters. **Dhiren Katwa** was presented with the Bharat Samman Award in New Delhi. He was the youngest recipient of the 20 NRIs who were each recognised for their exemplary work in their respective fields. Dr Rami Ranger received the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Full story next week.



Midland Voice

Dhiren Katwa is currently away