



The Outer Teacher and the Teacher Within

by Eknath Easwaran

Excerpt from the Fall/Winter 2017 Blue Mountain Journal

The word *guru* literally means “heavy” — one so heavy that no storm can uproot him, as heavy as a mountain that withstands the hurricane without flinching. A guru is a person who is so deeply established within himself that no force on earth can affect the complete love he feels for everyone. If you curse him, he will bless you; if you harm him, he will serve you; and if you exploit him, he will become your benefactor.

It is good for us to remember that the supreme teacher or guru is in all of us — call him Krishna or call him Christ — but we need an external teacher who has become aware of the teacher within and will help us make this discovery for ourselves. The outer teacher makes us aware of the teacher within, and to the extent we can be loyal to the outer teacher, we are being loyal to ourselves, to our deepest Self, our Atman.

We are told in the scriptures to select a teacher very carefully. Once we make a decision and select an outer teacher who is suited to our spiritual needs, we must be completely loyal to him.

Caught, not taught

Spiritual awareness is really not taught; it is caught. This is a beautiful way of saying that when we love someone who lives without any thought of his own personal satisfaction, who devotes all his energy, love, and wisdom to help those around him find wisdom, we absorb, through our deep love for him, something of his spiritual awareness. Constant association with people who are spiritually advanced supports us by a process of absorption.

If I may refer to my own small example, I have committed the innumerable mistakes that most of us commit in our modern civilization, but in giving all my love to my grandmother, I was able to attain some spiritual awareness.

The teacher steps aside

When the disciples love the guru, it is this love that unifies their consciousness. At the time when we are ready for it, the spiritual teacher will step aside to show us that all the love we have been giving him has been directed to our own Atman.

The guru, who has become complete in himself, does not need anyone's love to make him secure; it is in order to unify the consciousness of the disciple that the relationship exists.

All the external teacher can do is be a reflection of the student's Atman. He is the symbol of the unity of all life until the student can make the discovery that the Lord is within his own heart.

Ask for blessings

When you begin your meditation, it is very helpful to ask for the blessings of your teacher, who has no selfish attachments and expects nothing from you in return. Your teacher's joy lies solely in enabling you to discover your own real Self and make a great contribution to the world. That is why I always begin my meditation with an expression of my love and gratitude for my teacher, my mother's mother.