

# Get Real: What Is The Difference Between A Teacher And A Guru?

BY KAREN PALLISGAARD

Featured image: Uma Inder, courtesy of Karen Pallisgaard

In this series, *Get Real*, I ask my teacher a range of questions in order to explore the roots and realms of original yoga, ayurveda, tantra, meditation, spirit and no bullshit-living.

I have been in the yoga game for decade and I'm still confused as to what a guru is versus a teacher. I have seen big egos called themselves gurus, and I have seen non egotistical people not calling themselves anything, who might just be gurus.

I see Uma as my teacher, but I have heard people speak of her as guru. A word I have never heard her use herself. So what's the deal – and what is the difference between a (yoga) teacher and a guru?

**Uma :**

*“Guru (the master) is showing, not teaching” ~Madhu*

Guru conveys by their very presence the concentrated essence of being themselves, as one with all, as one through all. So being, their role becomes role-play. A play of roles that is interactive, interchangeable and transferable. A play that is organically responsive to circumstances that arise as nature's experimentation in the elemental world Guru is supernally reintegrated into. Teachers teach by example from a body of knowledge they represent and therefore to which they are held accountable.

In contrast, Guru shows what Guru is in response to what stands before it, like a mirror, having dissolved certain structural restraints—as the fruit of personal sacrifice—of their programmed relationship to dualistic preferences, including the preference to be a guru-type or not.

If the mirror appears dirty and the viewer needs a cleaner reflection, it is the viewer's responsibility to wipe the surface clean. For it is their desire to be seen and reflected back to that draws them close enough to recognise the mirror is useful for that very purpose. The mirror itself is not reliant on showing what is there or not there until it is seeable by the one seeing. At that point there is a relationship defined by the seer seeing itself as the seen. The mirror is now relatable as a mirror. Until it is used as a mirror, it is potential, conscious energy resting in itself. Non-expendable contentment in being self as any and all self.

It is also content to be used for the purpose as chosen by the active viewer or not. As a perceivable object, the mirror has innate role and function relative to its nature and capacity. However the mirror itself is not dependent on being used as such. A mirror could well be used as a table until the user realized greater, more specific potential born of self-motivated discovery. In that sense the student potentiates Guru through the fulfillment of their own intent and desire. Through the fulfillment of their own will, faith and action. Until then Guru is extraordinarily ordinary, a nobody, could be anybody.

A teacher who is not Guru is a teacher.

A teacher is a teacher by virtue of their categorical role.

A Guru can be a teacher and or Guru, or neither.

Thus the difference is how shapeless you can be.

*"You must be shapeless, formless, like water. When you pour water in a cup, it becomes the cup. When you pour water in a bottle, it becomes the bottle. When you pour water in a*

*teapot, it becomes the teapot. Water can drip and it can crash. Become like water my friend.” ~Bruce Lee, Master (Guru)*

If you have a question you'd like Uma to answer, please send it to [info@karenpallisgaard.com](mailto:info@karenpallisgaard.com). Read more about Uma [here](#).



Image: Uma Inder, courtesy of Karen Pallisgaard

*For more self-study, [The Urban Howl](#) recommends [The Inner Voice of Love: A Journey Through Anguish to Freedom](#) .*

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