

Voice is the concern

Passionate about using your voice in all its potential? Therapists are here to help you, says Renuka Suryanarayan

PRESIDENT Bush, Elizabeth Taylor and Elton John have one thing in common—they have all paid a visit to the voice therapist. In fact, Bush was given lessons in perhaps his most important public address—his acceptance speech after winning America's closest election race. Bush was advised to lower his pitch of his voice in the time between this speech and the inaugural address. The results were there for the world to see.

Ever wondered how some people are able to strike just the right pitch and chord? The secret lies in voice training, a practice quite common in countries like the US. There have been speech and voice clinics for some years here, but never with awareness of how a voice determines your degree of success. People are also beginning to take voice disorders more seriously. Speech centres at Nair Hospital and the All Yawar Jung Institute for the Hearing Handicapped at Bandra have serviced this need for long. At the All Yawar Jung Institute, those with an income of less than Rs. 5,000 per month are given free treatment and a minimal charge for the test.

Says Anur Basu, Head of HOD of material development at the Institute, "We have had Speech and Language Pathology from the 80s and we have a sophisticated voice lab to evaluate

the problem. Based on this, treatment is given." Nair hospital also has a speech therapy department offering free consultation.

Specialty clinics are also coming up like never before. For instance, Aarohi which is headed by otolaryngologist Dr. Sudhanshu Nayak who has acquired specialised training in "Care of the professional voice and laryngoscopy" and "Phonetics and Voice Culture" from Dr. Robert Sataloff of the US, the same person responsible for Taylor's husky voice and Elton John's deep baritone.

The ideal way to enhance the voice is through vocal exercises, before which voice evaluation is done. Says Dr. Nayak,

"A laryngoscope is the device helps you 'see' the voice box, giving a very a magnified view of it." There are several functional voice problems faced by a lot of

people.

What a voice-training programme does is provide techniques, exercises and philosophies for improving voice quality, power, range, flexibility and so on.



people like those who do voice-over, in comedians and yoga teachers. Teachers are a common category. "Habit is so structural change, the voice is brought into resonance through an enhancement programme or voice therapy," re-

commence. It includes a series of graded exercises for improving breath control, articulation, volume control, voice projection, intonation, rhythm, phrasing, expressiveness and for optimisation of pitch range. Dr. Shetye who treats voice disorders, says, "Speech therapy without examining the voice box may be like threatening. An ENT surgeon should also be

consulted on any problems with the voice." He feels that the problem has to be detected for the causes, whether it is psychological, neurological and so on. "If the problem is not severe, the voice can be trained and there is no need for an operation," he adds. He says equipment like the stroboscope are used to detect lesions in the larynx as the visuals in the equipment can be seen in slow motion.

For that precautionary measure, whenever there is a noticeable voice change lasting for more than three weeks, get it treated. Those who wish to maintain their voice culture must remember that there are things to be avoided like excessive talking, shouting, spicy foods, caffeine and smoking. Says Dr. Nayak, "There are singers who have nodules and they like their deep voice, so they don't get it treated."

There are times when you find your voice too weak, high, soft, big, small, harsh, in short, not really you. The concept of voice care and voice enhancement has been very popular in the US and is considered a vital part of image building. Maybe it's time we took the plunge.

- The cost of voice therapy
- Could range between Rs. 6,000-20,000 depending on the intensity of the problem.
- Voice vocal health treatment: www.vocalcare.com and www.400-6000.com
- Voice analysis: Rs. 500
- Advanced voice analysis: around 1,000

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