

Rajan Mittal

Vice-Chairman of Bharti Enterprises

'I see my work as spirituality'

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Rajan Mittal is vice-chairman and managing director of Bharti Enterprises.

What does spirituality mean to you?

The first thing that comes to my mind about spirituality is good deeds and karma. I am a strong believer in karma and destiny, in the need to go ahead and do good things, without worrying about the results. The results will follow, and if they don't, it is fine as well. The point is that as human beings, no matter who and where we are, no matter what is the position we were blessed with by destiny, we can do good around us, and we ought to try and do the right thing. Of course the definition of what is right may be different for you and me. But this is where my heart and consciousness play a role and must tell me what it is about.

I actually constantly check if I can look at myself in the mirror without lowering my eyes, if I can get up in the morning and feel light and good. That is really important to me.

Do you believe you are guided and protected by a superior force?

I definitely have a feeling that someone is looking after me. When I look at how things have unfolded – though most of the time they have actually come the hard way – I cannot help but think that there is such a force. I guess there is a constellation of stars and there are forces that you attract which help you through. But they also tell you that you must fulfill your duties. And God helps those who help

themselves. There are certain openings but you also have to do your homework. You come with a destiny but then it is up to you.

In a life like the one my brothers and I lead, one cannot expect easy times all along. It is more like a yoyo. But as long as the ride is more often smooth than bumpy, and that you manage to get through the tough times, it tells you that something correct is happening. So especially during really rough times, I draw energy from the idea of that protective force looking after me. I also find tremendous strength from the awareness that I haven't done something fundamentally wrong. No one can raise his head and say "you've killed me because of your actions". That energy flowing in the body can be a quite resilient force.

Do you believe you have a special mission or purpose in this life?

Being born as human beings, I definitely believe we are put on this planet to do something very specific. But I could never say that in my early years I knew what it would be. I started by wanting to be a sportsman. Sports were a real passion, I enjoyed them so much. Until one day I realized it was all day dreaming.

Politics were not an option, though it could have been a natural one considering that our father was in politics. In fact, it was the only profession he asked us not to enter.

From our youngest age, we saw many things other kids are not exposed to, due to his political activities. We went through so many ups and downs. We saw how after election victories thousands of people would flock into the house, whereas after every defeat, it felt like a graveyard. It made us understand very early on that people are not committed to you or to a cause, but to power only. Seeing all that churning made us look at life differently. We did not know that the three of us – Sunil, Rakesh and I – would work together, but we had a sense of being a very small family, and no one else to count on. There is actually a deep understanding between us three, not just as brothers but as humans, a lot of give and take, and tremendous respect. I find it extremely important. It keeps us in good shape.

As education was not our forte, and politics were ruled out, business was left. In Ludhiana, where entrepreneurship is so common, we went from one business to the other and things developed over time.

So today, when I think about what we do, I feel I may actually add more to society than had I entered politics. If you look at Bharti's businesses, you will see that we predominantly pick up areas that have a deep impact on society. And that is the purpose I see to all that I do.

What is spirituality for you in your day to day life?

I am not an atheist nor would I say I am a religious person. I certainly do not spend hours praying in temples or doing havans. I just have my little prayer in the morning – not a set one, but something along the lines of "keep it going, keep me sane, let my own beliefs not falter and bless us all."

What is the role of spirituality in your work?

I actually see my work as spirituality. It is about trying to do things right, then putting them behind and moving on. Work brings me into all those good deeds. And do I enjoy coming to work? Absolutely. I love my Mondays. It is a given.

I constantly meet so many people, from all walks of life, coming with such different backgrounds, problems, mindsets, agendas. Human interaction itself can be so spiritual if you allow for it. So work gives me that high and that mindset.

Can you share a unique experience that changed or shaped your spiritual beliefs?

I cannot think of one event that stuck in that respect. I think it happened over time. For years, even as a child, I felt there was such a thing as destiny and the good deed factor was imbibed from my father early on. Later, as I went into the world, I had to switch from innocence to more practicality and there have been challenges to applying this philosophy, for sure. But can anyone apply it 100%? I do not believe so. So the bottom line is: as long as I can look at myself straight in the mirror, that is what matters.

What have been your main spiritual inspirations?

I am definitely not the kind of person who would go to any guru or have a disciple relationship with anything or anyone. I think that life is the most amazing and best teacher of spirituality and humanism. Nothing can be more brutal or candid or honest or giving than life. Besides, why go to a guru – he or she may have their own set of wonderful principles, while another set would be lying outside their door, and you would be missing them. So learning can come from anywhere and anyone in life.

If you were to be reincarnated, what would you like to be reincarnated as?

I definitely do not believe there is such a thing as reincarnation. But if there was, I would wish to be back as a good human being, who can add value.

If there was one question you could ask God, what would it be?

I get really disturbed when I see people being killed in the name of caste and religion. So I would have to ask: why all this?

What is your idea of happiness?

By nature, I never go to extreme happiness or extreme sadness. If something horrible happens, I feel it was meant to and look at what is coming next. On the other hand, I obviously draw some happiness from looking at where I am today, compared to where I was when I began, and from trying to do something for those who were not that blessed.

I am healthy, I have a good family, good children, a nice environment. And I love my work. Rather than doing it to make a mark, I am into it because I feel like it. I do not need any accolade, any exposure. I am a background guy, and I am really fine with it. My mentality is to do my work and move on. The rest does not matter.