

# Suresh Kalmadi

Congress MP

## 'One life and so much to do'

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**Suresh Kalmadi is a Congress MP, the President of the Indian Olympic Association.**

### **What does spirituality mean to you?**

It is about trying to be good and do whatever I believe in. For the rest, I let my wife take care of that side of things. She is a quite spiritual lady. She keeps going to temples and places of worship. And I am quite happy to "delegate" it all to her. She drags me at times to religious places. But for me, I do not need too much of it.

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

I definitely believe there is such a force, though I never delved too much into it. I cannot disbelieve the fact that there is someone out there shaping out destinies. But I believe destiny is only 5%. The rest is mostly about really hard work, and luck of course – which is random, and which is about being at the right place, at the right time. Nothing ever came easy to me in life. I always got what I wanted but had to work hard for it. If you look at the lines on my hand, you can see how much they criss-cross. They are always very clear and go to the end, but with a lot of struggle. I often feel that others get it easy while I have to fight for it. But that is destiny I guess.

On the other hand, I have had luck for sure. If you look at my air force batch, half are no longer here. I participated to two wars, in 1965 and 1971 but lucked out and made it out safe. So much is about luck when it comes to getting back home safe from a war. And then I left the air force before something bad could happen.

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

I guess some people have a mission, others don't, some are destined to do great things, others aren't. In my case, as a child, I never dreamt too much about what I would do. My father was a doctor, and as the eldest child, I had no choice but become one as well. But when it was time to enter college, many friends were sitting for the exams at the National Defense Academy, which was not far from our home. I decided to go through the exams as well, got selected and joined the NDA, against the will of my father. For ten years I was a pilot. But soon enough, I knew I should not stay for too long. I had a good time, but I could not do well with the "yes Sir, yes Sir" beyond a certain point. That is just not for me. I do not fit in it. I thought I should see the "disorganized side of life" and I got out of the air force, to enter business. Later on I joined politics. That is one thing I was always very keen about and really interested in. I became a member a Parliament and then moved ahead on that path. When I am ok with the people, I fight the Lok Sabha; when I feel something is wrong I go to the Rajya Sabha. When I feel people miss me again, I go back to the Lok Sabha. So I have been in Parliament for now 26 years.

Sports happened a bit by chance. I always was fond of sports, as I did much of it in school and later on in the air force. But basically a vacancy came out at the State Athletic Federation. Some people put me up against the previous gentleman and I was almost forced into it. I did not like the idea. But then things developed and I climbed up the ladder.

As the President of the Indian Olympics Association, my objective is two-fold: at the moment, cricket is the only popular sport, lavishly funded and supported in many ways. Yet, it is played in only ten countries while the Olympic disciplines are practiced all over the world. So I would like to develop at least the four core Olympic sports in India. Also, it is amazing to see how little place for sports there is in school. Kids go attend classes with the heaviest books in the world on their backs, their parents are only obsessed about studying. There is so little time for sports and so few facilities. That has to change. And then there is the objective of having the 2020 Olympics in India. If we are successful at the Youth Commonwealth Games coming up in Pune in October, we will be good at the Commonwealth Games in Delhi in 2010. And if that happens, we will have a good chance to get selected in 2013 for the 2020 games. That is my mission.

Yet, I should say that my family suffered most from the way my life developed. My wife came from a business family and chose to marry me because she thought someone in the air force would have a lot of time, instead of being so busy with business. Then I got involved into business, and then in politics, and then into sports, and every time the new activity took away from the family.

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

Every morning I must say my prayers, no matter where I am and how busy I am. There is no compromise on that. And that is about it.

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

My understanding of what life should be was always the same. Working hard, and taking some time off to enjoy it as well. That's it. One life, and so much to do.

**What have been your main spiritual inspirations?**

I could not point out people who really shaped my life or perceptions. I am too strong of a person to follow anybody else. Of course my family has a role for instance. But I generally move on myself.

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

Definitely the same sort of life, I am really satisfied with the one I have had this round.

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

I have no question to ask. I am really satisfied with the way things are and that's all.

**What is your idea of happiness?**

I really enjoy my life – whatever I do, I feel fine, I am at peace. The only problem I have right now is the pile of papers from the Commonwealth Games – too much paperwork is piling up and I could do without it!