

Subhash Ghai

Film Director and Producer

'The universe gives me energy'

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Subhash Ghai is a film director and producer.

What does spirituality mean to you?

Connecting to the existence, to the universal existence. When you manage to connect to it, you are like a particle, a minuscule one, so the chaos in your mind becomes very insignificant. You feel you are nothing, like a zero. And this is when you start achieving a state of peace inside.

How do you manage to reach that point?

There are a lot of devices. Reading books – Ramakrishna Paramhans, Krishnamurti, Osho and others have been my constant companions. They helped me find answers to all my questions. Also, it is about looking at people objectively.

Is there such a thing as objectivity?

Of course! Take a bird view of all people and you will find that there is no big deal about any of them. They are all in some kind of chaos, running for money, power, anger, rivalry. The moment you go up into the sky and get a bird eye's view, you connect with people in a different way.

On the other hand, the moment I look at things subjectively, my opinions take precedent, my limited knowledge asks me to gage them, my narrow traits react to them, so I become very hindered in connecting with people in the right way.

Do you go up into the sky all the time?

When I need it, I go. Especially at night time, when it is time to look at myself and others. Also, when I meet so called big people, huge ones – they scare me, their success, their jealousy etc. So I go up and realize they are not that big. When I think of the Prime Minister of my country I think he is big. When I go up though, he becomes one of the prime ministers of the world's 200 countries. And suddenly he takes different proportions.

I have grown and evolved myself in that way, because my mother always taught me – however much you grow materially and intellectually, you must grow spiritually as well. Because it is the most crucial device along with your intelligence, wisdom and living.

She was a teacher, but she could explain things much better than all religious people. Because I was for sure a very questioning child. For instance, I would ask: if Lord Shiva is so powerful and is the lord of the world, why is it that he is not that recognized in America? On the other hand, why isn't Jesus Christ known in a small village in Bihar? It seems that each of them is a figure of a particular land. But at the end of the day, they all connect to some universal existence.

Universal existence means universal energy?

Yes it does. And I strongly believe life is about cycles of energy, which no matter how long (a few days or a few decades), all boil down to the same components – being born, growing, then dying. The trouble with human beings is that they have been victims of their own intelligence. A human is wise, but he is limited by jealousy, greed, lust. And the biggest tragedy is that he thinks he won't die.

You do not call this energy God?

I don't. How could a God handle all these things? Existence has given you a brain like a computer to do certain things. We –all those computers– communicate with each other. God is not behind a cloud, orchestrating things.

I can see how the idea of God helps certain people. I guess it serves as an object, like a point to focus on, because they are limited in their grasp and understanding. But the more educated spiritually you are, the more you know you are Brahma, you are the God. You simply learn, grow and then you die.

Do you feel guided and protected by this energy?

Yes, because I feel energized by it; the universe gives me energy. I speak and it produces energy. The same magic happens to our minds. Your mind vibrates with the cells of mine and gets them to do certain things or not. And then you decide within your own limitations to be or not to be. Your destiny is there. Your choice of actions and people is your destiny.

So destiny is all in your hands, nothing is preordained?

Absolutely. If at all, the only thing I believe in is astrology, and the idea that planetary moves may influence us. Like if you stand under the sun, it is difficult to make a decision. Your body is boiling, it reacts to the rays. So it is better to move into the shadow and make a decision there. Similarly, I can imagine that planet rays would impact us. But then when people transform all this into a religion, it does not work for me.

But when you were born, was the script of your life already written?

Sometimes I believe so, sometimes I don't. If I look at my story, I could have never imagined I would have become a Subhash Ghai. I was the son of a refugee. From my childhood years, I could have never fathomed that I would come one day to Bombay and become a famous man. One thing though, when I fixed my mind on something, I worked extremely hard at it. I went for it and it happened. Though I have to say, ten other people came to Bombay also, worked hard, and still did not succeed. So is that destiny? Is that a question of having some super brainpower? I don't know. Why does a person from one school become a Prime Minister, or a top scientist, and not all the other students? I don't know.

As a child, did you always want to make movies?

I was interested in dramatics, in human beings, in knowing, observing and meeting people. I was interested in the Ramayana and was constantly imagining all those characters. I always had an inquisitive mind. So I pushed myself and succeeded in the end.

I first went to study commerce, because my father didn't want me to study movies or an art kind of a thing. He wanted me to have a secure job. Later, when I won all those medals as an actor, he understood, and encouraged me to go and study to the Pune Film Institute. I could have never fathomed I would have gone there, but I did.

Then I came to Bombay, and worked so hard. I did not know anyone. I was nobody. I was a one-man story. I did not know where to start and which studio to enter. I knocked at the doors of 40 offices, which all rejected me. Until I understood I had a talent for writing and I could sell stories. I sold six stories in one year. And the rest is history...

Do you think there is a mission to each of our lives?

Well, two things matter – finding joy, and constantly discovering. I grew up in a really modest and narrow environment. I was constantly fantasizing about discovering the world. Movies were giving me the visuals about all the worlds I was not belonging to and that I was dreaming of. And I went on, discovering, discovering, discovering. So the joy of discovery makes you enjoy. When you enjoy it becomes your passion. Once it is your passion, it becomes your growth. And it pushes you further.

You were not disappointed, when you finally came to Bollywood and discovered that world?

There are always cycles of rise and fall, success and failure, joys and sorrow. That is part of anybody's life.

Movies can be a very powerful tool when it comes to transforming, and conveying messages?

Definitely. If you look at a film like Taal for instance, I wrote in it about "rising in love", instead of "falling in love". Why fall, why be weak – rise, be strong! That's the kind of message I want to convey.

At times of down in life, where do you find the energy to cope?

When you fall, you can either cry or laugh. I always choose to laugh. It has happened to everybody in the world. I immediately compare myself to the most powerful people, and I see that they have also fallen, so then I feel good. To succeed, you also have to fall.

Do you believe in rebirth?

I am confused about it. There is no definitive answer or proof of it. So I leave those things unanswered. I don't need to have all answers to lead my life.

If there were such a thing though, what would you choose?

I would like to be a film writer, because I feel I still have so many ideas and stories, I will never have enough time in this life to write them all.

If there were such a thing as God, and if you could ask God one question, what would it be?

If you provide the same kind of body to everyone, why can't you provide the same kind of wisdom and brains to all of them?

What is your idea of happiness?

When someone looks at me with love. With full affection and genuine love.