

Subhash Chandra

Chairman of Essel Group

'Destiny is like a bank account'

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Subhash Chandra, Chairman of Essel Group, says he has progressed more in the twenty years that he has been practicing Vipassana.

What does spirituality mean to you?

It's about knowing the truth: why am I here on this planet, why am I who I am, am I just supposed to come, make money get old and pass away? Is that all? What is the purpose behind it all? Answers can only be found through spiritual means.

What are they for you?

For me it's been the practice of Vipassana.

Why Vipassana?

I have been on this quest since childhood. I was always curious and asking questions. I tried to find answers through many sages and saints I met. But I could never understand what they were saying, or they could not convince me.

When I came into contact with Goenka-ji, I understood that this is probably the best way to find out.

How old were you?

I was 40.

What was different about Goenka-ji and Vipassana?

I could feel it and I could see it like in no other practice. I am born a Hindu for instance. But Hinduism is about prayers, beliefs, rituals. Whereas here, it all starts with the intake from the five senses, we observe what happens, we feel and experience things directly.

Your perspective on life has changed a lot with Vipassana?

It has. But I have to say, I should have progressed much more in those twenty years since I started. I could have done much more practice, much more learning, more courses.

Were you too absorbed by business?

Yes, business has been taking too much of my energy, as well as all sorts of other distractions that I indulged in.

Is there such a thing as destiny in life?

I believe it is like a bank account, the good deeds are your balance – from a past life and from this one. And that is what you are withdrawing. I wouldn't call it destiny though.

And do we have a specific purpose in life?

I don't think everybody does. 99.9% of people do not know what their mission in life is. As for myself, I know what my "spiritual" wish list is. But I am not destined or cut to only work on that. I also perform all sorts of worldly duties. And so many distractions have been taking me away from my quest to find the truth.

But business could be very meaningful and purposeful too, depending on how you approach it?

I never thought of it that way. I simply club all those things as my worldly activities. Whereas in fact, they should also be one of my ways to find the truth.

How did you get into business in the first place?

My family was in business and I directly got into it. I was always wanting to take new challenges, explore new possibilities, and I took the business into all sorts of new directions. One thing led to another. When you are inquisitive and ask too many questions, too many answers also come! Then for sure you don't have to spend money on consultants!

At times of huge challenges, where is your anchor?

I have been through many challenging times and I definitely found an anchor in Vipassana. It helps you become calm and quiet instead of being confused by all the fears. Because it teaches you how nothing is permanent. It brings you back to the basic vibrations in your body, it makes you watch them,

no matter how painful they are, with the awareness that they too shall pass. This calms you down. Then once more quiet, you become much more efficient at handling the challenge.

Does the idea of God talk to you?

After Vipassana, things changed for me. Because in it there is no theory of God.

It's only about the reality of what I can sense now. You are the god. And you are experiencing reality.

If there were one question you could ask God, is there a mystery you would like to inquire about? There are all sorts of mysteries I do not understand, all sorts of events that puzzle me.

For instance, at times in my life I have indulged in certain things even though I had promised myself not to. Those distractions took me away from the path that really matters. So I ask myself why it happened. Why did I do it? And it is a mystery.

What is your idea of happiness on this journey?

To remain in the present. There is no happiness or sadness. What matters is to find the truth and become liberated, meaning to get freed from the cycle of birth and death.

So in this cycle, what are the moments when you feel really good inside?

It is difficult for me to say actually. For a long time I was very happy in terms of my spiritual practice but I may be very different in terms of my daily life, my work, worldly affairs. There I could be very unhappy.

Say if you have some major success in business, for instance if Zee TV has the number one ratings, is that a source of happiness?

That is not real happiness. Actually, when overly successful, I am not overly happy, and if I fail, I am not so worried about it. I am quite neutral about it all.