

Veerappa Moily

Cabinet Minister for Law and Justice

'We are the architects of our lives'

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Veerappa Moily is the Cabinet Minister for Law and Justice. He was awarded the Moortidevi award for his work on the Ramayana. He is currently working on a poem on Draupadi.

What does spirituality mean to you?

Some people call it inspiration, others call it a dream. Regardless of the name, without spirituality you cannot be a writer, you cannot be an artist. It is a vehicle for a person to reach out to his dreams, to what he wants to be, to what is not within the common periphery.

How does it happen for you?

Through sheer concentration. It is not about meditation, a yogic experience or something of the sort. I wake up very early in the morning to write and when I do so, nobody is allowed to come and disturb me. In those moments I cannot do anything else. I become completely immersed in it, with total concentration. It is almost like being possessed. That is how it all flows through me. I must get in that kind of a mood. Otherwise I cannot even write a line.

It is actually a strange feeling because often so many words flow through me and I feel my hand is too slow to write them all. In the end only a hundredth of what flows through me gets translated onto the paper. Only one percent of my emotions get translated into words. That is how I write.

Why write about the Ramayana or Draupadi?

My wife is the one who suggested it. She is the inspiration. Initially I was resistant - why write such poetry? I did not want to do it in a half-hearted or small way. So it would mean dedicating a significant part of my life to it.

But I always liked writing. When I was a child, my illiterate mother would bring the kerosene lamp for me to study and she would stay there while I was reading and writing. She would not allow me to do anything else. In the morning, she would wake me up at 4.45am and I had to study from 5 to 6.30 or 7am. That is how I started writing. Then I continued that way. I never stopped.

Even when I was Chief Minister she would sometimes sit quietly when I would write in the morning. And actually, even now, I feel her spirit is somewhere around me. I do not believe in rebirth and so on but somehow I believe she is around.

That is why wherever I am, the first thing I do in the day is write. And the morning writing charges me for the rest of the day. It is what gives me the energy to do so many things during the day.

How did you decide to get into law?

I have very vivid memories of an incident that took place when I was about four years' old. Back then, there was absolutely no protection from the landlord for those living and working a land.

So I was sitting on my mother's lap when the landlord barged into the house, and started aggressing and abusing people in the most revolting ways. I think the desire for justice and to get involved with it was born then.

So, would you have ever imagined that one day you would sit in this chair, as Minister of Law? Looking at how your life unfolded, does it make you feel that there is such a thing as preordained destiny?

I do not believe in fate or destiny. We are the architects of our lives. We are capable of doing anything. For this, one must work hard, study hard, with clear objectives, a clear mind and a clear character. And I must look for answers, I must search for truth.

So life is a quest?

Absolutely. And whatever I write is the expression of that quest.

Did you always have a sense of having an exceptional life?

Of course. Look at where I was born, poorest of the poor. And where I am today. Thanks to being on that quest.

Why politics?

Same thing. I was fighting the landlords. I would argue for justice, always taking cases of the poorest, most destitute people. But since nobody had any record, any document, it was almost impossible to get any justice done. So people would often tell me that the only way to get justice was to enter politics, be elected as an MLA, and fight at that level. That is how I joined politics. Once you join, you become

a minister, then chief minister and so on. There is no way you can stop, you can't cut yourself off from it.

Could you have ever fathomed you would reach where you have reached?

Absolutely not. I never think of what comes next. I do with absolute passion whatever my duty is today. And I believe in the principle of creative destruction. We believe in the ten avatars of Krishna. If there had been only one, it would not have been enough. Every time one got destroyed and new things would emerge later on with a new version. Similarly in life, you need to destroy to create something new and better. Change has to be there. Structural changes have to come. And this is what I am trying to do as a minister.

I actually wonder why we stopped after the tenth avatar! Why did India stop somewhere? We need new avatars all the time. Otherwise we just hang around. The past has such a gravitational force which brings us down. Whereas the future is a force that can pull us up. We are more about the past than the future here, and this is the defective Indian philosophy. Gravitation bringing us down, down, down. People think that the past is spirituality whereas actually I think it is the future.

Where do you find the energy at times of great challenge and difficulty?

Actually, Moly as a personality only emerges when there is adversity. I am that kind of a man. My wife asks me this – why must I become angry and have a fight with someone to be at my best? My best simply cannot come from status quo. It is like an energy unleashing.

What about spirits? You wrote about them.

There is no spirit beyond you. . I did try many times to find out but there is nothing like that, external to you. It is in you. It is all energy. And it can emerge if you have the power of enthusiasm, if you are passionate, if you are on a quest.

What is God for you?

If there is a god, I feel that my mother is god. I don't believe in an ultimate god.

Did you have a religious upbringing?

Not really. A few bhajans sometimes. But I was never interested in any ritual. I was always very focused on whatever I am passionate about. Passion is important. If you don't have passion to do, you can't achieve anything. I am not a routine kind of person.

If there were such a thing as reincarnation, what would you choose for the next round?

I never believed in reincarnation. This is my birth and rebirth. For instance, I almost died in an air crash in Mangalore. So I had death and rebirth in this life!

What is your idea of happiness?

It is not from external sources. If I can achieve something without greed, that is total happiness.

How is it possible in politics not to want more, a more powerful, impactful position and so on?

Yes, I do look at opportunities to change and have an impact. But I don't think of what is next. I think of what are the changes I can trigger from my current position.

Is it contentment?

Contentment is not happiness. If you are content you stop doing anything. I am enjoying myself, I feel at peace, but it is not contentment.

But in such a position there must be people trying to bring you down and sabotage you all the time, isn't it?

That's actually for me a source of energy.