

Nandan Nilekani

CEO of Infosys

'Spirituality is very much expressed through my work'

Sun Jan 07 2007



Nandan Nilekani, The President, Managing Director and CEO of Infosys.

What does spirituality mean to you?

It means establishing a sense of equilibrium about yourself in the world, an understanding of where you are and what you are within that world. It means defining a value system, an approach so that you can live your life in a peaceful, productive and effective manner. The world can be extremely stressful and destabilizing for the individual. So having a spiritual centre is very important in order to cope with all of that. I try to look at things with equanimity; I believe that life has given me more than what I need, certainly more than what I want and definitely more than what I deserve. So it is important to create that balance and I try to practice it.

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

Well, I think of god in an amorphous manner. And my view is that rather than creating and viewing god as someone there to bring comfort and benefits, it is to be thanked for what I got. So in times of challenges, or when there is a crisis, rather than simply reverting to it, my sense is that "this too will pass", my conviction is that at the fundamental level, I am doing the right thing. Therefore, I will necessarily reach a point when the crisis goes away. There is no need to revisit what I do and this gives me my balance.

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

One thing I am convinced about is that if you lead a purpose driven life it is so much better because it gives you confidence, it gives you a reason to wake up in the morning and do things. People have to decide and understand what is their purpose, but in my personal experience having a sense of purpose has made a big difference to my contentment, my happiness and my stability. It simply made me a better person. And I very much feel I am at a stage I should take advantage of my unique position in order to do impactful things in the world in every possible way.

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

First of all, spirituality is very much expressed through my work and what I do in society, it is about my actions. I am having an exceptional opportunity to make a difference to many things, so I really focus on that and it gives me a lot of contentment. But I also constantly practice a lot of introspection as to what is my role, how I can make a difference, how to be fair to human beings. I try to apply that learning to the ways I conduct myself, it is a recurrent back and forth between reflection and action. I also do a bit of prayer every day. But I am not going to temples or am not into rituals – I am not religious in that sense, spiritual yes, but not religious.

Can you tell us about a unique experience that changed or shaped your spiritual beliefs?

I couldn't recall a specific event. I would rather say that is it an understanding I have developed over the years. I just realized how important it is to be centred and how much it affects all dimensions of life.

What are your spiritual inspirations?

It is not about encounters or gurus for instance, it is more a value system I have built for myself, thanks to the various reflections and experiences of life.

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

Well, I do not believe in reincarnation, and also, I do not think of other things or people I would have liked to be. I am focused on what I am trying to do and be today.

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

I am so purpose driven that I don't sit and think about those things – I am almost too focused!

What is your idea of happiness?

Happiness is having that sense of purpose and constantly fulfilling it.