

Sudha Murthy

Author

'I always check if I'm doing the right thing'

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Sudha Murthy, Author, Chairperson of the Infosys Foundation.

What does spirituality mean to you?

To live by my own conscience. I can yell you any kind of lie or truth but inside I know what the truth is. I constantly check myself to see if I do the right thing. That is spirituality to me. At times people may feel I am rude as I always say what I think when I think it, but at least my conscience is clear, and I can have a good sleep at night.

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

In the day to day life, I do not ask for guidance or protection, for special benefits, asking God to help me getting this or that. But at times of crisis I pray. I tell God I do not know what to do, I am at a crossroads and I do not know where to go – so please guide me. And I guess I have indeed found the guidance at each of those crossroads and He has shown me the path.

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

When I was young, I used to believe there is no such thing as a predetermined destiny. Destiny is in your hands and it is all up to you, you gain or lose according to what you do or don't. But as I am getting older and as I have seen much of life and human beings, I have understood how much in life actually does not depend on us. You can have for instance all the wealth in the world, but when illness strikes, it won't really help. So the only thing you can do is try your best. As far as I am concerned, I feel a certain kind of wealth was given to me –not materially speaking– for a particular reason, and I have to both honor and fulfill that reason. Among others, it has to do with books. I always knew I would write. My parents encouraged me to read. My mother used to buy me books for my birthday. My grand-mother would tell me so many stories, maybe ten thousand verbal stories from her village. And I used to write very good essays in school. So writing was always part of me. When it comes to children, if you just tell them to speak the truth and so on, they will not understand. But if you wrap it into a story, they will. So in my stories, the cheater always gets defeated, bad behavior always gets punished. And hopefully the message gets through...

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

Listening to my conscience and doing my work the way it is meant to be.

What is the role of spirituality in your writing and social work?

It is everywhere. I keep my conscience very clear in my work.

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

At home the culture was like that. I suppose that is the main experience.

What are your spiritual inspirations?

I was completely shaped by my upbringing. My grand-father was a Gandhian by principle. He never told a lie in his life, he was a schoolteacher who did not have a lot of money but had a lot of contentment. It inspired me tremendously and gave me so much inner peace. My father was an atheist while my mother was a religious person. And they educated me with free will: you can choose to believe or not, it does not matter, just be a good human being. And I ended up being a partial believer! I do not pray God daily for any benefit, but at times of crisis I do. I only visit temples from time to time. More importantly, my upbringing meant not attaching much meaning to wealth or success. And once you are detached from it, you can be free, and you can be very bold, because you do not fear to lose anything.

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

If there was something more I would wish to live, I should do it in this life. I would not want to leave it for another birth.

What is your idea of happiness?

It is a state of mind. It has absolutely nothing to do with your gender, success, money, beauty, or with your capabilities. It is all about being content inside. And to get there is the difficult part of the journey

that each of us has to undertake and learn. The fundamental question is to know where to draw the line of contentment: if too near, you may not progress at all. But if too far, you may remain unhappy and frustrated all your life. So you have to find that fine line that enables you both to constantly grow as a person, and yet find some inner peace. On the overall, I would not say I have found it 100% but I really enjoy what I do. I do not buy anything, I do not need anything, I do not lie, I say exactly what I feel when I wish to, I never manipulate. And I do what I love, whether writing books or working with all sorts of sections of society.