

# Kapil Dev

Cricketer

'Only thing that matters is to know who I am'

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**Cricketer Kapil Dev believes that we must realize who we are and not try to put up a pretense.**

**What does spirituality mean to you?**

The first thing that comes to my mind is religion. I feel that religions were created by a few intelligent people who wanted to make sure people stick together. In every community, there is a small percentage of people who think. The others follow. So those thinkers created a number of rules and instilled a fear of God in people so they follow those rules. That is how religions came. Whereas in fact, everybody has a different way of thinking. What you see I may not see. The way you look at life may not be mine.

Religions are good but one needs to be educated about them. Most people follow the rules without knowing their meaning, simply because it was engrained in them since they were very young.

**Was it engrained in you?**

Yes, like every Indian, it was engrained in us to do pujas, to pray in front of the god before exams and all sorts of such things. So you just take it in your stride as the done thing.

### **Does religion have an important role in your life?**

It used to, but not really anymore. When I began traveling the world, getting exposed to so many different realities, opening up to many new things, it changed. Yes, I believe there is a power, but it is the power of the mind more than anything else. Everything is controlled by the brain.

You want to believe because this is how you strengthen yourself. Anything good happening and you say "god was on my side". This is what I said when we won the World Cup for instance – simply because I was brought up to think that way.

### **How did this change occur?**

In the middle of my career in cricket it started changing. Because I started realizing that the most fundamental priority and the only thing that really matters in life, is to know who I am.

I feel that so many people in this world come and go, without ever realizing who they are. So somewhere along the lines, having gone through all sorts of experiences, I realized who I am. When that happens, everything changes. You are not worried anymore about what people think of you, or say about you. You are not afraid, you stand up for anything and anyone you believe in.

When you are young everybody is having tea, and you also do. But somewhere along the lines you realize that actually you'd prefer coffee. That is when you realize what YOU like, not what other people are forcing on you. Same thing with religion, same thing with life. 80% of parents want their kids to do what they did or wanted, instead of encouraging their children to find out who they are and what they genuinely want.

When I go to schools and talk to children, I tell them that numbers are important, but that one's personality is more important. Forcing oneself, pretending to be someone we are not, being what others want us to be, instead of finding out who we are is the worse.

Whereas once you realize who you are, you perform very differently, you are a winner in the race of life.

Once, a man came to my house, in his mid-fifties. He wanted a drink, but wished to hide it from his father, his children, his servants. He was worried about what they would think of him. And I realized it is not about what others think. We may respect them from our heart, give them love and affection, but we need to respect who we are.

### **So at the beginning you were trying to do what your family wanted, and then it changed?**

My family went through the trauma of Partition and was simply trying to make ends meet. We were a large family, I was the sixth of seven children. They were working so hard to give us a life. So there wasn't much space for complex things and thoughts. Given their story though, they did imbibe in us something important: to never give up. No matter what happens, taking it in our stride and moving on.

**Did they push you into cricket?**

Not at all, they didn't even know what cricket was. But they didn't stop me from it. They just wanted to make sure I studied. Yet, only one thing mattered to me as a child: to play. It didn't matter which sport, but I had to play. In the end I picked cricket and things happened.

But again, the only thing that really matters is to know oneself. And that only happened much later, in my late thirties.

**Would your family have encouraged it?**

They couldn't. To this day, as they feel and see I changed, they do not necessarily understand me. Having remained in the same reality all along, I guess they are not equipped to understand me, like someone who stayed in a smaller pond compared to being thrown into the ocean. Once in it, I had to survive, which was not easy and I struggled, but I was exposed to so many different worlds and realities. When you see a thousand different perspectives, yours changes too. No book you read, no television show you see could ever inform and transform you as much as traveling does. That is the knowledge.

**You mentioned a power – is it an external force orchestrating things?**

I think it is all about inner power and how you use it.

**The concept of God talks to you?**

God is only a word. Nobody has ever seen God. But at least I would say God is you ! Being authentically and honestly yourself is what it is all about.

**At times of major challenges, where do you find your energy and anchor?**

I trained myself to be happy regardless of the circumstances. I decided that whatever happens, I must see what I can get out the situation. And this is how most of the time I manage to handle difficulties. I always ask myself what I can learn from it. Because I want to learn so much. And one lifetime will certainly not be enough.

**How do you deal with character assassination, defamation, and other such things, how does one develop a 'thick skin'?**

You have to know who you are. Once you do, then it doesn't matter and you are not swayed beyond a short moment by the bad things others may think or say. If you are mature enough, you just feel this person doesn't know what he is writing or saying.

**Looking at the way your life unfolded, is there such a thing as destiny?**

Of course you have no control on the circumstances of your birth, your education etc.

But over time you realize life is about your own efforts. I cannot and shall not stop for a moment, thinking that things may be preordained and therefore I don't have to do anything. Life is all about

this: keep looking, keep dreaming, keep doing things. And the more you learn, the more you realize how little you know.

So my philosophy of life is about how I can enjoy it no matter what I do and what happens to me. It is about managing to feel alive, here and now, in the moment, even though living in such a fast-paced environment makes it difficult. In a big city, there is always something to do, we are always on a race and it is easy to forget the whole purpose of our being here.

**Talking about purpose, how do you see the impact you can have now?**

God has given me a face which people recognize and therefore they want to know my thoughts. If I can communicate one single thing then that would be enough of an impact, and that thing is: realize who you are, don't try to pretend, and you'll be much better off.

I go to schools and I always tell children to start looking for what they want to do in life. Don't just come to class, study, go back home, listen to music or watch TV, and that's it. Find it out now! Because life is short and you don't want to find out when it is too late.

**If there were a question you could ask God, what would it be?**

There would be so many things to ask about! Can I be in two places at the same time? Can I close my eyes and reach wherever I want to reach? And if You created such a large number of people, why do so many suffer?

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

I can't expect a better one than this one. But one thing I wish: for people to see my face and smile. Smiling is the best thing but in today's world, people don't have time to smile!

They are so caught up with their lives and other things.

**What is your idea of happiness?**

When spending time with my daughter, my wife or some good friends, when eating a good meal, I feel good inside! Also, winning always gives happiness. Winning in sports for instance, not to mention that my victory also gives happiness to others. That's the amazing thing about sports: you derive happiness from winning but many others do too, then you feel like on top of the world.

And of course, above anything else, if I can achieve what I want to achieve instead of what others want, that is a hugely important source of happiness.