

Lord Swaraj Paul

Business Magnate

'I don't try to analyze God'

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Lord Swaraj Paul is an Indian-born business magnate based in the UK.

What does spirituality mean to you?

It is extremely simple: it is about being a good human being. Not just in theory, but try and practice it.

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

I am a God fearing man. I definitely believe there is a force guiding me, and that I could call God. Life can't be only about me and my own efforts. And hopefully this force guides me in the right direction. I do not think much about it, I do not try to analyze it, I just try to flow with it.

So when I look at my life, I have to acknowledge that God has been extremely kind to me. If you take our group Caparo for instance, we took it from a turnover of 14,000 pounds in 1968 to over a billion this year.

In fact, I attribute all good things that happened in my life to the blessings of our daughter who died in her infancy. Every single time we inaugurate a new plant or start some new venture, we plant a tree in her name. I owe everything to her. You could actually call it a personification of God.

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

We all have a mission in life. Without a mission, you can't have a life. You want to be successful, you want to be of some use to society. Whether you achieve it or not is another question. As a child, I had no idea what I would do when I grow up, and I still did not have a clue when I finished my studies. But at least I can say I always tried to be a good human being. For instance, I always try to say what I think even though it may hurt some people and create a bit of havoc.

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

No day starts without a prayer, thanking God for everything I have been given. And then, I try to be considerate of a couple of things: there are people better off than me and I should not be jealous of them; others are worse off and I should at least think of them. Even if I do not always reach out to the pocket to give and one cannot help everyone, I should at least be aware of their fate.

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

Our daughter died when she was twenty-two months old. It is a terrible thing for parents to go through it, and we knew all along she would not survive, as she was suffering from leukemia. It was completely shattering for my wife and me. After her death, we were so broken, and I decided not to struggle. Instead, I thought I should get away from my work. And I spent a year away meditating, reading, trying to come to grips with what had happened and finding some peace with the loss. It was of course the most life changing experience, and my whole perception of life has been shaped by it.

What are your spiritual inspirations?

My father's father was a close associate of Swami Dayananda, the founder of the Arya Samaj. They were contemporaries from the same village. So our home was impregnated with that movement's influence. Besides, my father was a strong disciplinarian, who tried to inculcate ethical values in us. And our family was one of freedom fighters. So all those things inspired me into becoming who I am.

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

I am quite happy with what I am! I would hope to continue that way.

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

None, no mystery.

What is your idea of happiness?

I always tell my children and grand-children, that they should work hard to have more than what they need. But also that they should make sure their needs do not grow exponentially and limitlessly. That is to me the definition of happiness.