

# Atul Dodiya

Artist

'Every piece I create is somehow a spiritual exercise'

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**Atul Dodiya, Artist.**

**What does spirituality mean to you?**

It means searching for the ultimate truth, trying to understand what the Creation is about, feeling both how humble my position is, and how connected I am with the rest of the universe.

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

Absolutely, I feel and see it in so many things. For instance in my art, I used to think that it was me creating a piece. Gradually though, I understood that it is not the case. There is always a moment when alone in my studio, quiet in front of a painting, I would take a decision, not a calculated one – it would come out of the blue, and then it would be it. It would be a turning point for the piece, it was ready. Where is that energy coming from, what is it? In those moments I am simply a channel, a conduit for that energy to be expressed on a canvas.

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

I think that everyone has a certain purpose and role to play in this life. In my case, I knew from the earliest age that I had to be a painter. I simply felt I had no choice. Even if I would be starving, this is

what my life was to be about. I had an understanding with my father, that would I not be able to make enough of a living to afford oil painting, I would use water colours. Would those still be too expensive to paint on canvas, then I would use pencils on paper. And if even that would be unaffordable, I would use newspapers for collages...

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

It is not about rituals, it is first about trying to achieve a certain balance – not to get myself as agitated, depressed or angry about things as I used to, and not as excited either when beautiful things happen. Besides, it is about being on my own in my studio, in front of a canvas, creating.

### **What is the role of spirituality in the world of the arts?**

Every piece I create is somehow a spiritual exercise. In the sense that I realize how much it is not completely me creating it. Of course, every time I start a painting I plan something. And of course, it never happens the way I thought it would. In case it does, the result is not good! So now I simply flow with it all.

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

I always had an inclination for spiritual matters. But as I began my career as an artist, I mostly focused on succeeding in that world – until three or four years ago. At that time, I began feeling the urge to be more on my own, far from the noise of parties and art dealings. Then I met one person, a very humble and wise guru, in some distant village. I had heard about him for some time but was not ready to meet him until one day I asked a friend to take me to him. It was a revelation. It is very hard to describe my feelings in words, but after meeting him I felt so good within. My whole approach towards myself, life, my surroundings gradually changed since then. He is so knowledgeable about the most varied things of music, philosophy, art, mysticism, and teaches simple things, for instance not to crave for name, fame and money, not to be obsessed by "me, me and me". Above all, there is so much sheer love and compassion in him, unconditional love.

### **What are your spiritual inspirations?**

First of all, at home, my mother was extremely religious, constantly honouring the gods, bathing or feeding them. Reading the Mahabharata, the Gita and other religious texts was commonplace. Also, Ramakrishna's and Vivekananda's teachings represented a tremendous influence during those years. Later on, I focused more on arts until I met guruji, in that distance village. He has been a constant inspiration since then.

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

One day I asked guruji about my past lives. He argued, why would I want to know about them? "There was a chunk of time you lived at some point, and now you are in the midst of another one, just leave the previous ones alone as knowing about them would not add to your present journey, just live here and now." As for the future, of course, I would have to be an artist!

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

I am a visual artist, so the first thing would be: I want to see You! On the other hand, I have seen Mona Lisa and not Michelangelo. So isn't it enough to see the creation, why would I need to see the Creator? Beyond that, I would ask one thing, along the lines of Ramakrishna: how can You always be in and with me?

**What is your idea of happiness?**

I can say that I am quite satisfied about what I have achieved and where I stand today. But what is all the success, recognition, exploration of the world if I do not have inner peace and contentment? That is what I am trying to achieve, that is where I would define happiness.