

# Jay Panda

BJD MP

## 'Failure is part of a bigger scheme'

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**Jay Panda, BJD MP.**

### **What does spirituality mean to you?**

At some very basic level, it connotes a humanness rather than something religious. Actually religion and spirituality are really not connected for me. Spirituality is about bringing out the best in human beings, such as compassion, while connecting to something bigger, deeper, better – beyond this mundane world of ours.

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

I have felt that at times for sure. For instance, in some challenging moments, I would pray and then things would flow in a nice way. But I have a quite sceptical view on those who see every single coincidence as a proof of the divine, and of that protection and guidance.

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

I believe that the luckiest people on earth are those who do have a mission in life, are aware of it, and are embracing it. In my case, I never had a single focus that I would constantly pursue, I would rather define myself as a discoverer and explorer. I stumbled on a variety of careers, such as politics in which

I fell a bit by chance. But I do not have a fatalistic approach as if everything was set in stone; we do have a lot of responsibility in what happens in our lives.

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

The underlying spirituality I feel keeps me centred instead of being carried away with politics or anything else. I do not have daily rituals to connect to it but at times I have my own kind of prayer, especially in times of challenge. Then it is not about asking for a specific outcome, but about having the clarity to find the best solution and the strength to go through it all.

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

It means the ability to take distance yet be detached – I would give the best, in the most passionate and caring way and if it still does not work, I must find detachment. Spirituality teaches how temporal all things are, and in politics they are more so than anywhere else – so it helps me to never take myself too seriously. It is a constant reminder of how insignificant and minuscule of a cog I am in the cosmos, whereas it is so easy to feel grand and important once we have even a bit of power.

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

There was a period earlier in my life when things were quite tough and challenging, when all the struggles I was facing did not seem to find a resolution. I would try and remember the karma yoga principle that one should not worry about the outcome of our efforts. Thanks to it, I was able to remain focused and work, which I consider a miracle of sorts. Gradually, I internalized this spiritual belief and on the long run, it helped me develop a sense of detachment which is with me till this day. When I face some kind of 'failure', I feel it is part of the bigger scheme of things and that something better will come.

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

I grew up in a liberal Hindu family with a very religious mother, who would insist we participate to a variety of rituals but at the same time she would give us the liberty to form our own convictions. Besides, I went to a Christian school which exposed me to very different belief systems. Beyond all those earlier external influences, spirituality is very much an understanding coming from within and evolving over time.

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

I would not want to choose, and unlike many who say they would like to come as the same person, I feel I have enough detachment so that if reincarnation actually exists, I would just take the chance of coming back as whatever is in store for me.

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

I would ask God what is my life's mission or destiny – to make sure I am on the right track...

### **What is your idea of happiness?**

I suppose Alfonso mangos with vanilla ice-cream come pretty close to the perfect definition of happiness – with a bit of bitter chocolate thrown in...