

# Adi Godrej

Industrialist

'I have grown closer to religion in the past few years'

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**Adi Godrej, Industrialist.**

**What does spirituality mean to you?**

I think about it as a bit of philosophy and a bit of reflections—anything different from the material world in which I am involved on a day-to-day basis. I was born a Zoroastrian but was completely agnostic in my youth. I have grown closer to religion in the past few years. Zoroastrianism does not have too many taboos, bans, superstitions or rituals. It focuses on simple principles like good thoughts, good words and good deeds. So it somehow suits my very rational and scientific mind.

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

I do feel I have been very fortunate in my life and so at times I feel blessed and thank my fate. But there is no such thing as destiny. Life is a combination of probability, logic and my own input. It turns out as I mould it and is not shaped by some abstract external force. I am the architect of my life.

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

I do not think we come to earth with a specific mission. Rather, we create our own. Being born in the family I belong to, I obviously had very special circumstances to help me achieve things I believe in— for instance, ensuring the company's employees' success; or spending on charity for education or health instead of giving to beggars, which I definitely do not believe in, or building temples, which I think is a waste of money.

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

I do not follow rituals, superstitions or religious prohibitions of any kind. But I do visit the fire temple once a week and pray there for 10 minutes. It somehow gives me a sense of peace and quiet.

**What is the role of spirituality in your life as a businessman?**

I do not believe in appeasing the gods or being ritualistic in order to bring business success. My scientific temper cannot accept it. But spirituality to me is about ethics. Of course no one can be 100 per cent ethical about every little thing, but I clearly draw the lines. In the long run, it definitely helps. Take corruption for instance. If you bribe to get something done, you may gain in the short run, but then every single time you need something, people will expect money from you. Whereas if you refuse to pay, you may lose out in the short run and people may still ask for bribes, but (the instances will be) much less.

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

Rather than one critical experience, it has been a gradual evolution from complete agnosticism towards religion since my forties. As I grew older and faced all sorts of challenges and difficulties, I got to think differently, finding that even though it may be a crutch, the bit of religion I practice gives me peace and quiet, which is what matters.

**What are your spiritual inspirations?**

I have always enjoyed reading philosophers, trying to understand what makes the world click, what works in life, what doesn't. Adam Smith and Ricardo were an inspiration in understanding how to build wealth that can benefit all. Though I am totally opposed to his economic ideas, I like Mahatma Gandhi's philosophical approach on how to fight a major force effectively. I was also inspired by Margaret Thatcher and the way she managed to transform her country so brilliantly.

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

I do not believe in reincarnation. Had I to choose though, I would not mind coming back as myself. I have really enjoyed my life. Still, for now, I need to listen more, delegate much more, and discover more ideas and realities of the world.

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

Why is there so much disparity on earth? For instance, why is all the intelligence in the animal system given to human beings?

**What is your idea of happiness?**

To feel that those around me are comfortable in how I deal with them. I am not a contentious person; I do not go into strong fights. I am more of a mediator. I try to get a lot of feedback, so I regularly meet my children or senior managers to hear what I do wrong and should improve. When I was young I thought I knew it all, and would not listen to anyone. It was a huge mistake. Now I try to correct it, and I find that the best feedback is from youngsters. So I do reverse mentoring with them. Of course with age comes some wisdom. But also, (you realise) that too many habits and convictions which may have been right 30 years ago are irrelevant today.