

# Namita Gokhale

Author

'Difficulty pushes us to fight, to grow'

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**Namita Gokhale, Author.**

**What does spirituality mean to you?**

It includes every single moment of my life. Since I was a child, I have had a sense of spiritual wonder, a strong mystical and religious instinct in which I indulge and through which I live my life.

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

Life can be harsh and cruel, so I do not believe there always is a protective force. But there is a flow to life and events. We ought to step back and try to get a sense of it, so as to follow it as much as possible. At times though, wisdom tells us to go against that flow. So recognizing when to follow it, and when to go against it, is where the guidance should be. Also, Hindu terminology differentiates Maya or the veil of illusions, and Lila, which is the playful way of dealing with things, and the one I relate to. If one brings that sense of play, which involves trust, then life mysteries work with us rather than against us.

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

I think that life is purposeless in the sense that Camus called the "benign indifference of the universe". I have seen so many lives pan out in so many different directions, with so many absurd twists and turns. Situations change, personalities change, chemicals that constitute our bodies change – change is the only constant, the script of life keeps changing. Instead, it is up to us to find and invest purpose. Once we do though, it simply is there.

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

It is my day to day life. Besides, I pray every day unless I do not feel cleansed enough to summon that state of grace. I have my own personal pantheon of Hindu deities and set of rituals which constantly change – nothing set in stone or dogma. At times of crisis – and I have had many – strength has come from prayer and in particular to Hanuman, with his special combination of physical strength, mental agility and pragmatism. I actually consider those moments more defining and enriching than times of stability and happiness. Indeed, I find the latter often quite debilitating as very few of us have the intelligence to use them for internal resource building, while at times of difficulty, everything in our nature pushes us to fight, to grow, to expand.

**What is the role of spirituality in your work?**

Writing is by itself a form of spirituality. Indeed, it involves among others finding patterns in life, which means taking distance with things. But I find spirituality in technology as well as it reinforces my sense of inter-connectedness. And if spirituality is about extracting some joy and grace from life, it obviously ought to be part of all my many involvements.

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

Defining spiritual moments have been those when I understood that the body's boundaries are not those of our existence, and when I would gain distance and perspective on life. At the age of five for instance, I fell into a pond with goldfish swimming all around. As I was struggling to keep my head above water, the world looked so different from inside the pond than from outside of it. I realized how much my perception simply depends on location.

**What are your spiritual inspirations?**

I relate very strongly to the Himalayan mountains of Kumaon where I am from. They have been a primary source of spiritual inspiration. Growing up as a Pahari Brahmin girl also shaped my beliefs, in particular watching my uncle –who eventually became a swami– struggling to define his own spiritual identity. All that contributed both to my love of the mountains and temples, and to a dislike of the complacency that comes from certain aspects of Hindu and Brahmin traditions. The same aversion applies to the absurd selfishness that sometimes accompanies so-called spiritual activities.

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

A cloud.

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

I am not a questioning person. But if I was in a position to ask God a question, I would sit and wait for God to formulate that question.

**What is your idea of happiness?**

Shared silence.