

Dr B. K. Rao

Chairman

'You can be happy or unhappy for nothing'

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Dr B. K. Rao, Chairman, Board of Management, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital.

What does spirituality mean to you?

It is about the purpose of life. I believe in a Creator. And of course, we all face those questions at times – if I am here, what is it for?

So somewhere through my work especially, I have found a meaning to my life. Whatever I do, my personality should be enriched and I should leave enough behind. If I manage to do that, I have successfully integrated spirituality into my life.

How did you find out what your life's meaning would be?

The foundation actually came from religion. Hinduism is not a monotheistic religion, it involves worshipping everything – the sun, the moon, rivers and so on. This gave me the feeling that everything has a purpose and a role. And if everything was made for a purpose in the universe, then so am I. Nothing came by chance.

And if I manage to fulfil what I feel is my purpose, then I have peace of mind. So at the end of the day, spirituality is nothing but an inner state of consciousness.

Did you always know you would be a doctor?

When growing up I mainly focused on getting good marks. At that time medicine was considered for top rankers so I went for it. Once you are a doctor, there is a sense of benevolence, plus the financial rewards. And it is up to you to choose what your focus ought to be. If I look at my life though, I can say that the overall purpose has not changed, only the scope has – originally I took care of a small group of people; now it is a large group and with a much larger array of disciplines involved. It is not only about being a medical person and providing healthcare, you also become over time a social worker.

What are the main challenges for you now?

Finding the means to do all that I want to do and the fact that a day has only twenty-four hours.

At times of major challenges, where do you find your anchor?

My belief that nothing lasts forever, and that any tough time will also pass – as much as the good times.

Do you pray?

My wife is a Brahmin and she prays, while I perform the pujas. We do it every morning, before starting the day. It sets the tone for the day.

Is there a guiding and protective force in your life?

I believe that whatever happens in my life was written for me, was preordained. You can try to change destiny but you can only modify it at the margins. And whatever happens, your attempt to change it itself was also ordained. In that sense, you also know that there is not only one life, and therefore at the end of your life, you are not scared of passing away.

There are moments when I question if destiny is ordained at the macro or at the micro level. Not everybody gets what he wants, and not everybody gets what he gets because he made specific efforts for it. So obviously there are things beyond your control, which decide what you are going to be.

But if someone kills or rapes, was that ordained as well?

No, I don't think so. But what was ordained is for that person to have a miserable life all along thereafter.

It also is obvious to me that some of those questions are blurry and not everything is crystal clear when it comes to those general truths.

Are there moments in your life when you felt like a "hand of God" is intervening?

All I know is that it should not be the case that when things are looking good, I take all the credit, while when things turn bad, I blame God. So partly it is my contribution, partly it is destiny.

Being where I am now for instance was never planned. Every step was leading me to the next one, but none of it was planned. When you enter a room, you don't know that there is another door in it leading to other rooms. You just enter that room.

Being in a hospital and seeing so much pain, are there moments when you feel there is too much human suffering?

Why there is so much suffering you can keep wondering. So I try instead to focus on what I can do to lessen that suffering. We do about 54,000 surgeries a year, we admit almost 150 patients a day for soon-to-be 750 beds. That is my focus...

If there were one question you could ask god, what would it be?

Whatever You made me capable of, I hope I have done a fine job using it?

If you were to be reincarnated, what would you choose?

If I am born a human being I would like to start helping earlier in life, and I would love to have the same spouse, as understanding as mine is in this life!

What is your idea of happiness?

It is a state of mind. You can be happy for nothing, or unhappy for nothing. It comes from a holistic approach, not from one specific thing or the pleasures of life. You are a happy or an unhappy person. And it is the result of what you have absorbed from your surroundings. If you think that getting richer and acquiring ever more wealth will bring you happiness, you set yourself up for unhappiness and dissatisfaction inside. So it is all about your own state of mind and priorities.