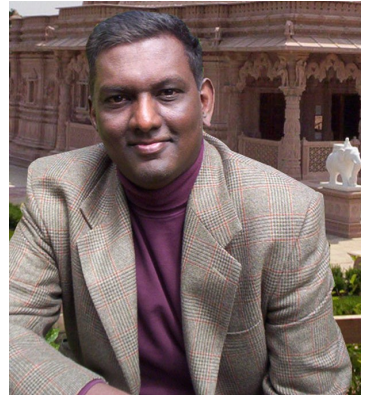

>> Dr. Atul K. Shah

Diverse Ethics

Dr. Atul Shah is a writer, public speaker and a regular broadcaster on BBC Radio 4, BBC World Service and BBC Asian Network. He is the founder of www.diverseethics.com, with over 200 articles on culture and ethics in the workplace, and the author of his book, 'Celebrating Diversity.'



1. How would you define success?

Success is happiness, contentment and inner peace.

2. What sorts of things do you do day to day?

I start my day with a short meditation and workout. I spend a good amount of time thinking, reflecting and writing, all of which I really enjoy. I don't spend a lot of time travelling or rushing around – I value calmness and quiet. I am also very independent in my thinking and research, which I really value. I am a regular blogger on my website www.diverseethics.com.

3. Did you need any qualifications/qualities in particular for your field?

Qualifications help in what I do. I have a PhD from London School of Economics, and that has opened many doors and opportunities for me. The experience of doing original research over a long period of time is quite revealing and liberating, and helps you to really discover your own wisdom and truth. It is also hard work, and can be frustrating and lonely at times. It has helped with my teaching and investigative skills, and I have taught and spoken at conferences all over the world. At heart, I am an educational leader, and there is something very beautiful and priceless about the sharing of knowledge.

4. What is one thing you wish you knew when you were 16?

Mentoring is important, and it is good to respect and listen to elders and learn from their experience and wisdom, even when I don't agree with everything they say. Even now I have a mentor who is most helpful and generous.

5. What is the best and worst thing about your job?

Best thing is that I am free to do what I want, worst thing is that I have to spend quite a bit of time doing my own administration.

6. Who inspires you?

Wise people like Mahavir, Gandhi, Mandela, Obama. I am always touched by the unconditional generosity, simplicity and help of my (uneducated) mother and my wife Nina.

7. What is your greatest professional achievement?

Publishing original research in international journals (a total of ten articles), where I predicted the banking crisis in full detail. If people had listened, it would have saved the world hundreds of billions of dollars, not to mention the pain of recession and unemployment.

8. What was your childhood dream and at what point did you decide what to do?

My childhood dream was to become an accountant, and I have become a writer, consultant and broadcaster. This is far beyond my wildest dreams as a child. There were no specific points about my decisions – things just evolved. There were some tough times when I was not happy doing what I did as a professional accountant, and I had to change career.

9. What is the best advice you've ever been given?

Don't aim for wealth – anyone can achieve it. Aim for wisdom and enlightenment. And try to live your values and with integrity.

10. How do you find balance between personal family life and work?

Life is a balance between birth and death. We know deep inside how to live with balance – all we need to do is to tap into this wisdom and stay connected to our soul.

11. What do you think were your main turning points in your professional life?

My marriage, the birth of my children and when I decided to quit the accountancy profession and became a university lecturer. Founding the charity Young Jains is an achievement that I will savour for the rest of my life. It gives me great joy and fulfilment to see that not only is it alive today 20 years on, but its wings have spread globally to North America, East Africa, Australia and even India now. It is a very grassroots and creative organisation.

12. Is there any degree of luck in your career?

Of course there is, buckets of it. I was foremost lucky to be born a Jain in the home of a community leader and role model father, Mr. Keshavji Rupshi Shah.

13. Is there anything you regret at all?

Yes, not having self-belief and confidence at critical moments in my life. There is still much to be done to ensure people who are different are allowed to be so and respected for their difference. My advice is don't try to fit in and suppress your identity. Take pride in who you are, but also respect the culture and wisdom of others.

14. What is the biggest challenge you have met and what did you learn?

To live with low income – I learnt to be frugal and to value the great free things in life, like fresh air, inner peace and a close family.

15. What is your next goal?

I would love to shape and influence the global dialogue on leadership, ethics and diversity.