

Artha Forum @ The Indus Entrepreneurs, Silicon Valley

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Speaker: HH Radhanath Swami

Topic: The Culture of Wealth

I was asked to speak on a subject of **responsibility of wealth**. As I was sitting here my mind went back a couple of years, I was invited to speak at a Milken Micro global conference at the Beverly Hilton hotel. And I was invited to one panel of discussion where seven of the most powerful leaders in the fields of America and international business were discussing what is real leadership. There was the CEO of Safeway foods, there was one lady who was the CEO of the largest cancer research organization in the world, there was Steve Wind who owns big hotels in Las Vegas and all over the world. There was Joe Torre, who is one of the history's greatest baseball managers. I wasn't on the panel but there was a swami there listening. It was full of variety.

What interested me, is at the conclusion of this very very insightful and sincere exploration of what real leadership is, Mahatma Gandhi was quoted 3 times. That was the culmination. Steve Wind said that his model of leadership is the words of Gandhi and he quoted "there go my people I have to follow them because I am their leader". And then they put on the computer screens a quote by Gandhi "At first they will ignore you, then they will laugh at you, then they will persecute or attack you and then you will win." And then the culmination was Gandhi's words "Be the change you want to see in the world"

Michael asked Joe Torre, you are one of the 3 greatest managers in baseball history. Before you came, the New York Yankees had not been in the playoffs for 11 years. After you came, they were in 9 playoffs and won 4 World Series. And when you came, all the press said it was a great mistake and that you were useless. So for all you have accomplished, plus you were in the hall of fame because you played yourself. What do you feel was the greatest accomplishment that you made in your life? He turned to the lady next to him and said she helps people with cancer; I've done nothing compared to that. And Michael said, well there are a lot of Yankee fans out here, there are 3000 people in the ballroom and they think you have done something. He said, well if there is anything that has given me fulfillment where I have felt that I have actually

accomplished something in this world, it's not those things. He said when I was a child living in New York City, my home was so abusive; I suffered so miserably as a little child. He said the only relief and release for me is to go out and play baseball. And that's how such a great baseball player became. It was just releasing all my frustration, fear and pain that were in my heart, in catching and throwing those balls. And then I became a manager and won so many World Series. He says but really what I accomplished is that I started an organization in the inner city schools of New York to help children who were suffering from abusive homes. And when I see these children suffer the way I suffered, and they actually feel that somebody values/ appreciates them, likes them and I see their smile, that is far greater than all I've done in my professional career. Then he said something that moved me. He said this whole realization was not my idea it was my wife's idea. She had taken the leadership.

Now this is of course on a very relative level, but what really brings fulfillment to our life. The Brahma sutra tells, every living being is seeking pleasure. That's the motivating force behind trying to develop power, wealth, influence and all the various sensual pleasures that may come with it. It's a search for pleasure. The only pleasure there is for the heart, is the pleasure of love. To love and to be loved, that is the fundamental need of everyone. The Brahma sutra also says, the origin of everything that exists is Bhagavan or Krishna or God. And the origin of that propensity to love is our natural, innate love for God. Because we are not just these bodies which are like cars, some people drive Ford, some drive Mercedes, and some drive ambassadors. But the person driving, he has different needs than the car he is driving. A car needs gasoline, oil, tune ups. But the person needs food. So this Atma, this living force, and the soul that is within us. Its greatest need is to be reconnected with its own nature or with God, through love. When we understand this principle, then we understand the foundation of Vedic wisdom and how it can apply to every aspect of life even in this modern world.

According to the Vedic culture, wealth is sacred. Sometimes Swamis don't speak like that. They say, Its Maya, its illusion it's all temporary. In the Bhakti tradition, wealth is sacred. Because wealth is the energy of Laxmi, the Goddess of fortune, the feminine energy of love of the Divine, Narayan. When we understand how this sacred energy of wealth, is connected with the source, with Krsna or with God. Then we can actually realize the sacredness of our wealth.

When we forget that, and see wealth in terms of my own selfishness, my own arrogance, my own greed. Then that is called Maya or illusion. It's not that wealth is illusion; it's our perception of wealth that is illusion.

Everything in this creation is good or bad according to the consciousness of the person using it. An eg, a simple knife. A criminal will take that knife and slash somebody's throat to steal their money for themselves. A surgeon will take the same knife and save a person's life. Is the knife good or bad? The knife is as good as or as bad as the person's consciousness that's using it. And in the same way, everything within this world is potentially sacred, that can uplift all of humanity and all living beings, or could cause great destruction. Technology can create the most vicious weapons for terrorists. And technology can also be used to spread love of God, spread compassion all over the world. Same buttons, same science.

Ancient wisdom is the wisdom of how we can change our hearts individually and collectively so we can be in this world but not of this world. Are any of you familiar with the Bible? Recently I was at the House of Lords speaking, just a month ago, and one man, he was a 'Lord'. One of the powerful entrepreneurs of Westminster and he wanted to speak just for a couple of minutes how business investment and wealth were very complimentary with spirituality. And he gave two historical, Biblical references. He said there was a person named Noah, and he taught us how to keep our stock afloat even during liquidation. And then he said there was a man named John the Baptist. And he taught us how we can go down to the river Jordan and make a profit. Profit (prophet) is Jesus, who he gave initiation or Baptism. In the Bhagavad Gita, there is a beautiful explanation, that my guru Srila Prabhupada would call, the "peace formula". How we can be in this world, fully active and dynamic, and productive, and competitive while not being of this world. Coming from a place of love rather than greed, compassion rather than envy, humility rather than arrogance. This verse (of peace formula) is from the fifth chapter "Bhagta " That if you want to achieve real peace, real fulfillment, we must understand how 'Isvara', the supreme source of everything that exists or God, we call Krishna, is the proprietor of everything that exists. And we are trustees, we are caretakers. And that means, our own body, this body is God's property. It is to be used in harmony of God's will, for the welfare of myself, my family, my society, all living beings. We were discussing the other

night, this is not my wife, or my husband, my children or my parents. That's not the substance of it, that's there on a relative level. These are God's children, they are entrusted in my care and there is a great responsibility of the example that is set for them. And my wealth. It's God's wealth in my care. You see in a true sense, proprietorship means control. And what do we really have control over. By the power of time, everything will be taken away from us. Time is so mystical, you can't taste, you can't see it, you can't touch it, but it's so powerful. That time will burn out the sun, dry up every ocean, will pulverize into fine powder every planet in the universe. And time will take away, on a physical level, everything we have, and everyone we have. So what do we really own?

Everything is owned by the Absolute, by the Supreme, we are trustees. Yes, we work, and that work is our duty, it is our responsibility. But what comes to us, we can use it with greed, with lust, with envy, with arrogance and Gita explains, all those qualities, they burn like fire. The more you feed them, the more hungry and hotter the fire burns. Or we could use them with love, with compassion, with humility. And that's the message of the Bhagavad Gita. Krishna did not tell Arjuna go to the Himalayan caves and meditate "Om shanti shanti shanti." He said it is your duty, you must fight this battle. But to do it with integrity and compassion. Do it as an expression of the wealth you gained from the discussion that we are having today. Rather than the emptiness inside you to try and fill it somehow or the other.

Dharma doesn't mean to be lazy. It means to be active, dynamic, competitive but with integrity. To earn with integrity and to spend with compassion. Yes there will be so much competition, but we have principles of what lines we don't cross in our need to compete with others. Integrity means that we have sacred ideals and we can brace those sacred ideals. Even if there are temptations, wherein we can earn so much, if we give them up. Or even if there is fear, that I may lose so much if I give them up. But the greatness of the person is to live with that integrity. And it is that integrity which brings true fulfillment. It is that integrity which is the legacy that we can give to our children. I'd like to tell you a very strange story. I wasn't planning on telling it. I was brought up near Chicago and when I was young I heard so many stories. There was someone named Al Capone, he was a gangster. Probably the most famous gangster in American history. He had a lawyer, whose name was 'easy Eddie'. He was such a good lawyer, that he

could just manipulate the law in so many ways that nobody could touch Al Capone or his leaders. They would kill people, exploit people and so many such things, but they couldn't touch them, because of 'Easy Eddie'. And Easy Eddie was given so much money. He had his own airplane; he had a house which was practically like a city block in downtown Chicago with massive fortunes. He had boats, he had everything. He had a son and his son could have anything he wanted at any time. But Easy Eddie was thinking, there's one thing I haven't given my son. An example of integrity. He has everything material that he could ever want. But he doesn't have a father that he could be proud of. And he came to the realization, the only way I can give him an example that he will be proud of, I have to testify against these people who I have been supporting and were causing so much harm to others. And he did. And he knew if he did, it was just a matter of time till he would be shot dead. And many of these gangsters went to prison on basis of his testimony. And one day as he was driving his car, another car drove by with machine guns. And with dozens of bullets in his body, in an alleyway of Chicago, he lay dead. He paid a heavy price. Because he wanted to give his son something that was greater than money and airplanes, and cars, and clothes and jewels. A legacy of integrity.

I will tell you another story. There was a person named Butch. He was also from Chicago and he was in the United States Air Force in World War II. And he was in the Pacific on one of those aircraft destroyers fighting against the Japanese army, navy and air force. And a squadron of airplanes flew off to go on a mission. And he happened to see that he had taken a plane with not enough fuel. So he had to leave the others that were going somewhere and turn back all alone. And on his back, he saw something that horrified him. He saw a whole group of Japanese planes that were coming to bomb the ship. Where there were thousands and thousands of sailors. And the ship did not know that they were coming. Nobody knew they were coming. And he did not have any way to contact anyone. So what he did is, he flew into about 15 fighter jets, flew right into them, and was shooting at them. One against fifteen of them. And they were shooting back and he was shooting back. And he shot down several of them. And when he ran out of ammunition, he started flying into them, and knocking off their wings. And finally these 15 fighter jets of the Japanese air force, they thought this man is totally crazy, he is insane. And they all flew away. And his plane was very much beaten down and he landed, and everybody saw what was happening. He was given the 1st Congressional Medal of Honor in the

US Air force in World War II. Because he had this higher principle. He was willing to give up his own life for the sake or for the cause of all those other people on that ship.

The most interesting part of these 2 stories is, this person's name was Butch O Hare. O Hare airport in Chicago was named after him. And he happened to be the son of easy Eddie. His father taught him that. Not just by words but by example. We have a sense of responsibility to ourselves to God, to the world and to each other. When people trust us, our family, our friends, our employees, or the public. That trust is what gives us real credibility. It is that trust alone that brings people to actually make a commitment to the cause that we representing.

The Mafatlal family, at one time they were extremely wealthy, and powerful. And when so many things changed government policy and there was fighting amongst family members and everything else that they were not on such a level anymore. But recently one of our dear friends who happens to be the uncle of Rajiv's (the host) wife, Hrishikesh Mafatlal. Their company went through a very difficult challenge. Where they were going through something like bankruptcy. Some sort of reorganization, where they had to sell of massive assets. You know in India where you have tens and thousands of workers, you can't just send them home. You can be sent to jail for that. You have to compensate for them. There was so much pressure, he was losing large amounts of money every day, he could not close it, and he could not keep it open. There were all kinds of legal issues, all kinds of permission issues. It took years. And he really had to scale down things. And most of the leadership in his company. They were happy to work for practically nothing. Even though they were being offered huge salaries in various parts of the world. Because they believed so much in the integrity of the company. And together they brought it up to a very stable and successful level. And he is humble. He said I could only do it because these people trusted me so much.

Last year I spoke at the Ford motor company. Now my father was a 'excel' dealer and he went into total bankruptcy, it's a kind of Ford. So our family is not so much inclined towards the Ford Motor Company. When I went there, there were 3 directors of international departments of the company. And I asked them, how long have you worked here? They all said that they were working for over 30 years. And all 3 of them said that their fathers worked for 40 years before

they retired. And their grandfathers worked for 40 years at Ford before they retired. And their great grandfathers did the same! You see it's not a matter of how much money they get only. Somehow of other, they have a real commitment. Because through it all they have developed a certain type of trust. The greatest wealth that we can gain in this world is not how much we have. And when we die, people say oh so what. And when you have a lot, people may talk respectfully to you, but in their hearts they may envy you. And envy is a type of hatred. They really would like to see you fall, even though they are treating you very nicely. And relationships based on those 'things 'are quite superficial, even if there is some affection. But people love you because of your integrity. People love you because they trust your character. To gain the trust of our family, to gain the trust of our society and of the world, our employees, or whatever, due to our integrity. That is wealth. That is a rich person.

When Arvind Mafatlal passed away, there were thousands of people I saw were really crying because they loved him. He was the international man of the year, according to lions club some years ago. And it was based on his love and devotion to Ram, his beloved Lord. This is the great need of this world but how, how to live with integrity. When there are so many temptations and fears and so many reasons to compromise. For that we require a strong foundation. Just day before yesterday, we were at Shashanth's house. A beautiful home, with nice furniture and nice architecture. But how many people have come to your home and said you have a fantastic foundation underneath it. Nobody really talks about the foundation. But the fact is, if your foundation is weak, if a storm comes, everything you built upon it will crumble and fall. It is the foundation that sustains whatever we have done. In this world, a place of dualities, honor dishonor, success pain, happiness distress, victory defeat, they are always changing like the changing of the seasons. There's winter, spring, summer, fall. In India we have monsoons, a fifth season. There will be storms in our life, and sunny days. How do we resist the becoming arrogant and condescending towards others during the sunny days of our great achievements? And how do we resist becoming envious and falling to immorality and temptation and fear when the storms of great trials and tribulations come before us. It becomes natural if we have an inner foundation of spiritual character. The Bible tells like this. If you build your house on shifting sand, when the storm comes, the building will crumble. If you build your house on

solid rock, no storm can knock it down. And what is that foundation? That foundation is the integrity of our character that is built on inner fulfillment.

I'm going to tell another story and I hope it fits it with what I saying. I'm going to try and connect it.

We were talking about this need for inner fulfillment. My mother and father, when I went to India in 1970, I really broke their hearts. I told them that I was going to Europe with my friend Gary for a summer vacation. Between college semesters and I'll be back for the next semester. Two and a half months passed, but they did not hear from me. I was 19 years old, the middle son. And 3 months passed, they heard nothing from me. And I was hitchhiking because I did not have any money, so they had no way of communicating with me. By Gods grace there were no cell phones on those days. I just had all facility to disappear. Now 4 months passed and they heard nothing from me. The college semester had started and I wasn't there. As mothers and fathers, many of you, what would be going through your heart? Finally 4 ½ months later, they got an aerogram. And it said, I have seen the world through the window of a western mans eyes for 19 years, now I want to see the world through the windows of the eyes of the people of the east. So I am hitchhiking to India, and Gary is no longer with me. That letter which they received was post marked Iran. So they know I was not turning back. And ultimately I came to India and went to the Himalayas and became a Sadhu and travelled around with a begging box. And I was going to many Rishis, and sages and Babas trying to find that spiritual foundation in my life. And I don't recommend anybody to do what I did, but it was my calling and so I did it. You can learn all the same things in your bedroom, if you have just a little more intelligence than me.

But I travelled, and eventually I came to Vrindavan, the holy place of Krsna where I met my Guru Srila Prabhupada. And his compassion and his wisdom, and how he represented such an ancient tradition in such a practical way. It deeply moved me and I tried to dedicate my life to assist him this way. You see he did not teach us sectarian concepts. He taught us that the essence of all spiritual processes, of all religions, the very essence of human life, is to see everyone with an equal vision. And the only way we can do that is if we awaken that love for God within ourselves. And we become instruments of that love. George Harrison came to our

Guru when he was with the Beatles. And he asked, should I move into your temple? Shyamsunder was his best friend and Prabhupada said, no, don't shave your head, don't move into the temple, don't change your clothes, be a Beatle! But try to give people a deep spiritual experience through your music. To raise their consciousness. And that's what he (George Harrison) dedicated his life to. And he transformed millions of lives.

But anyways I was away, and my parents were home. And finally after some years I came home. And that was a very interesting story, because it was a culture shock for them. An upper middle class, Jewish family, quite conservative and I was a Sadhu of the Hindu tradition, of Bhakti. And I came back with my begging bowl and my Sadhu robes and matted hair, and I sat on the floor of their house. They didn't what this was. And I didn't know what they were either because I was living in caves and jungles, or now I was in this nice house. They said they were so glad that I was home. And they asked, do you like being home? And I said Oh I like being with you but your home is Maya. And they said what Maya is. And I said "illusion"! (Laughing). Anyways, finally in 1989 they came to India to visit me. And their whole lives changed when they met people like Rajesh Talwar, Rajiv, Sanjeev and such beautiful people. Their hearts completely changed. They felt these were the most beautiful people they have met in their lives. And they saw some of the work we were doing and they became so proud. I remember there was a kirtan in the temple, and I saw my mother, she was about 70 years old, she was dancing in Kirtan, with Rajiv's wife's grandmother. I thought that was really a culture shock for me. And then I saw my father dancing with the Brahmacharis, with the monks. And they were crying and said we are so proud of you, we are so proud of you, we are happy that you hitchhiked to India.

But we decided to do some sightseeing and we went to elephant caves. And their lives had been changed, they were transformed, they were so happy, everything was so positive. They had been meeting beautiful people, eating wonderful Prasad, they had seen incredible projects and we reached the islands, and started walking and the first thing that happened is that mosquitoes attacked. And my mother said, mosquitoes, do they have malaria? And I couldn't lie, and I said I don't think so. And she said that means they might have! And I said I don't think so. Swamis have to tell the truth, even to our parents. And we were walking and my

mother had a purse. And all the valuable of my mother and father were contained in that purse. Their airline tickets, passports, visas, cash, all their credit cards and my mothers jewelry was in that purse. Because my mother was very thoughtful to very detail, she would never lose anything. Until this day. A very large, angry, male Monkey jumped right in front of her and looked at the purse. And this monkey was a brown monkey, with green eyes and he showed his teeth, very large fangs. And monkeys really know how to psychologically, invoke fear in our hearts. And he opened his mouth and showed his gums and teeth and he screamed! My mother froze, he was looking right at her and then he grabbed her purse. He pulled it and my mother pulled, and he pulled and my mother pulled, and she was screaming and the monkey was screeching. And I went to get a stick and my father said, everything is in that purse! Everything of value is in that purse! And he shouldn't have said that because the monkey probably understood. And the monkey pulled harder and my mother pulled harder. And the monkey just jumped into my mother and it was too much for her, and she let go of the purse. And the monkey stole the purse ran away onto the branch of a big peepal tree and started opening the purse. Now my mother and father looked up at the monkey and then they looked at me. And they both said, you were the one that brought us here. What are you going to do about this? And remember it was 1989, at that time there was a lot bureaucracy, to get a new passport, to get a new visa, to get new air line tickets, get credit cards cancelled and re issued. It could have taken just weeks and weeks of just standing in lines of different offices all day. They looked at me and said what are you going to do? I closed my eyes and prayed because I did not what to do; I couldn't climb up that tree. And I just prayed Krsna save me, and I opened my eyes. And I happened to see about half a block away on the dirt road, there was this fruit vendor with a push cart with wheels. And I ran over to him. And I'm a swami so I put out my cloth to him and said "Ek Kela ", one banana. And he wanted Rs 10 for one banana, because I have white skin. And I just said Baksheesh, Baksheesh. And he said, RS 10 Rs 10. And I dint have any money, my parents didn't have any money. The monkey had all the money.

So sometimes when you are in a desperate situation you act in ways that you won't ordinarily do. Sometimes poverty can bring about the worst doubt even in good people. So at that moment I was in poverty. I took a banana and stole it and the vendor started screaming and he actually attacked me and I ran away. And he started chasing me. And then by Krishna's grace, another

monkey attacked his fruit cart. So he turned around because to try to get one banana from me, he was going to lose all his bananas, and I got away. And then I went up to that tree and I showed the monkey the banana. I'll never forget what the monkey was doing when I approached him. He was in the process of chewing and chewing and eating my mother's American express card. And I showed him the banana. He had it in his mouth, the express card, but he stopped chewing as he looked at the banana. And I threw it. It wasn't a good shot but that worked in a favorable way because the monkey had to actually jump to catch they banana. And in the process of jumping, the credit card fell out of his mouth and the purse fell to the ground. And I put the credit card in the purse and very proudly presented it to my mother. She started to cry in happiness, and she said, that was really intelligent, what you just did. I'm so proud of you. And she embraced me and then my father embraced me and said son you outsmarted that monkey. That was brilliant how you did it. My mother took Rs 20 out of the purse and said go pay the fruit vendor. I have forgotten about him. That's we need ladies in our live s, to remember these things, even Swamis. So gave the money to the fruit vendor, and he was o happy and my parents were so happy. And the monkey eating the banana was so happy. It's what you call a win-win solution. Everyone was happy

And my brother married a catholic girl. And when they had their first child, they didn't know whether to get him baptized in a church, or a synagogue. My parents said, of but your brother is a priest, get him blessed in a Hare Krsna temple. And so they did, in touscan, Arizona. And my mother said give him a Krsna name, and we named him Balaram and his sister Saraswati.

So back to our narration, integrity. We have the foundation to actually live with character, despite the monkey attacks that come in various ways in our lives, when we have a sacred higher principle that brings us fulfillment. You see the mind is like a monkey, and that higher principle of inner fulfillment, of connection with God, of living with compassion, of living with dignity, that's like the banana. And we can easily let go of our restless, immoral, hurtful ways, if we replace it with something that's more meaningful, more fulfilling. And that's connecting with our own souls, with God. And living with integrity and character.

It is said that within each and every one of us, there is a good dog and a bad dog. The bad dog represents, arrogance, hate, envy, greed selfish lust. And the good dog, humility, compassion, morality, ethics, loves. And each of these dogs is crying for attention. And whichever dog we feed most becomes more powerful, and their voice becomes very strong. I think many of us have the experience of that bad dog barking .and trying to dictate what we speak and what we do in our lives. Which one of those dogs is going to win? The one that we choose to feed. With every choice we make in our life, we are either feeding the good dog, or the bad dog.

Dharma. Dharma means feeding the good dog. By making our choices that are based on a foundation of integrity and character. And not giving into that bad dog, even if we have so much to gain, or so much to lose by doing so. And that is what makes a person great. Srila Prabhupada said the greatness of a person can be estimated by how that person can tolerate provoking situations. And that's why spiritual practice, and satsang, associating with spiritual people is so important. Because it establishes that foundation. Or in reference to a tree, it deepens and broadens our roots. Take an example of the Redwood forest. The underground secret of the red wood forest. These trees grow for thousands of years old. They are the widest, highest trees on the planet. And over the thousands of years that they are growing, they pass through massive storms, devastating earth quakes, and they keep growing. Because the roots grow outward, underground, and reach out to each other. And the roots of different trees intertwine with the roots of the other tree and make a permanent bond. And in this way, every tree in the forest is connected with every other tree in the forest, through the roots. And whatever storms or earthquakes come, they are there to hold each other up.

This is the way our families should be, our friendships should be, how our companies should be, our society. This is how the world will actually come out of the entire crisis that it's going through. It's when we find a higher principle by which we connect. The roots of the affection and care of our hearts beyond all our difference and all our selfish inclinations, we are there for each other. That's a quality fulfilling life. And the Bhagavan Puran tells us, if we water the root of the tree, every part of the tree receives the water. And God is the root of our existence. When we go through our yoga, through our spiritual practice, through our Bhakti, we chant Gods names to make a connection, to water that root. And if we **are** actually developing that love for

God, it's not just a matter of talk. In today's age, with the twitter, and face book, and TV, and the entertainment industry, all the ways that people are communicating there is so much emphasis on what we speak. How we speak it, what we look like, what is our personality. But that's not going to make such a big difference in the world.

What do we do? What is our character? What is our integrity? That's what's going to make a difference. To love God, it's not a cheap thing. It's to live with compassion, with forgiveness, with self control and love. That's the greatest need in politics, that's the greatest need in business, that's the greatest need in family. That's the greatest need, believe it or not, in religion! It's absent in religion as it is absent in any other sphere of life. Seeking the essence and we can all do that. Just by giving some time and building that foundation by which we earn with integrity and spend with compassion, as trustees of Gods treasures.

When I was at the House of Lords I spoke one thing that got the best ovation. I said you can understand how rich you are by trying to find out how many things you have that money cannot buy. That's real wealth. To love, to be loved. And to be an instrument of that love. And to be competitive, and dynamic and productive with that motivation as the very core of our lives.

Thank you very much.