

## Giving - A charity to self or others

Saturday, 29 September 2007

Though this Keynote speech, Mr. Aditya Jha shared his thoughts on "Giving - A Charity to Self or Others?" at the Seventh Annual Gala of the Toronto Chapter of the All India Movement for Seva. The gala raised a stunning \$1.7 million in a single evening. The POA foundation has also committed to the cause.

Keynote speech by Aditya Jha at annual gala of AIM for SEVA

Good evening and welcome to you all for supporting a worthy cause and for coming together to celebrate the spirit of GIVING and SHARING. All of us here are fortunate to live in a part of the world which has great abundance. Our presence here is the testimony of our awareness of life-threatening poverty in other parts of the world. I would also like to draw your attention to a third-world living condition for a significant population in Canada &ndash; amongst the natives of Canada.

It is with this background that I decided to share my thoughts with all of you on "Giving &ndash; A charity To Self or to others"

I am a great admirer of private giving and especially, the great support it has provided in creating world class institutions in the Western world and the massive support to life threatening causes around the world.

One of the most notable things about private giving is that it is not beholden to lobbying or political considerations of public giving or major wastage caused by large-scale bureaucratic not-for-profit/ charitable organizations. Private philanthropists are free to venture where the governments and politicians fear to tread. However, I was shocked to know that the wealthiest individuals of the world give only 9% to charitable causes and at the same time 2% for their pets and rest goes to their kids. The legendary Warren Buffet says he believes in giving his children enough so they feel they could do anything, but not so much that they could do nothing or need to/ motivated to do nothing. Let us pause over this the statement that I said just now &ndash; how we of Indian origin think about our accumulated wealth?

There is this general notion that my time to GIVE is not there yet. It all depends on how we think about giving- "We never have spare money to give but I have no doubt in my mind that we can always spare to give." There is an obligation for the rich to give. All of us here could earn large amounts only because we live under fortunate social circumstances and let us not fool ourselves with giving all credit for our success to our talent, as we don&rsquo;t create those favourable social circumstances by ourselves. Imagine for a moment that if we were left in Peru or Liberia or Ethiopia then how much our talent could have produced in those nations &ndash; or if we were born into a poor African family. How much of talent we would have developed if we were part of those circumstances and geographies. Nobel laureate, Herbert Simon estimated that the "social capital" is responsible for at least 90% of what people earn in wealthy societies. I am trying to make a case here that all of have obligation to give and pay back to that "Social Capital" and ALL of us can "SPARE to Give".

I must admit that I have been active in the world of sharing my fortunate circumstances only for the last six years and have picked up some experience that I would like to share with you

- Be active with the cause that you give to- where you are actively involved with your money, time and talent and to a cause that you are passionate about there will be multi-fold impact than the paternalistic mode of giving where you just

cut a cheque. Your presence and involvement allows stringent control, oversight and the cause benefits immensely from your insight that you have accumulated by virtue of being so successful.

- Philanthropy of affluence has given rise to a new business, that is, Business of Philanthropy, which in many cases leads to wastage akin to running large bureaucratic type of organizations and in the long run, harms the cause of philanthropy. Large number of third-world philanthropic delivery is disgusting and wasteful and in the developed world there is this mentality amongst the people involved in fund raising and project execution team that for doing something good you need abundance of resources. People who give majorly are very frugal in their own life and therefore accumulate wealth; but, it is amazing that their own generous giving resulting of frugal accumulation is managed with affluent wastage. Hence, my strong suggestion, that, be active with your giving and choose projects that you are passionate about. Your entrepreneurial presence will do much good than what your money alone will do.

- Before I become active with 'giving', I looked at giving as charity to others. Now, I see giving as charity to myself. You are giving to your expanded self, your passion, your talent to make change and to your obligation to payback to the favorite social circumstances so that those circumstances are sustainable for yourself, your kids and for all, that you care about.

- I have met Terry Papneja of AIM for SEVA only once before and I was struck with his passion, the cause he supports, the way this project is well-managed, the way he welcomed me to be active with what I would like to support. I have committed to share \$25,000 for building a hostel for 50 students from landless labourer's families in Bihar. I know it will cost \$65,000 to build that residence and I offered to work with him to make it happen. I have two large projects of mine that I privately support through my foundation- one is Nurturing Entrepreneurship amongst Canadian Aboriginals and other as National Chair of UNICEF Canada-India HIV/AIDS Campaign for Three Million Dollars, besides supporting endowments at four Canadian universities

- Last but not least, I would like to make a case that we should support mainstream Canadian philanthropic projects in a major way, and international projects as well as Indian projects with a lesser portion of our total giving. Most of the successful Indo-Canadian professionals and entrepreneurs here have done relatively better than those who have been in Canada for generations. We have become successful by delivering mainstream services to the mainstream people. Then why should our giving be mainly to ethnic causes? There could be the logic, that Canada is a rich country; but let's look at the plight of the unfortunates in Canada, and the need of philanthropic dollars to support our universities, hospitals, opera, museums, environmental causes, etc.

And lastly, I would like to acknowledge the presence of Consul General of India Mr. Satish Mehta and his wife Mrs. Preeti Mehta, Hon. Consul General of Nepal Dr. Kunjar Sharma. I salute wonderful Indo-Canadians in this audience like Dr. Alok Mukherjee, Dr. Gopal Bhatnagar, Prashant Pathak and my friend Andy Jasuja - who connected me with wonderful Dr. Terry Papneja of AIM for SEVA. Let me end my thoughts with a Sanskrit shloka - "Ashtadeshu puraneshu Vyasasya vachanam dwayam- paropakarah purnaya papaya par pidanam"

Thank you and Namaskar.