

Keynote Speech for the South Asian Philanthropy Conference

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Good afternoon and welcome to you all for coming together to celebrate the spirit of GIVING and SHARING. Our presence here is the testimony of our awareness of engaging ourselves for largersocial causes. The title of my presentation is "**South Asian Philanthropy: Training or Tuning**". These are my reflections from being a South Asian philanthropist running my own small private foundation, a South Asian community activist, an entrepreneur, having been involved in major fundraising campaigns and above and all being very passionate about promoting and nurturing the idea that New Canadians have special obligation to give to the mainstream causes.

I am going to present before you four themes that may provoke you to look differently at philanthropy amongst South Asians and how to approach it:

- South Asian philanthropy and its cultural aspect
- Giving: A Charity to Self or Others
- Minority majority Canada: Giving to mainstream causes
- Training or Tuning for fundraising professionals

The South Asian sub-continent majorly consists of five religious groups: Hindu, Moslem, Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains. Giving to causes beyond your own self is deeply ingrained in the cultural and religious ethos of the South Asian society.

This is the month that just celebrated 150 years of a great Indian saint and philosopher Swami Vivekananda. I saw a quote from him plastered on the walls of main streets of Mumbai and that read "*They alone live, who live for others*". The great Indian sage VedVyas, who has given important religious texts to India summarized the gist of all religious texts and said in a Sanskrit shloka: "AshtadeshupuraneshuVyasasyavachanamdwayam-paropakarahpurnaya papaya par pidanam". In all 18 volumes of Puranas, he wanted to convey just two things: To help others under all circumstances is the life without sinning. To hurt others and neglect others sufferings in fact is the life of sinning.

One of the most important principles of Islam is Zakat- that all things belong to God, and that wealth is therefore held by human beings in trust. The word Zakat means both 'purification' and 'growth'. Our possessions are purified by setting aside a proportion for those in need, and, like the pruning of plants, this cutting back balances and encourages new growth.

These are very powerful cultural and religious aspects of lives of South Asians. Now in the context of the South Asian giving in Canada, I would like to take you to the first theme of my presentation and that is "philanthropy and its cultural aspect".

The Asians in general and Canadians of South Asian origin in particular share the following. There are definitely exceptions to what I am going to describe but these are my generalized opinion that needs to be understood, reflected and debated in order to gainfully engage South Asians in giving back to the mainstream Canadian social causes in a significant way:

- First, for South Asians their legacy is their children and they are accustomed to giving and leaving back all that they earn to their children, which is in contrast to the wealthy in the West for whom their legacy in large way is what they leave for the society;
- Secondly, for new immigrants, there is hidden fear factor and lag in recognition that it is the high time that they should start giving back. They have this sub-conscious level fear that something bad may happen in the future and they have not made enough that they should start giving back now;
- Thirdly, the South Asian immigrants have come from a social system where all institutions of public purpose has always been fully supported by their governments and hence generally they think that it is the job of the government to support universities, hospitals, museums, operas and Symphony etc. They also think that these institutions have very large financial needs and only governments can provide for it as their owns means comparatively are so insignificant;
- Lastly, when South Asians look at the richness of these public institutions in Canada in contrast to the poor state of institutions back in their native country and how far the dollar can go in their native country then they are more motivated to give back for the causes in their native country;

It is with this background and further reflections and discussions, the community leaders and fundraising professionals need to approach this

highly potent group of South Asians that is the largest growing population segment in Canada and is relatively highly resourceful.

I would now like to take you to next theme of my presentation and that is "Giving: Charity to self or others". I have an unconventional definition for *Philanthropy* and I would like to separate it from the definition of *Charity*.

The terms Philanthropy and Charity are used inter-changeably. However, I would like to submit that we need to see *giving* beyond the paternalistic attitude- that I am more able and you are needy and hence being a good human being I am helping you. I wish to coin a new definition of philanthropy and that is giving to your expanded self and giving to your passion. It is not primarily about helping others rather it is about giving your resources to what you are passionate about. As result of giving to your expanded self, what is happening is others are directly and indirectly benefitting. It is about giving to your expanded self and passion but the major beneficiary of that is the society and larger community. For lack of better term, I would call this enlightened giving as Philanthropy.

I wish to share my own personal example and some time it does give me a guilt feeling for what I am going to share with you. I have found that ones philanthropic deeds and giving, if it is organized and impactful and sustainable then one is not only serving her passion and expanded self but you also materially benefit in significant way. I won't be standing in front of you having the opportunity to Chair this conference and giving the keynote speech but for my philanthropic work and philanthropic persona. I would not have been even considered by the Ryerson University for the Honorary Doctorate but for the work I have done for the aboriginal community and my partnership with the Ryerson University for the aboriginal project. I have no doubt that my receiving Order of Canada is aggregated outcome of all the work I have done with the universities, the Canadian aboriginal community, my leadership role with the community organizations and my philanthropic giving to the several mainstream causes: be it Roy Thomson Hall, Trillium Hospitals and like. It has allowed me to interact with who-is-who of the Canadian political and corporate world. It has opened doors for me, which otherwise would not have happened. My question then-*Is philanthropy not about giving to your expanded self and even to your material self?* Helping others is the bi-product as your expanded-self touches beyond the physical boundary of your family and your vested interests.

While I have just scratched surface, though mostly in focused way through my own private charitable foundation (www.poafoundation.org) at the universities and other institutions and within my circle of influence; I must admit that I have found this journey of graduation from "Charity" to "Philanthropy" happening over years and it has been the most rewarding thing in my own life. Now, I have made it a personal mission to aggregate my philanthropic efforts working with the highly successful members of the South Asian Diaspora in Canada so that they give significantly to public causes. It is with this quest that I am here today in front of you and I would implore that the fundraising professional community in Canada needs to think differently in order to engage the South Asian groups.

That takes me to the third theme of my presentation- "*Minority Majority Canada: Giving to Mainstream Causes*". Our Canada is inching towards a country where the minorities together will form the majority of Canada. Canada is aging and the New Canadian group is relatively younger. The pace of wealth creation in the South Asian group is happening in a significant way. You don't find the mega rich like Peter Munk amongst South Asians but the number of multi-millionaires is significant. Are the fundraising professionals readying themselves to tap into the giving of this significant group and the demographic dividend that can come from emergence of this group?

There is this general notion amongst the South Asians 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 and think about what social causes they can cultivate to be passionate about. All of us here could earn large wealth only because we live under fortunate social circumstances. Let us not fool ourselves by giving all credit for our success to our talent, as we don'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 for us in those nations- 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" and give to the mainstream causes as we created our wealth in this country. We

need to give to the "Social Capital" as that alone has allowed us to succeed.

Now I would like to bring your attention to the last theme of my presentation: *Training or Tuning of Fundraising Professionals*. While the significant wealth creation in Canada is happening in the South Asian groups and amongst the New Canadians; the extent and pace of giving back for the social causes of Canada by them have been very slow. In my humble opinion, the fundraising professional while being so professionally trained in their trade have not fully understood the psyche of the South Asian groups and the opportunity that it presents. They have also not fully understood the demographic shift of Canada-aging Canada and Canada slowly turning to a *Majority Minority Canada*. There is a demographic dividend to be reaped but that will happen only with new realization of the realities of today's economy as well as what will tickle this new group of potential givers pink.

In my considered opinion, it is a journey and also more importantly tuning of the fundraising professionals as well as of the creating motivational environment for the South Asian groups to give to the mainstream causes. For us to reap the demographic dividend, it requires radical transformation in approach and thinking of fundraising professionals beyond the existing well tested technical parameters of public fundraising. Fundraising professionals need to find motivational approach to draw South Asians and not continue having too much faith and be rigid with technical parameters of fundraising that has worked in past and worked with the mainstream community. What will motivate the South Asians so that they want to come back and want to give significantly to public causes? It is not about having a separate committee of South Asians or give prominent role for South Asians rather how would the mainstream of fundraising professional tune to South Asian giving or for that matter to New Canadians.

As our societies are becoming more prosperous and more democratic; the instruments of wealth creation are no longer aggregated in the hands of governments. Even people at the lowest strata of the different geographies are exposed to what is available there in the world to enjoy. All are aspiring to be able to use the fruits of prosperity and all want a chance to have it. Governments cannot provide those infrastructure and conditions alone. There is a greater need for *public private partnership* to address this massive social need and social giving. There is a viability gap that needs to be addressed and provided for in a collective way.

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, you may be 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 go 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 – *how we of South Asian origin think about our accumulated wealth?* How do the trained but not tuned fundraising professionals of Canada think about this and approach the aspect of demographic dividend.

I have been active in the world of sharing my fortunate circumstances only for the last ten 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 owing to affluence in our society 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, and harms the cause of philanthropy. Large number of third-world philanthropic delivery and even in Canada is disgusting and wasteful. In the developed world there is this mentality amongst the people involved in fundraising 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 they accumulate wealth; but, it is amazing that their own generous giving resulting of frugal accumulation is managed with affluent mindset resulting in avoidable 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.
- 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 projects in South Asia with a lesser portion of our total giving. Most of the successful South Asian 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.

Let me end my thoughts by repeating Swami Vivekanand's statement: "*They alone live, who live for others*". Thank you and namaskar.

Dr. Aditya Jha, who immigrated to Canada from India via Singapore and Australia, transitioned from being a top executive at Bell Canada to becoming co-founder of a couple of software companies and now a restaurateur (Prego Piazza) and a confectionary (Karma Candy Inc.) owner. Dr Jha is chairman of the POA Education Foundation which fosters economic growth and development through education in high-tech fields, especially information technology. Among his many awards and recognition, Jha was honored on August 14, 2011 in Toronto and profiled in "Top 25 Most Influential Indians in North America" released by Toronto Premier Dalton McGinty assisted by Dr Roseann Runte, President Carleton University in Ottawa and Indian Consul General Preeti Saran in Toronto. In January 2013, Dr. Jha was appointed a member to the Order of Canada along with 90 other Canadians. These appointments were made on the recommendation of the Advisory Council for the Order of Canada. It is the second highest honor for merit, second only to membership in the Order of Merit. The citation at the Governor General's web site for Dr. Jha, C.M states: "For his achievements in business and for his commitment to promoting education and entrepreneurial opportunities for Aboriginal and disadvantaged youth".

