



PUT YOUR SPIRITUALITY TO WORK

Conversation Starters for the Workplace

1.23 THE WEALTH OF LIFE

When we tap into our spiritual roots, we can manifest true wealth – we need not split ourselves with one attitude towards our personal wealth and another towards the world of business.

AS WE BEGAN to reflect on the second of four goals in life that we've been writing about – wealth ("artha" in Sanskrit) – a flood of old associations welled up in our minds:

Money cannot buy happiness

The one with the most toys wins

Money is the root of all evil

Not surprising, our dictionary showed us how much the idea of "wealth" is wrapped up in material considerations – defining it in terms of "an abundance of valuable material possessions or resources; all material objects that have economic utility". Yet spiritual literature from around the world goes beyond this, saying that wealth includes wisdom, love and health. For example, the universal spiritual teacher Sathya Sai Baba says:

Artha does not merely mean wealth of money. It means wealth of wisdom. Seeing unity in diversity is the true wisdom.

All wealth and prosperity cannot confer true happiness. Without Love, no object can give you real happiness. Hence, the primary wealth for man is Love.

There is no greater wealth than health. What is the origin of this word 'health'? It is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word 'Heilig', meaning that which is sacred and pure.

Even the original Middle English root of wealth ("weal") was much more expansive than our current definition; weal means *welfare – the state of doing well, especially with respect to good fortune, happiness, well-being or prosperity*. It's as if in our consumer-hungry fervour we've become absorbed with well-*having* rather than well-*being*!

Moving further in our exploration about wealth, we went through the interviews which we had conducted with spiritual-based business executives, and found some provocative statements about both personal and corporate wealth. For example:

Deependra Moitra, an executive with Infosys, talked about wealth in this way:

Something that is spiritually fundamental to me is creating the wealth of joy and being balanced. I think that peace and joy are a form of wealth that businesses can create. Wealth is about protecting everyone's interest, creating joy, and growing.

Anita Roddick, founder of The Body Shop, an international retailer of natural body-care products, talked quite explicitly about sharing wealth with others:

My spiritual theme is kindness. Kindness is my religion. With profits, the purpose of business is to do something remarkable within the community, because it is the community of your customers that gives you your wealth.

My husband and I publicly say that for us to die rich is to be obscene. There is no value in accumulating wealth; accumulated wealth is like water in a vase that has gone rancid. I think that my responsibility for the last 20 years of my life is to get my hands really dirty, giving it away on a proactive basis, and seeing the fruits of that.

N. S. Raghavan, Joint-Founder of Infosys, broadens this notion of sharing wealth to the employees as well:

I think it is important to help the employees create their own wealth so that they can help others who are not in a position to help themselves. As a result the community as a whole benefits.

And Dr. A. K. Chattopadhyay, Executive Director of Tata Refractories, brought all of this together for us when he spoke of wealth in terms of manifesting our spiritual perfection:

Spirituality is the manifestation of the perfection that is already there within you. If we as business leaders can manifest this perfection, we will create good things for the society. When leaders start working from the mindset that, "Yes I love society, I love my colleagues and people," then this will be transmitted to all levels of the organisation and society. Then our actions will definitely bring prosperity to all of us.

What surprised and pleased us about these executives' views on wealth was that these themes applied equally to our personal and work lives as well as to the purpose of business. When we tap into our spiritual roots, we can manifest true wealth, we need not split ourselves with one attitude towards our personal wealth and another towards the world of business.

So, ask yourself: *What is "true wealth" for me in my personal life? How can I apply that understanding in my work as well?*

This article is an excerpt from the book, *Put Your Spirituality to Work: The Basics*. To download the full book of articles, as well as additional book chapters, articles, workbooks, and research on the subject of "spirituality and human values for leadership and work", visit our website: www.globaldharma.org