



Sadhana Educational & Empowerment Foundation's (SEEF)
**Sadhana Centre for Management & Leadership Development
(SCMLD)**

Seminar: **“Learning from the Learned”** - Series V

Theme: **“Redefining Business: PROFIT for SELF vis a vis Making Others PROFIT”**

Venue: **Le Méridien, Pune** | Date: **24th & 25th April, 2010**

CONCEPT NOTE

Business is for profit and unless profits are not substantial, investment and growth will not happen. But is profit only for the entrepreneur, investor and the consumer? Or is it for the masses and society at large as well? This is the theme question of the seminar.

Most of the businesses today are geared to cater to the wants and vanities of the rich and / or the “rising middle class”. Both- businessmen and consumers -profit from this game and standard of living of many people is up. What about the quality of living of the masses? Look around and we see madness. Rivers have become effluent channels of cities and are dead or are carrying downstream the filth and dirt of urbanization. Underground waters are infected with e-coli and other impurities. The air has become toxic and water bodies are drying up. The climate has become unpredictable and unfriendly. Conflicts and violence are ruling the minds, manifesting into everyday battles. Governance time and resources are engaged in managing these confrontations. Cities are stinking with heaps and heaps of garbage and filth. Plastic bags are flying around all over in villages and fields. Atmosphere is getting warmer by the day. Extinction of species is fast leading to ecological imbalance. And all these are manmade.

Quick buck businesses of speculation and paper monies are playing havoc with others' money. People who are chasing such paper money consider currency notes, stocks, stock exchange rates, derivatives and bank balances as wealth. They do not count grains, oils, fruits, vegetables, gardens, mountains, oceans, rivers, lakes, trees, birds, animals, farmlands & farmers and the like as wealth. They are just means or meaningless things for them. Currency notes are all that matters to them. They then bemoan about inflations, deflations, taxations and so on. For them life is all about bulls, bears and valuation and not real value or value addition.

The businesses of real estate, mines, minerals, metals and forest products etc. are all ruled by black money. Naxalism, terrorism, extortion, blackmail and corruption are at its peak. Business and industries are continuously exploring and altering systems and processes to control costs and manage bottom lines and top lines. Governments are trying to control the cost of living. But the long-term cost to life and cost of life are getting ignored. The heaps of bio non-degradables and degradables, men and women with masks and scarves to save themselves from pollution and new

diseases and flues, the noise, barren lands, denuded forests, flattened hills, the “take more, and give less” grab mentality, and the craving for possessions, positions, power, recognition & appreciation, arguments & acrimony, the business of trading in and feeding on the wants and false pride of men wanting to bask in self-glory, the consumption (of the middle class and rich) driven production and distribution business, inventing newer and newer wants by ad gurus and celebrities focusing still on the haves and the so called upwardly mobile, and above all, the competitive news manufacturing & the negative instincts focused media hungry for higher TRPs- all have contributed to this increasingly conflict ridden, agitated and argumentative environment of today. On a close scrutiny, one can see a common motive in all this- private profit by any means. However, this is not to suggest that there are no great businessmen and business houses creating and distributing prosperity and real wealth around. But their number is small.

If public profit is the driving force and private profit is only for sustaining that force, then the business community and the professionals managing these businesses can become the single most economic change agents in creating a society with Gross National Happiness. The GNH will rid the world of terrorism, conflicts and confrontations to a great extent. It will create a world of cooperation, collaboration, comfort, contentment and fulfilment. Naturally it will lessen the level of insecurity, anxiety, fear, mistrust, denial and deprivation. An enabling government can accelerate this process of nation building if the society consists of responsible citizens.

Reclaiming water bodies, greening lands, kitchen gardens on terraces, balconies & backyards, sanitation & hygiene, health care, food- growing, production, processing & preservation- cultivation of herbs, soil conservation, rainwater harvesting, animal husbandry, aqua culture, reforestation, water conservation, fodder cultivation, contract farming, activities based learning oriented school education disease prevention, positive health and so on are opportunities for needs based businesses, to name a few. This will build a nation wherein harmony and happiness will abound. Just imagine one crore households of India nurturing one vegetable plant each in their backyards, balconies and terraces- vegetable prices will come down. Just imagine primary and secondary school children are taught yoga and pranayama at school and are given project activities of creating vegetable and herbal gardens, fruits preservation, sanitation & health, rainwater harvesting etc. Facilitating these will generate millions of employment opportunities and there will never be shortage of food. Inflation will be contained. Are these not great business opportunities?

Today’s education of transmitting borrowed information as knowledge to be tested by paper and pencil examinations are only producing paper tigers and not action oriented citizen leaders. There are vast business opportunities here, provided the government removes the obstacles. Just imagine what the business opportunities will be if the government stipulates that all the terraces

of all buildings must have “vegetable cultivation in pots” with greenhouse facility above it, in housing complexes in the cities. It will also reduce pollution and global warming.

All this is to say that gentle & genuine businesses of serving the community, respecting nature and being grateful for its bounty, and we human beings being natural, can rescue the world from terrorism, conflicts, discrimination, denial, disease and crimes to a great extent. Businesses with this or any other kind of public profit orientation will have no recession also. This approach coupled with conservation, preservation, replenishment and solutions to problems- creative economic activities- will make the world a better place to live life fully, healthy and happy. Today’s consumption (destruction) driven economic activity feeding on the ever increasing wants and greed will make the world unliveable with climatic changes, conflicts and violence. This calls for the creation of awakened business leadership and entrepreneurship. Today we are awake and do things following the crowd or by reacting. We need to awaken and start leading. We have a choice and a last chance.

I am not speaking of businesses and industries like aircraft manufacturing, ship building, power generation etc. that are needed. I am speaking about creating millions of entrepreneurs who can change the current world of shortages and shortcuts to a world of plenty focussing on needs and solutions to the problems already created and preventing further problems.

These are my stray thoughts. They are only suggestive. You may articulate your views, vision & experience and address the students accordingly so that they go out more aware and woken up after this seminar. There were and are such awakened business and other leaders amidst us. JRD Tata was one. Mahatma Gandhi was another. Swami Vivekananda once said, “Give me hundred truly dedicated people and I will change the face of this country”. Dedicated businessmen can bring such changes faster, stronger, higher and better, than anyone else or any system. Although the above are the concern as I see you may like to tell your own story or anything on action leadership, as you feel important.

Looking forward to your support and with warm regards.

Yours sincerely,

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