

# Humility & Humanity



Founder and Chairman of Buttar Associates, **Dr. Kuldeep Buttar** is as well-known in the corporate world as he is within the Indian community for his humanitarian work. The visionary businessman extends his aid in several causes, be it helping schools in India, donating bird feeders or sponsoring socio-cultural events in Hong Kong. **Brinda Khandwala** discovers that the philanthropreneur is the true embodiment of humility and humanity.

**W**hat are the values you grew up with that continue having an impact in your life even today?

The values I learned from my parents have endured the test of time. One of the first ones I learned was the emphasis on commitment. Both my parents taught me the value in seeing through a task even when things got tough. That definitely helped me later in when life began to take a dip for the worse. I learned to be gritty in the face of adversity – always putting one step in front of the other, never giving in. I thank my parents for instilling this type of fervent energy in me. It proved to be effective not because they used words to convince me. On the contrary, it was their actions that nailed home the lesson in me.

**B**etween academic achievements and world experiences, which do you feel contribute more to success?

There is space for both of these. There are situations in life where one of them would suit you more. If I had to lean towards one, I would choose world experiences. Life has a knack for teaching you lessons when you least expect them.

There was a time in our history, before classes and colleges and schools, where all we had was life to teach us all we needed to know. It was all trial and error. In a way, life is the ultimate teacher. But if you combine the two – life experiences and education – that's when real progress begins.

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be a shining beacon of light throughout my life. We did not have much growing up, but they always made it feel like we were enough.

Once when I was a teenager, one of my friends got cool new shoes as a gift from his parents. I was so jealous. Why couldn't I have a pair too? I begged my father to buy me them for me. Instead of lashing out at my childish demands, my father decided to go a different route.

He handed me his monthly salary and told me to run the household expenses for that month. If, at the end of the month I had enough left over, I could have the shoes. I barely made it a week through before giving up. I realized what an impossible task it was to raise three kids in that environment. It made me respect the work my parents did. That was the last time I begged them to indulge my unreasonable demands.

**H**ow do you maintain a work-life balance? What leisure time activity you enjoy most?

I try my best to separate the two. I do not bring my work home, and I try not to let my personal life seep into the workplace. When there are clear boundaries, it becomes easier to balance out both sides. Of course, that does



not always work, but I manage somehow.

I enjoy playing hockey and listening to music a lot. I love old school Punjabi folk music – this is a love of mine that traces back to my adolescence.

**W**hy is it important for businessmen or corporates to engage in social causes?

It is important because the corporate landscape makes the world tick these days. Just because businesses are supposed to be profitable does not mean they have to be 'cutthroat' at all times.

Business has the potential to bring out great changes

to peoples' lives. They can transform whole communities and uplift the downtrodden from extreme poverty.

Of course, there has been no shortage of powerful executives looting and exploiting those in desperate situations. It is down to small business owners and grass roots managers to spark change from the ground up instead of waiting for it to descend from above.

**T**ell us what got you involved in so many activities for social uplifting.

I wanted to give back, simple as that. I am fortunate enough to have achieved a lot in my life so I want to make sure I plant some seeds around me that will grow and prosper.

I want to pass on a better world than the one I inherited, and it has to start with me. If one of my deeds ignites a chain of reaction that sets off something greater than me, I would have done my job.

**W**hat work ethics do you feel are essential for every businessman?

Humility is key. There is beauty in accepting your flaws and weaknesses. That is the only way we can learn and be more than what we are. Being humble allows you to realize the qualities you lack and begin the climb upward towards excellence.

Every person you meet has something to teach you. But you cannot let that knowledge enter unless you humbly open yourself to it.

**W**hich person or philosophy has influenced you the most?

It will always be my parents. They set a standard that my siblings and I could look up to and it has continued to



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## What makes a good humanitarian?

Honestly, it is not up to me to define that. People get caught up in definitions too much. As long as you think of the bigger picture in some sense, both in your work and beyond, it is a good humanitarian deed.

There is no shortage of problems and issues around the world. Do something, anything that alleviates someone else's pain even a little bit and forget about defining what makes it good.

## With reference to the current crisis in Hong Kong, what lies in the future of the Indian expat community here?

I have high hopes for the Indian community, as well as the local Hong Kong people.

We Indians have a knack for making the best of anything, wherever we are. We can forge a home away from home even in the direst of situations.

The important thing is that we cannot afford to lose hope. The Latin phrase "ordo ab chaos" or "order out of chaos"

is relevant here. We have the opportunity to make sense of the dissonance we see around us.

I do not know what lies ahead, but I know that we as a community have survived and prospered when the odds were against us, and that is what will guide us through this crisis.

## What is your advice to the next generation of businessmen?

Learn to love the challenge of it all. If you can look at the problems you face in life and business as puzzles and obstacles to get to the next level, you are already ahead of the game.

Learn to keep a cool head. There may be things beyond your control, but what you can control is your reaction and headspace through it all. Panicking is not going to help anything.

Learn to lead. You have a semblance of an idea brewing in your head. How do you take that idea, present it to your team, and get them fired up enough to execute it? It all depends on how you speak and carry yourself in front of them. It will not come easy. Study the great leaders of history – read about them or listen to their speeches online. You have a wealth of resources at your disposal – make use of them.

Above all, learn to love what you do. That will be the only thing that carries you through the dark times. Develop your passion, and it will in turn build you in ways you can hardly imagine.



## Ten Commandments to a successful life

1. Develop a passion
2. Never stop learning
3. Be honest with yourself and those around you
4. Make time for family
5. Make time for yourself
6. Cultivate your spirituality
7. Do not take yourself too seriously
8. Actualize all of your potential
9. Take care of your physical health
10. Leave a better world behind

