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Tradition vs selfishness: The black, white and other colours of money

[JAIPUR LITERATURE FESTIVAL 2017 \(JAIPUR-LITERATURE-FESTIVAL-2017\)](#) Updated: Jan 23, 2017 13:04 IST



A Mariyam Alavi (<http://www.hindustantimes.com/columns/a-mariyam-alavi>)
Hindustan Times



The panel included speakers like businessman and writer Ashwin Sanghi, writer Hindol Sengupta, and entrepreneur Sanjay Agarwal, and Suhel Seth in conversation with journalist Jyoti Malhotra. (Prabhakar Sharma/HT Photo)

“It’s like in our buildings; nobody is fond of their neighbours!” prominent personality Suhel Seth commented when Nepali businessman Binod Chaudhury said India hadn’t managed South Asian relations. “One thing India has failed in doing... is managing South Asian relationships. All (your) South Asian neighbours are disgruntled, unhappy. There is political chaos in all these countries; and in most of these countries, whenever a government falls or forms, India’s name comes into it,” said Chaudhury at a session entitled, The Colour of Money. The audience thought Seth’s comment was

funny. But Chaudhury insisted the situation needs to change, and that demonetisation might help. He hoped that as a result of demonetisation India's apprehensions about neighbours would vanish. "The security concerns are legitimate, but they should not literally hold the economic development of neighbours hostage," he said.

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The panel included speakers like businessman and writer Ashwin Sanghi, writer Hindol Sengupta, and entrepreneur Sanjay Agarwal, in conversation with journalist Jyoti Malhotra. While the speakers discussed the creation of wealth and the concept of 'giving back to society', they seemed to be split on how their wealth should be spent.

Sengupta cited the example of Jamsetji Tata, who worked to better society because he believed in 'giving back' and "not as PR."

Seth argued that this is no longer the case. "The problem in India is we take, but we want to give back only to our children. The concept of sharing the legacy with the community has vanished. The poor of this country give more of a percentage of their wealth back than the rich of this country. When that changes, we get to a better place," he said.



"The problem in India is we take, but we want to give back only to our children. The concept of sharing the legacy with the community has vanished," said Suhel Seth during the panel discussion. (Prabhakar Sharma/HT Photo)

Agarwal said people were entitled to do whatever they wanted with their wealth, as long as it was all 'white' and procured legally. Sanghi and Sengupta insisted that things had come to this pass because people had lost touch with their 'traditions' and now viewed money only as a tool to satisfy selfish needs.

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“Yesterday, two highly-educated members of Delhi society said that they did not even know the word Arthashastra. We are a deracinated race; we have been cut away from everything we had.”

When Malhotra stopped Sengupta from generalising based on the two people he had named, to the dismay of Delhiites: “They are from Delhi. They can be forgiven. Let’s move on!”

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