

Red Hot

Many years ago, I had the good fortune to meet an American golf professional. Besides competing in the American pro circuits, Jeff traveled to Asia to do missionary work. We played a few rounds of golf together and one day at the practice range Jeff asked, 'Pat, what is your goal for golf? Do you have a desire to be a zero-handicapper?'

I told Jeff that I was already satisfied with consistently getting 88-92 scores and occasionally hitting 82s and 85s. If I reached 80, it would be an amazing feeling but I did not have any desire to lower my score to 72 to become a zero-handicapper.

Jeff went on to talk about the areas I should focus on in order to consistently shave off a few strokes to reach 80 consistently, and he told me that unless I did a complete overhaul, my self-taught golf strokes would never see me becoming a zero-handicapper. I laughed and accepted his diagnosis. After all, he was the expert, and I already knew that being a left-hander golfing with my right hand and lacking a solid foundation wasn't going to make me far in golf. I was comfortable and the idea of an overhaul was daunting and required way too much time and effort.

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patrick.pacificpillars@gmail.com

Compare my lack of desire to improve my golf with Arunachalam Muruganatham's red hot desire to revolutionize menstrual health for women in rural areas.

Arunachalam was a school drop-out living in a rural part of India where not only do few women use sanitary pads, the subject of menstruation was considered taboo. When Arunachalam was newly married, he was horrified to learn that his new bride used dirty cloth as sanitary pads, cloth that was so disgusting that he would not even use it to clean his scooter. Arunachalam went on to discover that sanitary pads are expensive by rural standards, and many women in the village don't use them. Instead they turned to old rags, sand, sawdust, and leaves.

Determined to improve the quality of life for his wife, Arunachalam tried making a sanitary pad and began his quest to produce low-cost sanitary pads. That quest led him on a wild journey. In addition to experimenting with cotton, he even created a fake uterus by filling a football with goat's blood and wearing it throughout his daily routine. He was ridiculed by everyone around him, and even his wife, mother, and sisters thought that he had gone too far and abandoned him. His villagers were convinced that he was demonized and attempted to chain him for deliverance by a soothsayer.

Arunachalam pressed on with his red hot desire to improve the lives of rural women and he eventually developed a low cost method to produce sanitary pads after nearly five years. His family eventually reconciled with Arunachalam and today he runs a social enterprise that not only creates the machinery for the pads

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but also enables women in rural areas to maintain the machinery and in creating jobs.

Arunachalam definitely had a lot of grit that powered him through the criticisms, the separations from his family and the misunderstandings and dangers that confronted him. Surely it would have been easier for him to simply abandon the venture, especially after his wife had left him; after all he wasn't going to be the primary beneficiary of a low cost sanitary pad!

A golf score of 88 wasn't bad at all but I was comfortable, and sometimes being satisfied and comfortable is a huge obstacle to becoming better. In other words, being good sometimes stands as the enemy of greatness. Let me be clear - I am not advocating for a mercenary mindset of unquenchable thirst for money, fame and success, but I believe that in our pursuit of greatness, or simply onto the next level, we enlarge ourselves, discover ourselves in new ways and create greater impact. We could become better negotiators, gain more sophistication, enlarge our perspectives, become more tolerant, acquire discernment, solve bigger problems, lead better and manage more skillfully, etc etc.

Are you too comfortable with where you are? Could your good be standing in the way of your greatness? Or perhaps you used to strive towards greatness but have stagnated for too long? What's your Arunachalam's version of Red Hot Desire? Let's chat!

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