

ANDY KHAWAJA

THE PAYMENT MAHARAJA

The CEO and founder of leading online payment solutions provider Allied Wallet joins us for an exclusive interview. He discusses his views on the growth of the Indian economy, family life and gives entrepreneurs some valuable advice...

So Andy, it's been a while since we last spoke. What have you been doing in the last few months?

I've been traveling and traveling and traveling and working. I think since the last time we spoke, I've probably visited about 16 countries.

Do you mind me asking how many countries you have been to altogether?

Altogether... it must be about 78.

Have you been to India recently?

I've been to India three times; I have an office there in Mohali. My staff from the US visit India once every three months.

Do you usually join them?

I have on a few occasions; I've not been there this year yet, but certainly last year. I'm planning on being in India at the end of August.

What is your advice to Indian people who want to start a business?

The next three years will see a very strong, growing ecommerce market. Indians are very smart as a nation, but they just need a push. I'm an entrepreneur myself and since starting my company, I've had many ups and downs but I've continued and will never give up. You learn to become stronger and more aggressive. I'd advise people to always move ahead, because in the end, as long as it's good enough, the product being provided will sell. Indian entrepreneurs tend to be more frightened to fail, but this plays a

weak part in an entrepreneur's mind. They get it into their head that they are a loser but it's not true, and nobody should think like that. Don't care what others say; it's your dream, so who cares what other people think of you?

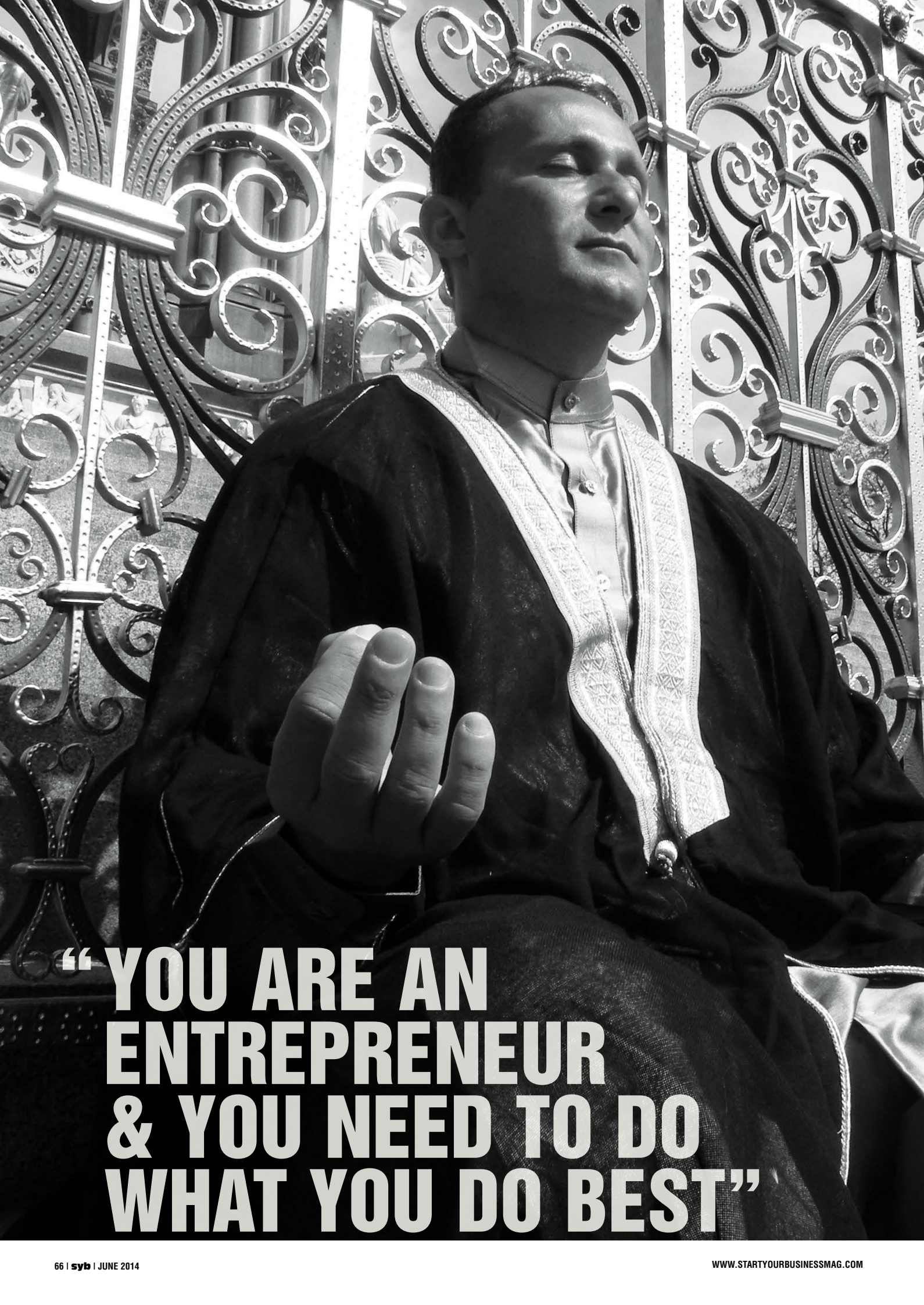
What do you think the eetailing market in India looks like in comparison to the rest of the world?

It's a very interesting market. It's definitely growing, but it's growing very slowly in terms of ecommerce. In terms of the sector of the ecommerce transaction, what we are seeing coming out of India a lot, is tech support. What I have done is make it very easy and possible to provide easy transactions for tech support because I understand the tech support area extremely well. A lot of local banks don't understand why a company might need tech support, which is very interesting to me, but the Indians are very smart. Put it this way: big companies like Microsoft and Google are outsourcing from India, because they know that the people there think smart.

Don't look at it like cheap labour, let's take that term out. What's happening now is that Indian entrepreneurs are building a product, labeling it and then selling to third parties, whom are taking the credit, but they are starting to realise, that the credit should be 'ours' (theirs).

I've seen this happen to a very large company, and I'm not going to name names, but I've seen large companies use Indian developers and they, the company get the credit and become a billion-dollar company. Indians are becoming wise to this and taking the credit for themselves.





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What sort of technology are you seeing emerge specifically?

I'd say that mobile payments and anything related to mobile technology for online transactions, especially APIs, which is a connecting platform from computer to computer to system to system, is emerging. I've seen Indians do some amazing work with APIs. They are also focussing a lot more on Dot Net coding. Dot Net is very good; it's the future of all codes.

What advice would you offer to the new Indian entrepreneurs just coming onto the scene?

I'd tell them what I'd tell anybody; learn what you can do best and build upon it to take the credit for yourself. If you're starting your career, understand that you'll need some kind of financials. It's okay to work for a company to generate an income, and understand the business as a whole, and almost break the ice by doing things this way, but just don't take this path as a career. If you are able to build a product for yourself, take the entrepreneurial route, and make a name for yourself, then I encourage that.

What common problem shocks you?

Some people don't even have a website. My advice would be straightaway, go get a website, start accepting credit cards online, and don't just focus on Indians; think on a global scale.

So are there any businesses that you are keeping your eye on at the moment?

Yes, I am currently working with a very large team of Indian developers. We're building an amazing product which will connect to every software and identify your location. It's kind of like social API, which is going to be state-of-the-art, and will be coming out towards the end of July. It's very similar to Stripe, but it's much more advanced, will serve more duties, with more functionality, and is less expensive. We are very proud of it.

What do you find most Indians to be buying online this year?

Without a doubt, electronics. It's a country full of rich culture and cuisine;

What do you most enjoy about the land?

First and foremost, I enjoy socialising with the people. I love the culture, because it's like work and relaxing at the same time. It's work and meditation, and you don't see that anywhere else. In Japan for example, they like to work a lot, it's non-stop, but then they don't enjoy or know how to relax. Maybe they have a drink just to calm the mind down, but that's it.

Also, the family bond in India comes first. This is something that you don't find as much these days. In the United States, some families only meet on Thanksgiving Day, but in India, they unite every chance they have, usually every week, if not then every day, and that is something that is very beautiful.

It's good because you get to speak to your family about what you want to do, and consult with them about future ideas. Saying that, don't let them slow you down if they don't agree with something, because you are an entrepreneur and you need to do what you do best.



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WORK; I ENJOY IT &
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