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## Context to the conversation

Viral speaks about some common mistakes people make. He specifically speaks about some of the mistaken notions people have about pursuing Computer Science and AI.

## Transcription

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**Deepak Jayaraman (DJ):** The other theme I'm curious about Viral is my conversation with Pramath Sinha who is also on this podcast awhile back. You know, one of the questions I asked him was, you have a perspective on young, young adults because you are actively involved in education and you work with leaders. How do we prepare the leaders of tomorrow and how should people think about educational choices? And his point was, the link between the first degree and careers is getting more and more tenuous. You know, earlier, if you studied sort of medicine, you became a doctor, you studied psychology, you became a therapist. Now, in a way, people are starting somewhere but finishing somewhere else. What's your take on, let's say, the role of the first degree and careers?

**Viral Doshi (VD):** I always say the first degree should be something that you enjoy, and then your skill should come with a second degree. I tell you interesting options. I had people doing a BSc in biochemistry, doing a law degree, getting into patent law. People biochemistry, doing something like public health and going work with Bill Gates Foundation. You have people doing physics and doing a PhD in physics, going into doing hedge funds or doing private equity.

So you have so many pros and combinations. So the times have changed. You're absolutely right. What he said and what you were saying is absolutely true that earlier the first degree controls your career. Not anymore. The second degree will control your career. The secondary will be a skill base. That is why today you look at more and more people are opting for humanities also if they BA Psychology or BA in English, I'm not going to get a job.

But if I do what I enjoyed and I top it with a law degree or MB or a master's, that'll get me a job. I'll give you my own example of my own family. My son went to study biochemistry in America. He graduated in history and German. My wife had a heart attack. You know how Indian mothers. Gujarati Mother. Physics. Chemistry, math.

How did they allow him to do history? I said leave him alone. You know this MBA in finance and master's in public policy. That's what control desire. So you're absolutely right. First degree and

second degree are now completely irrelevant. But the secondary should be your skill based profession. First degree should be something that you are passionate about.

**(DJ):** It's a beautiful distinction actually. I hadn't thought of it. And that sort of clear terms. And second one is what you're saying is in a way, what will give you a job or what what sort of will help you.

**(VD):** Tomorrow if you do a BSc in physics, you won't get a job easily, except perhaps in the finance will be the top of physics. Are you aware two of our Chief Justice that done physics as an undergraduate degree? So when you give role models more like that to children, they get so excited. Oh my God. He did law and he became chief justice. I said yes. I said, why would you do physics before law? Physics trains your mind to think logically when top level law degree because your analytical logical skills which are so exciting for a legal profession.

**(DJ):** And that's the other thing I was talking to with my nephew recently. And the discussion was should I do a BBA or should I do something in economics? And at least my sense I might be wrong was that the undergraduate degree should be in something specific foundational, like physics or biochemistry. And at least my view is that it gives you a lens with which you see the world. If the first view itself is sort of a wide lens, I Wonder,

**(VD):** yes and no. Both, I would say I would. I would say it would depend the child's aptitude, isn't it? You may tell him, do economy. If you can't do math, how will you do economics. So I would say dependent child's aptitude. Of course, if he has aptitude to do something which is in Stem or something, obviously that's a good option to train your mind to think analytically and logically.

When people ask me, how did engineering help you? I said, help me indirectly. It's made my mind think logically. When I do all my counselling work, I can analyse and think logically because of engineering degree. I would say again, if you do a broad based degree, it's a much better option because you can discover what you will do at the age of 16, 17, who knows what they want to do. And that is the beautiful part about the American education. Talk to any American kid.

The amount of counseling I've done with American kids, nine out of ten do not know what they want to do, but India seven out of ten know what they wanted because they have to survive and they have to know what they want to do. You didn't need to survive. You can follow your passion. Go to college and discover that you want to Engineering? Do you want to do English? You want to do music? You discover in college that privilege we still don't have in our country. It takes another 30-40 years when India becomes more affluent. Which affluence gives more security? With security gives you allows you to explore what you want to do. You cannot do all these things in a country which is developing.

Remember that. So you could have not have done what America did 50 years ago. We couldn't have done that. We can do it now because we have more affluence. That's why humanities liberal arts is now coming in in fourth. Look at Ashoka, you look at Flame, you look at Ahmedabad university, you look at Nayanta University in Pune, I look at Kriya. Those colleges could not have existed in India 25 years ago. So today, existing because people have understood the value of a Humanities Liberal arts education.

**(DJ):** Is so true. Even if I go back to my time in IIM Ahmedabad. My favorite course actually was organizational behaviour. But I kept telling myself I should be doing. I come from an engineering background, I should do derivatives. So I did options and futures and derivatives and all that. And then 20 years later, I find myself in a OB related field. But you're right. You know, one of my friends was telling me education in India is often seen as a financial asset, not as an exploration. Again, if when you come from middle class.

**(VD):** You can't explore this all fine to say all that actually you cannot explore unless you are from the upper classes where you have got stability of finance, you can go and explore what you will do for a middle class. Upper middle class still is getting that, you know, earning the bread and butter with the degree that they have, and that will take another 30 or 40 years before that changes.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

**DJ:** Very often, when we think of careers like Private Equity, we think of a STEM degree coupled with an MBA as a prerequisite for a great career there. Even that is slowly changing in India with the advent of institutes like Ashoka, Krea, FLAME, Ahmedabad University etc. I had the opportunity to speak with Ashish Dhawan (AD) on the podcast and he spoke about the role of liberal arts education in the context of a career in PE.

**AD:** *"I think Liberal Arts education is good training for a PE business because I don't think you can be unidimensional. A lot of people think to be a PE investor you got to be good at say economics and analysis, just data crunching, reading balance sheets, etc., etc. But I think it's much more than that. I think at different levels you need to be fairly skilled. The first is I think at an emotional level and psychological level. I think a deep ability to somewhere be a critical thinker, to have confidence in your own thinking but yet keeping an ear to the ground and being able to listen but being able to filter out what you are hearing and to be able to control your emotions I think is absolutely critical. When you are an investor, you are surrounded by a lot of market noise, and I think the easiest thing to do is to be wallowing in other people's thoughts or dancing to the rhythm of the market."*

**AD:** *"but my general belief is that we look at what the 21st century requires. I think it requires you to be a somewhat broad thinker, to be a critical thinker firstly, to be able to analyse and think for yourself, think independently, to be a good communicator both in written form and in oral form. It requires you to be able to connect the dots between different disciplines and different data points and to be able to deal with ambiguity, requires you to be a lifelong learner, a lot of people are in knowledge industries where things are changing every few years and so you need to stay current, you need to be a lifelong learner and we believe you need to have an understanding of the other or have a social conscience to be successful."*

**DJ:** But I love the overall distinction that Viral makes between the first degree and the second degree in the way we think about our careers.

## End of transcription

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Podcast Transcript [110.08 Viral Doshi - 1st and 2nd degrees and careers](#)

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Nugget from Ashish Dhawan that is referenced: [What it takes to be a good PE Investor.](#)

Nugget from Ashish Dhawan that is referenced: [Educating ourselves for the future.](#)

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## About Deepak Jayaraman

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Deepak seeks to unlock the human potential of senior executive's / leadership teams by working with them as an Executive Coach / Sounding Board / Transition Advisor. You can know more about his work [here](#).

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