



play to potential

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Guest

Amish Tripathi (born 18 October 1974), is an Indian author, known for his novels The Immortals of Meluha, The Secret of the Nagas, The Oath of the Vayuputras, Scion of Ikshvaku and Sita: Warrior of Mithila (launched on May 29 2017). The first three books collectively comprise the Shiva Trilogy and the next two are the first two of the Ram Chandra Series. The Shiva Trilogy was the fastest selling book series in Indian publishing history and the Scion of Ikshvaku was the fastest selling book of 2015. All four books have sold over 3.5 million copies in the Indian subcontinent since 2010, with gross retail sales of Rs. 100 crores. Forbes India has ranked Amish among the top 100 celebrities in India four times in a row in 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015. Amish was also selected as an Eisenhower Fellow, an exclusive programme for outstanding leaders from around the world. After a Management degree from IIM Kolkata, Amish spent his initial several years in the Financial Services world.

Context to the conversation

Welcome to the second conversation at the Play to Potential podcast series. This is Deepak Jayaraman here, the creator and curator of this podcast series. Joining us this time is Amish Tripathi, a celebrated author who needs no introduction. Known for his Shiva Trilogy and Scion of Ikshvaku first in the Ramchandra series. I have been keen to speak with Amish because of the successful transition he has made from the corporate world to the world of writing books. He is an alumnus of St. Xavier's in Mumbai and IIM Calcutta and spent about 14 years in the financial services world in companies like Standard Chartered Bank, DBS Bank, IDBI Federal Life Insurance before starting his writing career. In our conversation, we spoke about how this transition panned out for him, how he leveraged his business skills to market his books creatively, and some lessons the business world can learn from some of the ancient works. Without further ado, over to the conversation.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Where the seeds of this transition were sown?

Amish Tripathi (AT): If you are looking for the seeds in my childhood, frankly they don't exist. I was never creative when I was young, in fact most of my school and college friends in friends from IIM Calcutta, when they meet me they usually say "*sach bataa actually kisne likha hai?*" I was academically oriented when I was young, I was also active in sports like Boxing, Gymnastics those kinds of things but I never did anything creative. I never wrote anything, I never wrote any fiction before 'The Immortals of Meluha', I never wrote any music, I was the singer of our Band in IIM Calcutta but I never wrote the music, we only performed what others had written, I was never

creative at all so, I think the seed had to be found perhaps in an incident that happened 11, 12 years ago, When my family and I we were watching TV and we discovered something interesting and a philosophical discussion ensued and that was the genesis of 'The Shiva Trilogy' it was a philosophical discussion into the nature of evil. My grandfather was a Pundit in Kashi both my parents were deeply religious, so, we have an atmosphere in our family of our mates our scriptures of discussions of debates on it in our family we also read a lot, every one reads a lot.

I primarily read nonfiction, but as you know everyone has their own favourite genres, my favourite genre is History, Spirituality, Philosophy, Religion, Science, Politics, I read books in this genre I read maybe five, six books every month and reading at that pace for decades, started reading maybe when I was five, six years old, everyone in my family, my siblings, we must have at least a thousand books library at home we all read a lot and we discuss and debate a lot, I guess that was the atmosphere.

DJ: Having a debate to writing a book that still a long journey, so walk us through how that phase panned out for you.

AT: Like I said it was essentially a philosophical discussion on the nature of evil on what is evil, It was based on a, the discussion was based on a TV program that we saw and we discovered something interesting we all know that for Indian the gods are called '*Dewas*' and demons are called '*Asuras*' we all know that, what many of us don't know is that for the ancient Persian not Islamic Persians its Zoroastrian Persians the gods were called Ahuras and the demons were called Daivaas, their pantheon is the exact opposite of the Indian pantheon, Indra the king of gods among the Indian is one of the cheap demons the ancient Zoroastrian Persians and which take over an interesting discussion in our family that the ancient Indians and the ancient Persians are met we probably be calling each other Evil cause your god is my demon my god is your demon you must be evil. So, who would be right? Would the ancient Indians be right or would the ancient Persians be right? The obvious answer is neither they are just two radically different points of view but neither of them are evil, they are just different evil is something that exist just beyond petty human rivalries so an answer occurred to me to that question to what is Evil? Based partly on some of the *Upanishads* that I have read and that I have learnt from my family and based somewhat on my own thoughts. So, I told this philosophy to my family they liked it and I was encouraged to write it down as thesis so that's how it began actually a pure philosophy thesis an answer to the question what is Evil?

DJ: And when you wrote it, in your mind who was the audience for that? Was it just to as it went?

AT: It was just for me, look I was a banker man, no one wants to listen the banker let's be honest and a banker going with the philosophical thesis 'what is Evil?' they will say, yes, you bankers are Evil. So, I was just writing it for my family and myself that's it. And it was a day addition to my job as a banker. And then of course that thesis got converted into an action adventure book the idea being through hopefully engaging story I will communicating at the wrote of it is the philosophy of a 'what is Evil' and I am trying to communicate that through this adventure through this story and yes that's how it panned out.

DJ: From writing for yourself to writing a book that gets published what was that journey like?

AT: When I write I don't even care, even now when I write am not really thinking about how it will be received by the readers, critics, publishers or anyone else frankly. This is how I wrote my first book and this is how I write today as well, I can't say it was a conscious choice when I was writing my first

book because I wasn't thinking that it would get published. I guess without realizing it I was following what Lord Krishna tells us in Bhagwat Geeta "*karmanaye vadhika raste, Maa Phaleshu kadachana*" - that you have a right to your Karma, not to the fruits of your Karma and we in the modern world have interpreted this wonderful philosophy to mean something fatalistic which is wrong, what Lord Krishna was telling us, what he was telling is actually if you are detached from the results of your Karma, if you are detached from success or failure then actually you are unstoppable, if you are doing something simply because you love doing it, simply because you enjoy your Karma so much who can stop you? Failure can of course be demotivating because it feels sadness, grief, demotivation in your heart and it stops you but success can be as dangerous, you will find so many people that are one of the eight wonders because success filled pride in their head and they lose their way but if you are detached from success or failure then actually you are unstoppable because you will just keep doing what you love doing and I am not saying that I am a great philosopher and I consciously figured this out it's just that I loved doing anything with my books so much that I genuinely didn't care whether it succeeded or not, I wasn't really thinking whether it got published or not I just love doing anything associated with my books.

DJ: What was the tipping point for you to say this could be a full-time career? At what point did you leave the banking job?

AT: It was a pragmatic decision, look I come from middle class family so I always joke "*Bhai mere pass baap dada ka ashirvad hai jaaydat kuch nahi*" so I have to be pragmatic and practical in my career decisions, I have responsibilities you know I am blessed with the child, I have a wife so I resigned only after second book when my royalty cheque became greater than my salary cheque and even at that time I was the member of the SMC committee at IDBI federal life insurance so hence I was not just involved with projects in my department, I should look after marketing, product development and service quality for the company but I was also involved in the projects of other departments other part of leadership team, so I made sure I gave my boss a very long notice period I completed all my projects including one there I was involved in with the other departments, I found my replacement and I trained him and took him to SMC meetings for a few things so that he was, you know he got into the groove of it and I resigned only at that time. My boss through a farewell party for me gave me a lovely and very large idol of Lord Shiva as a gift, so I left on very good terms with him and I told him at the farewell party also "*Sirji kal ko kuch gadbad ho jaaye to mai waapas aa jaunga Naukri pe*" I would say it's being pragmatic I mean some people might call it boring I call it being pragmatic. If you don't have family wealth to fall back on you have to be practical in your career decision and I always believe why burn bridges, if you can maintain good relations what's the harm? You never know when you need a bridge and even karmically I think it works. Why attract negative emotions from anyone if you can leave people with good positive emotions, it's good unless you are forced to fight then you shouldn't be a coward then if you have to fight, you have to fight, that's the different discussion but as far as possible even if you are leaving a relationship leave on good terms, that's the way I see it.

DJ: Where do you get your energy to deal with failure?

AT: I will go back to, if you are doing something you love doing so much, genuinely failure does not demotivate you now I am not saying that you should be impractical. Like for me to react to that failure by leaving my job and commit to this as full time and then realize at the end of three months I don't have money to pay my bills that would turn the books which were the source of joy for me into a source of frustration. So, I always suggest that use your heart to decide the destination but use your mind to plot the journey so I was very clear that I was not going to give up on my book no

matter how many people rejected it, I was going to do everything that I could to make it work, *aage chale naa chale Bhagwan ke upar hai* but I will do my best, that I was very clear on. Now that was the destination my heart had decided so, what should be the journey to that I allowed my mind to make up my decision. This is why I did not resign from my job. Into the marketing of my books I invested only what I could afford from my salary, I didn't take loans from anyone, I of course didn't ask any of my relatives, anyone for anything, only my money, I invested only I could afford. I was lucky that I had family support, my family, and my siblings. If you don't have that emotional support, it's not about financial support it's all about emotional support, that can kind of draw energy away from you and that family support is extremely crucial, of course I am lucky in that sense but I would also say that it's to the responsibility of each individual to try and get that support to enrol people around him into his journey. It's your job to figure out get them motivated in your journey because frankly it is not their journey why should they care so much about you? So you have to figure it out and my family was of course very supportive because they could see how this book had changed me it changed my character by 180 degrees and they were extremely supportive and that's a big part.

DJ: In what sense if I may ask it changed your character by 180 degrees?

AT: I was like, you know how an IIM guy, you know how we tend to get in a the corporate world, we can be very hyper comparative frankly unnecessarily aggressive, we are bench marking all the time you go to an alumni meet oh this guy is sizing up, oh this guy is still at this level loser, oh this guy is at that level shit I got to work harder whatever bonus you have got you always felt you are underpaid when you moved into a cabin, you would feel, no I might deserve a bigger cabin when you got a personal assistant, I deserve a better personal assistant and when you got a promotion. I should have got it earlier there is never any calmness, no I am not saying you should not be competitive, you can't be someone who just sits around wastes life drinking alcohol on a beach that's not the productive life of course you should be competitive but you need to understand, how to keep that calmness within you as well it should not become a source of frustration and endless dissonance which frankly many of us in the corporate world do behave that way let's be honest. So, I have changed dramatically from that pose, I am far calmer than I used to be, I used to shout a lot in my corporate career, I know my team must have hated me I think the only way I used to get motivate them is I would ensure and fight and get good bonuses for them at the end of the year but now I am not like that, I don't shout and scream as much as I used to. I am far calmer than I used to be I am much happier than I used to be and strangely I am doing better in every other way as well financially and everything but you realize that you don't need to be hyper comparative nutcase to get results you can actually be calm inside and still be competitive that balance can be possible.

DJ: Give us a sense of the reality of writing? What do the highs and lows look like.

AT: One thing if anyone wants to get into any creative field, you have to be aware of the rewards are very skewed out here it's not just in writing but in films, in TV, in Artist, Painters, any creative field you will have people making money beyond their dreams beyond their wildest dreams and you will have a large number not even making enough to get buy, that's the nature of the creative sector and you should be clear of that before you get into it, unlike say banking or the IT, any proper corporate career where you can make a career and everyone can do reasonably good and you can get buy. So, you have to be aware of this risks when you get into it and very few people can actually predict what will work and what will not work in the creative field nobody really knows, one of the main reasons my books were get rejected before I moved to the Meluha, most mythological novels was simply not working they were flopping in the English language which is why my books were also rejected by

publishers, but to everyone surprise my books did well so you have to be aware of that and I always advise that there is no harm in having another job while pursuing a writing career on the side. What my approach was keep the soul alive and have a job to give the body and soul together, but you have to realize that many people don't make it, it doesn't mean that anyone is better or worst it's just right time right place of course there is blessing of god there are skills involved, but it also just share a luck yaar.

DJ: For the first-time writers for a minute given the initial hurdles you had to cross till you got the first publisher any lessons learnt would you have done anything differently with the wisdom of what you have gone through?

AT: No not really, because I tried everything that I could and in fact I believe that the rejection that I have faced for publishers from all publishers actually was actually blessing in disguise because I was free to market the books the way I want to the publishing industry is not the most innovative when it comes to marketing, there is this attitude "*yaar ye to pehle kabhi kiya nahi hai to ye naya kaise kar sakte hai?*" which frankly one of the most irritating lines in the world that we have never done this before so we can't do it and that's the worst reason and it is the way the industry is, especially when it comes to marketing so actually it was a blessing in disguise because we could do innovative things.

DJ: What are the questions people should ask to themselves before committing to a direction in writing, in your sense what does it take to become a good fiction writer?

AT: I think the first step is to think do you enjoy it? This is not something you should take-up just because you think it will make you famous or you will make tons of money from it because if that's the purpose there are other routes which are much surer in the corporate world as well, I think the first thing you clearly have to answer is Do you actually enjoy it so much? Would you rather this than do anything else? And for me that answer was yes, for seven, eight years I was working on my books, writing, promoting etc. and doing a full time job at the same time so I actually had a very little free time I was doing only three things for that seven, eight years and they are like essentially doing my job, working at my books and spending time with my family I did nothing else and of course I was stretched for time but I just loved writing, spending time in that fictional world I loved it so much that I couldn't think of anything else so that is the first thing one must answer and only your heart can answer that it is not a pragmatic balance sheet, assets-liabilities, opportunities and threads kind of discussion, no. only your heart can answer it.

DJ: When you look at the people who somehow don't make it is there some sort of a pattern that emerges in terms of what doesn't work out for them?

AT: Procrastination, you will find so often and it happens in large number of cases most of the writers who begin writing the book most of them never actually complete it because remember writing is not the team sport unlike many other creative pursuits as well like film making, so you don't have others who are the part of the project who are driving you together, it's the benefit in the corporate world as well because you have an entire team where the momentum pushes you forward writing is in that sense a lonely profession you are sitting by yourself and you are doing your thing it's very easy to get distracted, it's very easy to lose momentum and so many people simply don't finish their books and you need to have that discipline that's what I meant when I said that, that discipline and that commitment only comes when you actually love it so much it would rather do that than anything in this world because the chances of success are very low, the chances of even

getting it published are so low so what can motivate you there is no rational reason to motivate you to write a book or to Paint even painting is in the sense very solitary profession you have to just love it so much that you will find every free time available and do it.

DJ: How do you create the space for you to write in this world where there is a tsunami of stimuli?

AT: On a lighter note I was joking with my wife yesterday, thank god we finished college before WhatsApp and twitter came, we would have flunked everything because we will be so distracted, I had read this interesting case studies and this was done in the US that apparently among the youth in the US average attention span on any one subject is 8 seconds now just to give you a sense of perspective a gold fish apparently has an attention span of 9 seconds so we are that distracted as a species now of course US are much more because of the nature of their media but the rest of the world is also getting in. In this distraction how do you get productivity going, it was supposed to be great productivity enhancement major but I would say many ways its productivity destroying because we are so distracted. Which comes back to that thing which I said that If you love doing something so much that actually you don't get distracted and especially in a creative field, see in the corporate world you can have a short burst of attention span and still achieve some productivity and like I said the benefit of an organization it has its own momentum in the individual space if you are doing something creative individually and hammer that point even more it's so easy to distracted today, so easy.

DJ: What rituals you use which help you in writing?

AT: There are times when I take off on a writing breaks, more not because of twitter and things like that but you know if I am in Mumbai someone or the others keep find for meetings and there are something or the other which keeps happening, so I go do that, I mean I will just take off for, like while writing the 'Oath of the Vayuputras' I took off to Kashi and Banaras and I was there for some four weeks I hired the place lived out there, cut off completely, I don't do any meetings and nothing, I don't even tell anyone in there, it gives me focus three four weeks and I can get a lot of momentum into my so I try and do that, but when I am doing my writing phase I write everyday even in the mornings at home, so that's one aspect taking those writing breaks gives some momentum but as I said in my writing phase I write everyday even at home, I get up early in the morning normally, I am up normally everyday by 5, 5:30, I exercise do my pooja and I start writing, I read four newspapers every morning then I start writing may be by 9,9:30 I need music to start writing that music kind of works like a key for me, it opens up that world the words themselves don't matter the mood of the music is very crucial. I listen to all genres of music, India classical, Western classical, old Hindi film music, modern Indie, Indie pop, in western music I would listen to rock, metal world music, Indian regional language music, and regular music, I don't listen to Rap, it doesn't really connect to it but any other genre of music the mood is more important than the words themselves and I eat a lots of cream biscuits while writing that works for me, I don't know sugar rush perhaps.

DJ: Again, back to the point you alluded to which is about writing for an audience of one, which is yourself. Again, at the end of the day, there is a commercial element which is important for sustenance. How do you balance this whole inside-out and the outside-in in terms of listening to what the market needs versus what the creative person in you wants to produce?

AT: In the creative space I believe there can be no outside-in, there cannot be; there's only an inside-out when you are writing. Now, outside influences could impact you on terms of like you are

travelling and you know you see something and that inspires you, or someone tells you something about the book and that makes sense to you but you by outside-in I mean you can't do market research and write a book; it doesn't work that way. You know, writing is in a sense a spiritual process, a creative process and you have to kind of be in the flow and that only comes when you open yourself up. If you are a believer like me you would believe its Lord Shiva or whichever god you believe in blessing you with it. For an atheist it is just you say universe basically, where it comes from somewhere outside and you have to honour that blessing. So, while writing there is no question of doing market research and writing. You write what feels right to you. Only once you finish the book then you have to become a practical, pragmatic marketing guy and you have to figure out okay how do I sell this. So, the book itself cannot be touched, it cannot be changed.

DJ: Sure.

AT: Except by the editor, like I say, obviously, I mean if, but not for market research purposes okay. The book cannot be touched and then you figure out okay now how do I market this, how do I position this, how do I sell this, because ultimately yes, a publisher has invested money in you as an author; it is your duty to make sure that that publisher makes his money back.

DJ: I am told, there've been a bunch of innovative things you've done in marketing the books. So, talk to us about maybe two or three things that have been different about how you promote your books versus maybe some of the other authors?

AT: I will give you some ideas from my first book. I must clearly admit though that they weren't my ideas; they were from my team but perhaps my skill was in picking good ideas and getting them implemented. The first idea came from my wife, Preeti. I always believed that marketing cannot exist as a discipline by itself. It cannot be just an area where your marketing team is essentially having fun; it has to serve the business objectives. You have to be clear what the business problems are, what the business objectives are and then how can marketing solve those problems? So, what were the business problems for me as debut author in 2010, a self-published author? I wasn't backed by any big publisher, so there was no way I could ensure availability and good display of my books at stores. Chances are even for debut author of a big publisher chances are your books are a well-kept secret at the store. Forget about the readers, the store staff wouldn't know that your book has been launched. The carton wouldn't even get opened. It would probably lie in some bathroom somewhere and get returned six months later. So, how do I get display of my books? *Kyunki jo dikhta hain woh bikhta hain*. Because if it's not even displayed, how is it going to sell? So, this was an idea that my wife came up with and it was inspired by shampoos. You remember, when the sachet revolution began, more than a decade, two decades ago now? The bottle itself, in those days, used to cost may be 20 rupees or something, but the sachet would be 20 paisa, 25 paisa. The entire point was to induce trial, because the bottle is too much to invest in, but the sachet — *kya jaata hain yaar, pachees paisa hain, lele, try karle*, if you like it you might buy the bottle. So, she said why can't we do a sampler like this for a book? So, we printed the first chapter of the book and put the same cover as the cover of the main book and distributed it free of cost at retail stores. This had never been done before and I went with our PowerPoint presentation to various retail chains, told them I am giving you something free, what's the downside? Just distribute it free. I guess they'd never seen authors come with PowerPoint presentations, so they agreed to that idea. To my surprise, they didn't charge anything. So, now if you think about it, they displayed those booklets...

DJ: These booklets were on the shelves or somebody was standing outside the shops...?

AT: They were at the cash counter! Now, if you think about it, this was the prime display space, because that's where a serious customer is. Because he's come to buy a book and he's got like 20–30 seconds where he's waiting for his bill and waiting to pay. He has nothing to do and he sees this booklet out there with a very nice cover and it's stamped free on top of it. Many of them picked it up! And they went home, and they read the first chapter, and they came back and said ok, now where is the book? And we launched this two weeks before the launch of the book. The initial response to the first chapter itself was so positive that many of these chain stores raised their order even before the launch of the book. This was why the book hit the bestseller charts in the first week of launch. So, this as an idea worked really well for us. The key thing I always like to point out is you have to come out with a new idea. Because today, if you go to a bookstore and say I have a free booklet, can you display it, they will charge you for advertising space, which destroys the entire purpose of it...

DJ: That strategy is taken?

AT: The strategy is gone because your costs have gone up, so the returns will not justify it. The second thing that we did for the first book was suggested by a friend of mine, called Abhijit. He said to me your books are very visual, I can almost see the scenes the way you have described it. So, he said, can we convey that to readers, can we make a proper live action trailer film? Again, this had never been done before. As you can imagine, I had only my salary to invest, so I didn't have that much money, but we made a good trailer. We got a model, shot him against a green Chroma screen, and then put some special effects on that Chroma screen. We had music made by Taufiq Qureshiji and we uploaded this on YouTube. And this really took off, did very well for us. Again, this was something that had never been tried before.

DJ: And from a timing perspective, this was before the launch as well or...?

AT: Yeah, this was also before the launch of the book, and it really went viral and did well for us.

DJ: Amish, let's talk about a different theme, work-life harmony. There is a Professor in Wharton, Stuart Freidman who talks about four dimensions: yourself, home, work and society, while taking stock of how you spend time and you talk about dharma, artha, kama and moksha. Give us a sense of how you balance... what these are, help us understand these and also talk a little bit about how you balance these four dimensions in your day-to-day life.

AT: Yes, dharma, artha, kama and moksha are an ancient Indian philosophy. It was said that to have a successful life you must balance the purushartha; it doesn't mean purush as in male but purush as in the life force. And the four purusharthas were this: dharma, artha, kama and moksha and dharma is essentially, it is not religion, that's a wrong translation. Dharma is essentially the right way to live, the balance in the universe, you know, values etc. Artha is wealth, power, and fame, all of that put together. Kama is not just sex but actually all the sensual pleasures of life so music, arts, drama, and you should have all that in your life. And moksha is of course finding liberation. You must have a balance in all these four to lead a successful life. And for that you must find balance with of course with your swadharma and with yourself and also with everyone around you because only then can you find a balanced life. Now, will there be times when you will be working very hard? Yes, I mean, those phases come in life. Now, you have to figure out how to make sure that you can, you don't leave your family or friends with a sense that you have cut off. They should believe in what you are doing. And no one manages this perfectly, you know, you have to, it's a journey and you have to figure out how to do it. And there will be phases when you may not have that much work and you

can spend time on various other aspects. The only point I am trying to ensure, I am trying to suggest, is that you must have this sense in your mind that you have to find this sense of balance. You will never be walking on that exactly balanced path all the time because if you were a soul like that then you would have hit moksha already, you know, you would have been a Buddha, you would have been already with Lord Krishna and Lord Shiva and everyone else. The fact that you are still here it means that actually you haven't hit that balance and it's not that easy. But you can only achieve something when you actually have that in your mind that I must find this balance.

DJ: What are the lessons that business world can learn from some of these works, first is about culture, what's your take on how one could strike that balance in the context of creating culture?

AT: One of the themes I tried to communicate again and again in my books is there's no way that is better or worst each path works for a different time for a different atmosphere and this is true of countries, this is true of companies, this is true of families, ideally you should be true to yourself, for example in the case of our country there are so many Indians who think we have to be like china, we cannot be like china we are not like them because they are compliant people who follow what their government tells them to do. We are a rebellious race Indians will not follow what, we by nature are very rebellious race, even when we say yes our gestures are such that you are not really sure whether I will actually do what I have apparently accepted doing as an order given to me so we are a rebellious race we are more Chandravashis if you will, no one exact Chandravashi or Suryavanshi but we are more Chandravanshi the Chinese are more Suryavanshi, we should be true to who we are? Now each way of life has its positives or negatives the Suryavanshi way of life are its best are very efficient very just very focused, at its worst it can be very rigid it cannot handle change at all it can become fanatical. The Chandravanshi way of life at its best very freedom loving, very creative, very Passionate very protective, especially of its weak but at its worst it can be very irresponsible, decadent, you have to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of your way of life and this will apply in your company as well your company will have a natural culture the industry which your company is in will have a natural culture there are some industries which are naturally more Suryavanshi there are some industries which are naturally more Chandravanshi it attract the certain type of people and your customers are coming in and expecting that as well now you as an individual may be exactly the same but when you walk into a party and if you find a guy or a girl with the hair dyed blue and with piercings and tattoos and god knows what not, and you will find that guy fun and you will chat with him and you will but if you walk into your bank, you don't want to see a guy like that, you want to see a guy with the perfect knotted tie, you don't want a crew cut, you don't want any ear ring, no tattoos, you just want to see a sober straight guy, because that's what you expect in a bank every industry has its own culture you have to be an alignment with what that culture is and try and do the best that you can do within that culture, organizations don't lay enough important how crucial culture is? And try and do what the best you can do within that culture, organizations don't lay enough importance on how crucial culture is.

DJ: What are the three things they don't teach you in B-school?

AT: You don't have to allow your hyper competitiveness to cloud your inner happiness, trust me you can actually be competitive and still be calm I know it sounds counterintuitive but it is possible and if you are internally calm you will find you are even more productive and more importantly you are happier, I think that's one of the key things and essentially life skill not so much career skills but life skills but if you are not able to handle your own life how will you handle your career well? And this is something that needs to be in ancient time was taught at a schooling stage itself through

philosophies but today is not taught anywhere including not in B- schools so this is a very important part, how to manage your own life?

The other thing is you must try and find an alignment with your heart and your mind I am not one of those new age guys, the hell with responsibilities and the mind and follow your heart and kick your boss, no, that's irresponsible, but the B-schools are on the other extreme, where you have to sacrifice your heart completely always be pragmatic, just focus on how to get the next promotion, the next bonus and if you lose your heart, your sense of values then then you get the scandals like you have got in financial services industries for example, in the west. So, how do you balance your heart and your mind don't swing on either string that is something that I think worth learning from all ancient cultures there are not just ancient Indian culture it's just too happened to that ancient Indian culture happened to survive but this is something to be learnt from all ancient cultures.

DJ: In summary one or two things you want to leave the listeners with about playing to potential?

AT: I think the best way to some this up is this wonderful line from the Bhagwat Geetha "Shreya swadharma Vigunaha Paradharmat Swanushthitat that is it's better to do your own swadharma even if you make mistakes while doing it rather than doing someone else's Swadharma even if you are doing it perfectly what lord Krishna was trying to tell us is find your own Purpose and do that don't try and be someone else don't try and live a life that society has decided for you or anyone else may have decided for you. You must live your own life you must, when only you can answer that question in life no one else can answer that for you and when you find that purpose perceive it, do it.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Following your swadharma with mistakes is better than following someone else's swadharma perfectly. Powerful lines to conclude the conversation. Hope you found this purposeful. Thank you for tuning in. To follow the series please follow the Twitter handle play to potential. Bye now and hope to have you tune into the subsequent conversation.

End of transcription

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In Summary – Playing to potential: This playlist captures the essence of what the speaker is trying to say in their conversation. In a way, it captures the key principles with which they have approached life which has brought them to where they are today. They share their perspectives on the mindset we need to adopt as we navigate through life. You can access the playlist [here](#).

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- 02.02 Amish Tripathi - Writing for self
- 02.03 Amish Tripathi - Transitioning from Financial Services to Writing
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About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock 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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