



The banner features the 'play to potential' logo on the left. To its right are contact details: a WhatsApp icon with the number '+91 85914 52129*', a Twitter icon with the handle '@PlayToPotential', and a globe icon with the website 'playtopotential.com'. Further right, under the heading 'Also available on:', are logos for Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts. On the far right, a portrait of the host, Deepak Jayaraman, is shown with the text 'Podcast Host Deepak Jayaraman' below it. A small disclaimer at the bottom left reads: '*Just send us a Whatsapp with your name, number and email and we will add you to our distribution list.'

Guest

Viswanathan "Vishy" Anand is an Indian chess grandmaster and a former World Chess Champion, considered as one of the greatest chess players of all time. Anand was the first recipient of the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award in 1991–92, India's highest sporting honour. In 2007, he was the first sportsman to receive India's second highest civilian award, the Padma Vibhushan.

Harnessing the full potential of our mind and staying relevant in the context of advances in machines is something that all of us wrestle with as we go through our respective journeys. Chess is a great canvas for us to explore perspectives on these two questions.

During the 90 odd minutes that I spent with him in Chennai, Vishy spoke candidly about how he got into Chess as a career, how he thought about his own development at various stages of his growth, how he harnesses his mind and leverages the right brain and the left brain, how EQ matters as one grows through the ranks, how he stays level-headed and grounded despite his towering achievements, his thoughts on harnessing human potential and more.

Context to the conversation

Welcome to the 21st conversation of the Play to Potential Podcast Series. A series of reflective conversations with leaders across fields such as Business, Sport, Arts. In this series, I like to talk to people about their journeys and get to the bottom of why they did what they did at various inflection points and how they grew to the top of their profession.

I am Deepak Jayaraman, the host and the curator of this podcast series. I am an Executive Coach and work with senior executives and help them with two questions as they go through their leadership journey – Where to Go and How to Grow? Where to go is about helping them pick the right canvas and context for them to flourish when they are at a pivotal transition and How to grow is often about helping them scale their leadership capabilities in a certain organizational context. You could visit transitioninsight.com for more details.

I am excited to share this conversation with an individual who has been a personal role model of mine for several years' right from my days of schooling in Chennai. The guest is Viswanathan Anand, one of the greatest chess players of all time. Apart from his accomplishments as a Chess Player at the highest levels, I have always personally been a big fan of his simplicity and his humility. In fact when I was preparing for my conversation with him and reached out to a few leaders to ask them what they would like to learn from Vishy, the first thing most of them said was "ask him how he stays so grounded despite the towering heights he has reached and how he stays so level-headed through the ups and downs". It was an absolute privilege and a humbling experience to speak with him.

We spoke about a range of topics ranging across how he picked Chess as a career, role of EQ in become a chess champion, how his approach to Self-Development shifted after he became a Grand Master, his take on role of humans in a world where the Machines are getting exponentially more powerful, How he has dealt with failures, his approach to harnessing the power of the human brain, how he copes with digital distraction and ensures mindfulness in what he does and much more. I personally learnt a lot from the conversation and I hope you will find it purposeful too. You could access this conversation or specific segments of this conversation at playtopotential.com or on iTunes, Stitcher or one of the other podcast apps.

Just a quick additional comment on the format of the podcast. If you are looking for a quick insight here or there or clean list of 7 things to become a better person or 13 things to stop doing from tomorrow, I have a feeling that this podcast series may not be up your alley. I feel life is a little too nuanced for such clean, definitive and prescriptive lists. But if you are open to immersing yourself in someone else's journey and understand how they thought about various inflection points and the mindset with which they have gone about the journey, I have a feeling you might walk away with an insight or two that could help you.

Without further ado, over to my conversation with Vishy Anand.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): I am curious about how people, pick their career or pick their sport? I would love for you will talk a little bit about, how you got into the chess? And specifically the inflection point where you made a commitment to chess as a profession? And what were the trade off at that time?

Viswanathan Anand (VA): It was a nice add, it was for AMD actually and the Idea was, you may not even have considered us, you probably just heard Intel, but it's worth finding out what's right for you and they tried to make that point with cricket and Chess, that you might think that you like playing cricket, but your true calling might lies somewhere else, so it's worth thinking about that choice, I actually found Chess quite quickly in life I was six years old, and my mother taught me how to play, so I was lucky because typically you learn Chess from someone, in my case someone at home, she was a good chess player in the sense she used to play quite a lot at home, with her father and brothers and she knew enough to teach me but in chess as in everything else, you get better where practicing and she hadn't, never any time to go to a chess club and play chess, so especially once she got married and she had kids and she never had time to pursue on chess but having said that of a long time we could discuss, what I had done?, and things like that so it was nice and she was able to follow a little bit of what I did? I didn't think about this question in an illogical way, when you think about the choices like this you think of a pen and paper and listing options and writing the pros on one side and writing the cons and if you don't do it literally in the way I have described then, you at least are thinking of someone who have got a mental process of what's the argument for, what's the argument against? I can't recall having that thought about chess, I was quite lucky in life that I had a lot of the crucial if you like inflection points where you would hesitate I was buoyed by the big success at the chess board, so when I finished my 12th Standard or rather when I finished my 10th standard I became national champion and that's nice, I mean it points you at least that the and it suggest you that you have some future in this career and things like that and it makes just easier to take those decisions, I would say someone who gets into sports as a career usually or

should be motivated by love, in which case it's very difficult to have a very rational talk even with yourself, I mean it tends to be a heart versus head, in the couple of decades before me this conversation was tended to be between your parents being the head and you being the heart and you have heard in a lot of cases of people saying this was my passion but they wanted to me to be Doctor, Engineer, that was the usual referring in those day, so I was very lucky, after the 10th standard I became national champion, after the 12th standard very soon afterwards I became world junior champion and a grand master and I think those models was clinched it. In the sense that once I became a grand master, I mean a grand master is quite a nice title to have, you get invitations to go tournaments which means you tend to get good financial conditions, and I knew that the risk I was running was very low, I was very that the critical moments is happened, now I went to college and I did my B.com there, I did my gig B.com as a sort of stop gap, I thought it will give me options, in the unlikely event but already it escalate to me that I was going to be a Chess player but I just felt well do me do my B.com, I case I want to switch, in case if I feel like I have to change then it gives me options, but when I finished my university I was already in the top 10 and so my decision was made for me so I always say that I got into the chess, it's not that you chose chess, you eventually have a very strong reason not to choose chess, and I never found that reason.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Just a quick pause here. Vishy talking about doing a B.Com as a plan B despite his meteoric rise in the Chess world is an interesting thing to note. In one of my earlier conversations, I was talking to Amish Tripathi (AT) who is an alumnus of IIM Kolkata and was pursuing a career in Financial Services. He spoke about how he thought about the transition to Writing

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"*

DJ: While these things often boil down to risk preferences, it is possibly worth noting that it is almost as important to ensure you have a safety net along the way before you take a plunge in a certain direction. If taking a plunge into a low-odds field is of interest to you, you might also value the insights from the journey of Papa CJ interesting where he talks about his journey from being a Management Consultant after an MBA from Oxford to becoming a Stand-up comedian. You could find these segments at playtopotential.com. Now back to the conversation with Vishy Anand.

DJ: When somebody approaches you today about, let's say the career in sport or career in chess what's a typical advice you provide on how they should think about it as against traditional path that you have suggested?

VA: Well the world is changing so much that I don't have an easy answer, I told them not to foreclose their options too early, so especially seven year old and eight year old and you think you really love chess, well you should be loving it in four years so don't foreclose options, first of I believe that going through the educational process is very healthy for you as a person as well, I mean you can be socially challenged, which is not ideal in our times so it's worth going to school having classmates, learning a little bit about let's call it emotional skills, I always advice don't foreclose the options too early, because now a days, I am not even sure about your Engineer, Doctor stream is that safe, what is safe in these days and todays concept what counts us a safe job? Which job are you sure that you will never be fired and you will have a stable salary all in your life, the world is also

changing, even from the time I made my decision is very hard to extrapolate why I leave from that? I mean these are heavily clichéd answers, you have to stay in the learning process, you have to learn new things but it's also true, the important thing is adaptability and even chess what it gave me was travelling, it made me meet well-travelled people, people who speak a lot of languages, and the thing is these kinds of skills give you options, you might be able to work in many countries, so I know lots of players in Europe who could live because they could speak four or five languages, they could live anywhere, and that expands the job options, I feel that now days it's very hard to say what constitutes the safe career and what doesn't, and even in a career I think that people have it made, the way it works now a days, is that very small sleeve get to do very well, some people get to do OK, and some people struggle, so I think you just have to be ready you have to have a broad range of skills, and I think you should not have a kind of resistance to learnings, and saying this is not my subject, this is doesn't interesting, even within chess, it is easy to get into this mentality, we would be able to say that this area of chess doesn't excite me, I will stay focused on this stuff that I like doing but they might true get into this later as well. I believe that you have to be less dogmatic.

DJ: What gets formed in the early years of growing up? You spoke about your mom introducing you the chess, what was some of the other things or approaches to life of attitudes that got built in you which have helped you in a journey this far, are there three four things that stand out in your first 12 to 15 years?

VA: I guess I got most of my values from my parents, my parents were quite protective, mother would accompany me to tournaments when I was 16, 17 and then after that she came for some of the big ones even if she didn't travel with me everywhere So I had this typical phase when I was 15, 16 where I wanted to go alone as well, you know, you are a teen ager and you want to explore a bit more, so my mother probably felt this and didn't stop coming everywhere but certainly it might have been there in the back of their mind that too much independence and you pick up bad habits and things like that, so my habits and my attitude is probably are very similar to my parents in the sense, there were things that never ever occurred to me, within my own range of adventures there were things that I would feel comfortable experimenting with and things that wouldn't and so on, I feel it in my chess that I am quite pragmatic and I am not very adamant in a certain way, if someone has a good idea and it works for them I am interested to copy it, I have a ability to improvise and I have no problem with borrowing ideas, some people come with the very scientific bend of mind, where you know it's their concept, their idea, It's not about success or failure it's all about what works for you? But because I came from the non-scientific background for chess, in chess it has engaged to play in those days everything is spontaneous so I would say, I was sensible and pragmatic.

In my time there was no chess coaching, I think like that, so everything that I learnt at the pickup on the fly and that means you are comfortable with certain level of improvisation and of course I have changed heavily since that I mean as I have got to the top I have to learn lots of skills and perhaps now I am more comfortable in well prepared areas and things like that, but I think that was the best.

DJ: If you can reflect on your journey, let's say for a minute I pick GM as a point you were GM by the time you were 17 I think, just to take that as an example when you became World Champion, talk to us a little bit about, how your approach to growth has changed?

VA: We have found that a chess players tend to be good in certain things, the obvious connection you would make is are they good in mathematical things, because Chess looks like very logical, mathematical game, are they good in scientific, I would say yes, chess players are probably slightly over represented in those fields but I know many chess players, excellent in Languages as well, what I think chess players are really good at is looking at a lot of information and working with those patterns so wherever these pattern tend to be useful so in things like financial trading a lot of chess

players moved into those fields, because it looks very similar to this flood of new games from which you try to draw conclusion and this flood of data about anything and you work with that, it trains you to focus on one subject and stand that subject till you have gotten an answer, and these are things that happened unconsciously over the chess board and you will carry over these skills elsewhere, I was quite surprised when I was in my early twenties because it was clear to me that I was going to make a living as a chess player, I found a lot of my junior colleagues and all dropping out, they would become a Grand Master then couple of years later they wouldn't be so active for a while and then couple of years later they could turn out and they will become Bankers, far few a Lawyer, Bankers, again you can see this, they could go for a traditional career but not that traditional, something like trading suits the chess mentality, and they always said that one of the biggest strength for people or chess player who have got poker as well, all of them usually said that one of the things that chess taught them was objectivity, so this idea that opposition is only what it is, if you played well until that time your position is good, if you played badly until that time your position is not good, so they were surprised how many people in poker for instance just trading just felt lucky and did this or that and for chess players, if my past moves were good then I will have a good position, and this idea was almost like good and bad, if you would played well then you would have a good position there was almost a kind of justice supplying there, and they said that made them very strong they tend it not to get emotional, in another way even though they wouldn't feel where could gamble they tend it not to gamble or only gamble when they really felt the odds was favouring them or that sort of thing so gamble when the position was the desperate so there was Indian influence that thought in a certain way but also like the many chess players you got into research because again the university side up things where you get used to, chess players generally are comfortable with the other chess players, I think it's wrong to say but they don't the social skills but there are certain kinds of social things, there are that certain situations they come from in, what you associate with nerdiness I mean it's an over use to word probably, and so chess players gravitate naturally to those environments, very controlled setting because chess is a game played with a quite rigid rules so you tend to gravitate toward settings like that, and they feel uncomfortable in areas like entrepreneurship and so on because that calls for a totally different kind of a skill set so, I find that far more chess players and these kinds of things than that, though perhaps the chess players who know bit about coding might straddle this world.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Just a quick pause here. It is interesting to hear Vishy talk about the key capabilities one builds in a certain career and reflecting on the different canvases that one can apply it to. Having that self-awareness and abstracting the key themes can be super critical in transitioning from one orbit to another and in course corrections.

In one of my earlier conversations, Nandan Nilekani (NN) spoke about the notion of individual competitive advantage and how he transitioned from the world of politics (after he lost the elections in Bengaluru) to being a key catalyst in the Fin Tech ecosystem.

NN: "so after the election campaign and after that I realize that this was not where I want to be, that I didn't have the leverage, I didn't have competitive advantage in that area I didn't think I would be very effective so I realize actually my effectiveness comes from being what I am good at which is a technology lead transformation agent and use my talents and abilities to solve large intractable problems and make that available to anybody who wants to use it, so that was my shift"

DJ: You can find these nuggets at playtopotential.com. Now back to the podcast conversation with Vishy Anand.

DJ: Back to your journey Vishy, if we go back to becoming GM, did your approach to preparation or your approach to your game changed significantly? What changed at that point in time?

VA: I would say that as I climbed high in the chess world I realize that there were some skills that I was lacking, so I started to work seriously with the trainer before my first candidates match this is the candidates cycle for the world championship and that's when I was first started to work with a trainer, and that's interesting because for the first time you don't just have an idea and you go to a board, you are actually trying to impose some discipline on the process by which you can come up with the new ideas, because in chess everything that's new gets old very fast, so it's a stream of ideas, fifty years ago it was very slow, then it kept speeding up and now with computers and the internet it spread up insanely, but none the less, the first time you work with the trainers, you learn that there are totally different opinions and perspectives to yours you realize that there are strong people who argue strongly for the moves you didn't see, and you try to learn from that and then when I won my first match and I qualified to play, I worked with the Russian player again the idea was I could benefit from the Russian training methods because they were the most sophisticated and advanced in this area, I would say most recently I have had to learn and somehow reorient my style towards spontaneity and creativity again, essentially almost back to where I came from because I over prepare and then you need to rebalance that, so I think the big change was clearly in my twenties when I first started working with trainers and suddenly chess is the very structured thing and that was the big change for me.

DJ: How people pick trainers or coaches in the corporate world, having worked with different players, what have you learnt in terms of picking good trainers or coach from the wisdom of your journey?

VA: I would say this is quite easy because when you pick someone to be close to especially as a chess player, I mean in a corporate environment there are some buffers between you and the next person, so if you don't like someone you still get to go home and he goes home and you don't have to see him for a day and there are also the other people at the office there are buffers but in chess it's much more raw because, if you don't get along with your trainer then you are really stuck with the each other, it's almost marriage like for that duration, so the first thing is you must get along well with these people and I think it's very useful to have who disagree with you because they will challenge you, your view points or trainers good in the area you are weaken, I mean you may be a better player than that overall, but that may mean you are good in seven areas and they are good in three areas and those three areas are your weak, so you can still learn from some of who's weaker than you in competitive chess but not necessarily in training or understanding of chess, that's the mix I tried to idea to letter on I found that even though there are some people I really like I genuinely like them as friends that they were reinforcing unhealthy qualities in me so if like I am cautious on certain situations and I am trying to break out to that the last thing I need is trainer who is cautious there as well, because you will tend to reinforce to the bad habits so you should also see, what it is you are trying to learn exactly a trend achieved with that training camp, I would say subsequently there are people who are friend of mine but who also they have certain quirks that would make you uncomfortable all day but I found that that can be healthy too people who leave you slightly unsettled the whole day well, I found that sometimes my work is better as a result, there might moments you are annoyed with them and you work harder, or something like that so I would say, you should be focused on getting along and second is an openness to receive ideas and third to question you're working wise, when my trainer first started to disagree with me the first reaction is from your ego, your first reaction is that's my idea and you said it's not good I am going to sit and

defend my idea but if you can lose that and think well why do I have these trainers at all? And then you think well let me see if there idea is good or not and let me argue this based on the objectivity, then you can learn something, so it's important to have to be able to watch yourself from above sort of speak have a perspective and whether you are learning something at least in a narrow environment like a Chess, then it should really be about people you can see yourself spending couple of weeks with.

DJ: If you look at the distraction of the technology in chess, just from a preparation and scaling up point of view or from a development stand point how has technology fundamentally, plot out your approach to scaling up as a chess player.

VA: The first technological intervention into chess first came in the late 80s when databases started to come, so already the people who are good in indexing information and who could organize information in a certain way, these were people who knew how to take all the games that are being published, index them and they are able to immediately find, retrieve the information they were looking for, even a librarian who doesn't have only skills you think they have, what they have is they know enough about the subject that they able to look forward their need, and if they don't know, the subject pattern very well they will still be able to find what an expert will able to find, so when computers came along suddenly the people who was good in chess because of this, started to fall back of it, because their skills wasn't the most relevant here, if I know how to search field well, I could find whatever I want for that subject, then the second trend which came was that the chess playing program was started to appear, these are very weak chess playing programs and in the beginning they would go like four or five moves in every direction there were thorough but that's all what they could do, you tend to anything that a grand master would say into the future, who tend to be more accurate than what they did, but they were very good at essentially that was the very basic calculators you use them to eliminate little errors, then as slowly they start to get better, so the kind of calculations they could check for you improve a little better and they improved a little bit more, and then this deep Lou match happened but Deep Lou was very special because it was running very specialized hardware, which couldn't be recreated for anyone, so even though Deep Lou existed and in theory this machine existed somewhere in the world which was stronger than chess players, it didn't affect you right away whereas now if there is computer which is stronger than everyone the chances are they will let you use on the internet, that delivery mechanism splayed and exist back that but right after the Deep Lou I would say within a couple of years maybe three four years in the max, your Laptop became stronger than you, which means it will beat you in any single game that it plays, but you may make a better move here and there over the computer but over a game it would make fewer mistakes than you did and tend to win and what has happened subsequently because now these programs are just run the course but it is the same essential process, we have had to withdraw we would have to consist space to the computers so they got better in this, they got better in that and then they got better in that, and first they got better in the things that you thought computers are good at, but then they started getting better in things that we thought we are good at, such as, long term calculations, judgement, intuition, so to be generally think of intuition is something slightly long term process, and so if I make a move and the reason for that move is ten moves down the line you were tend to associate with the intuition well computers got good in that as well, they started making long term sacrifices long term plans, which turned out to be very good because their search depth was increasing so they were hitting further and further, there is nothing intelligent about these things, then it turned out chess is again that can be, that is perfect for that because very strict rules and an environment where they thrive, so at first we considering space when we moving along, but eventually it becomes a tool because as computers gets stronger and stronger, anybody who consoles them can benefit from the information, so what differentiates a chess player from another starts to change a lot, and suddenly if you are adapting

your way of working you find yourself even players who are much weaker than you are neutralizing you, because they are using the computer to cover their weaknesses, so this is a regular chess, the thing is if I want to play an opening today against some player, and he prepares three lines with the computer and he checks them precisely and then he comes back and plays the game against you, how you even could improve on it? Even you are very good in that area even if your intuitions are very good, if he has worked it out, he has worked it out, so that became a problem, so as the computer becomes more stronger and stronger you change your work methods, that involves getting out of your ego because what worked five years ago just no longer works and you have to just get redetect I mean your working method, I am talking about, and that more and less where we are driven to today, and now a day it's almost extreme, people who have adapted themselves to, I mean computers are now so strong they find in seconds or maybe minutes what it takes us to couple of weeks to find, that's the speed of calculation, so what you do is no longer makes any sense to specialize in anything because a guy will never see that opening will be able to catch up with you in one week, so now a day most modern chess players are incredibly flexible, they are able to switch in that and they play everything what they specialized and what they don't specialize they move around a lot, and it's becoming about not what you bring to the table but what you remember, can you organize this new flood of information in a different way? And what keeps you stronger? And then you shift your skills further and further into the end game and the battle game because it's harder for the computer to be prepared at all that way.

DJ: If I look at the characteristics of a top ranked chess player today as compare to the characteristics of the top ranked chess player 20 years ago are there fundamental differences in the trades and characteristics which lead you to the success today than earlier? And on the fitness part why is it more important today than it was earlier?

VA: Chess players today are much more flexible they are much less ideological or dogmatic strange word in the chess context but I will explain, in chess we used to grow up with concepts like, bring your pieces out till control the centre don't move the same piece twice till you done with the all of your pieces, once upon a time these were very good roles and we used to call them Laws of chess almost, because they were very good strategies for winning game but as it turns out these are not roles as much as statistical phenomenal, so bringing all pieces to the centre turns out to be a good strategy because is often is correct but the chess players are along so self-rigid, now anything works, modern chess is constantly about moves that I think would offend a pure risk from fifty or hundred years ago, I am sure that if somebody from 100 years ago came and looked at us today he would just say this is ridiculous how can you make such a move? But you have to just wipe the slate clean and learn a new way of thinking so chess players of today will do anything they are so flexible and computer what they shows, eventually they shows me enough exceptions to show that any role is only an approximation it's not a rule, it's not like a law of physics which always works, it's as approximation these are good strategy but now T+O they are much less dogmatic and second thing is now obsessed with fitness because what differentiates you is simply around your ability to play a long game, you can't bring a greater understanding at the table but you can play over a longer then you need to be fit so again the skillset has been evolving.

DJ: And just on the fitness part why is it so important today than it was earlier?

VA: So what happens is as the weight of struggle shifts from the early paths of the game to the later paths of the game, so by the time you get there you get tired so if you are fit you will be able to concentrate into your fifth eye, into sixth eye, and all of that, so one of the things that happened was chess players stopped agreeing draws quite so quickly, because earlier the thing which was least probably going to make the best moves, but now we don't have the luxury of getting advantages all the time you have to play the end games till the end and if you do that then it's the fitter ones to do

worth, the other thing is I shouldn't, there is a qualitative difference as well, in the way chess players work because now we are following 100 of openings instead of five, our workload has increased enormously and remembering all that putting it all into context trying to recall, what you need at the board, all that is taking energy and during the course of the game it drains you and if you are not fit, you will make mistakes.

DJ: How much of the meticulous planning gets coupled with sort of the pattern and the big picture thinking which might be beyond the left-brain capability?

VA: Let me follow this rough terminology, my left brain is trying to have some sort of control on the chess board and my right brain let's say what deal with when you lose control, I will describe it in those terms, I don't consciously break it down that way but mostly chess players prefer to win an easy game than a hard game would prefer to win without effort than effort or rather prefer to the effort was at home or at the training camp rather than at the board where the uncertainty involved so everything which will fall under control you will think off with the left, by that I mean things which are already well known to everyone, I mean there is this whole massive knowledge already exist about the chess, you want to be able to work on that and then recall at the moment when you need it, there are so many examples of people losing a game because they know the evaluation correctly they may even know the idea, but they don't know what exactly and if you don't know it exactly you might sleep up in the execution, so that broadly speak on control so when you play against someone you would like to develop the game along the lines of what you prepare this morning and so that is the systematic work, that's the work you work on when you are getting to a training camp you tried to get the work out of the way you think as much as things meticulously and so on, but you should always be ready because you are basically playing against someone who is trying to get you out there at the open he is trying to get you out of your comfort zone and he is trying to make life difficult for you, and he has the same knowledge that you have so it's very easy for your opponent to think this is what Anand would have prepared, how do I get him out and so he is looking unusual ways to surprise you and so if he does that you should be ready for surprises, now that means when you learn a subject even any part of chess that you plan to do use for the next round or the next week or whatever, it's not just enough to remember the or get a grip on the existing knowledge because everyone has that and that doesn't differentiate you chances are you will be dropped very soon into something that you hadn't looked for, how do you deal with those problems, so the thing is when you work you can't only work on prunes that lend themselves to solutions, you have to think more broadly and think how do I train my skills in such a way that I develop a feeling for this class or positions so that whatever turns up I will be able to find the best moves so you have to do a bit of both. For a right brain what will you do? You play a lot of 5 minutes games, blitz games you do problem solving problem solving is they are trying to find out very unusual patterns and the more unusual patterns you find you are training to your brain to think in an unusual way, so again when you look at the position how many candidates move you think of? If you normally think of three but after some problem solving training you are able to think of 5 that's very healthy, because you pick up more unusual moves, so you would have to balance your work, in such a way that not you are only getting to the proper work done, which is essential by the way, the existing base of knowledge you have to learn playing, you have to learn to play it well, but you also have to train the skills that you need to just cope with unexpected circumstances, and last but not the least the psychological aspect, there is no use having all the creative in the world if when the moment comes that you have to going to the unknown, you enter it with the reputation, because then you have lost half the battle before at this thing, it's not utterly hopeless because still if the position turns into your favour you have to cover and whatever but you must be psychologically ready for the battle that means the moment you have the chance to break free from the known areas and you go out there and you fight, you have to be ready and enthusiastically if you like about facing these unknown challenges.

DJ: And how do you build that psychological capability?

VA: I think you would fight to play as often as possible if your opponent is an uncomfortable opponent for you, then against that opponent you tend to gravitate towards safety, and what to break that pattern you will have to figure out the way to do it. Think of breathing the whole method of how you approach a risk but it's a mixture of things sometimes people will go to a board completely ready to take a risk, at the last minute they will suddenly start seeing everything that's wrong with what they have planned to do, and then they will do the same thing and come back, and then they realize that all the things they were taught were wrong, but themselves wrong, so in fact they could have gone ahead and what is going on here? The thing is psychologically you don't want to enter in the area that's risky so at the moment you want to you, your brain almost tricks you, it gives you arguments for going back to the safe and predictable course which at that moment seems logical to you, you justify on the terms that you are saying I am going to play logically, I am doing the logical thing here and then you realize you got to be covered, so you can learn the example, you can play a lot of blitz games, you can play training games there are many ways to do this you can study players who have those desired qualities in that area but it's often a psychological problem, nothing in chess is easy to break down, so again what are the things I feel that the chess players start amazed that are very far from controlling to your brain, your brain is a wild horse and you need to work with it, sometimes it will betray you, it's operating to its own clock, its own schedule, you can't impose control on that and so creativity is partly learning how to understand that you will lose controls, I have often alluded to losing out controls losing control can happen at many levels, psychological, you can feel uncomfortable when playing something and so on, in chess it's not enough to focus on the skills you can learn, and also the skills that you might become intelligent, I will give you one quick example, I would often get to move 40 and Move 40 is a significant because it is the end of the first hand control, which means you get a fresh amount of time on your clock and normally your time period is over, but a lot of people the time between a move 32 and 40 are so tense and they are so caught up in it they are not able to stop, they will make their 41st move any way and especially once upon a time I was very prompt to this error, and I was also prompt to an error when I had half an hour up and had 3 seconds I would try to play fast that he wouldn't have any time for think, it doesn't take a lot of intelligence to stop insolvency that if you played fast to not give him any time to think you are not giving yourself any time think, I thought so these were two areas where I had problems, and one of the things I did was, I would simply make a mental note, I would think of some painful loss I had suffered as a result of these habits, so then when I went to the board, when I wasn't move 35 and my opponent down to three seconds, he is shaking and the temptations were overwhelming and I have half an hour and I don't have any pressure, I would just tell myself to get up go to the refreshment area have a little bit of water or some coffee and then I would come back and I found that this broke the tension, I became too emotionally bound to the game and this broke that and then I was able to bring some sanity in the process and especially doing this after move 40 when neither if there is any tension anymore, but just getting up going away and leaving it for 10 mins then you come back and you find that it resets your brain almost, so that's one technique but there are techniques like this that you learn part of your bag of tools and your tool kit.

DJ: How you organize the data in your head? How do you organize your processor in the sense is there something that you have learnt over the years in terms of not overloading the data, that you don't have the space for processing power is there a trade-off there or is that a false trade off?

VA: I don't think, I am never thought of my brain in terms of hard disk capacity so there is the limited amount of space that I am going to work with but it's like this I have come to the conclusion that you can't manage your brain in a certain way but what you can do is to create the conditions that are ideal where you found in the past it tends to flourish and you will create those conditions so you follow the kind of habits that worked well, like for an instance this habit of breaking on move 40

worked well for me, I dropped the emotional baggage of the first 40 moves, now a lot of people may not understand what is emotional baggage in chess, so in a chess game you can go through a lot of twist and turns, I might have been winning then suddenly I blundered and then I was lost then now my opponent blundered and now I am back in the game and think, so here are a lot of the cumulated things first kicking yourself and or not winning your first position you are thinking I shouldn't having to play this now, but then you realize that you are lost as well, the only position you will ever have in the board is the one in front of you now, that's the only thing you can do anything about, so you have to have this habit of breaking it now overnight sleep is nice but in this case you have to find somewhere to break it, and I believe that it's important to keep the brain excited about chess, passionate about chess, so if you keep on looking at one position you look out for things that are interest you or you look at difficult things that didn't come to you, if chess keeps fascinating you then the chances are, when the time comes to process it will process when the time comes to remember it will remember, if the people in the audience won't know that in a very basic sense, try to see your recall in subjects that interest you and try to see the recall in subjects that don't interest you.

DJ: How do you think about judgement when you have multiple options to choose from how do you pick the one that sort of makes sense for you at that point in time?

VA: The first thing you learn in chess is you make the best move because that is the best, but then as you get up the ranks you will learn that the best move might not always be what you required, what you required is the most uncomfortable move for your opponent or you may find that slightly better position in which you are very happy and comfortable and you feel everything inside out, it better for you in than a much better position that you don't feel completely comfortable in so your own to tune it a bit to your needs but mostly I think your judgement is just a collection of all your experiences so far, in some way that in a process that you don't control, so you have all these experience you have things but it's very hard to tell what you will recall and what you want at worth? There are times when I astonished at my recall, and that time I just I forget something I saw that morning, whatever I need to remember I tried to make as interesting as possible so that I will remember it or I will look at it several times in such a way or one funny thing, when I was training I would often ask my trainers to quiz me things that I tend to forget, and they would know roughly what I tend to forget and they would do that and when I couldn't recall what I am supposed to do sitting in front of a room with all of them looking at me as I am struggling to the call was so embarrassing that when I went to the board I remembered it, it's like that, you create the conditions for your brain to work well and that in sense is the judgement.

DJ: Are there rituals you practice to ensure that your sense of judgement in your processing power are sort of its kept at its fullest potential? Or what are the rituals that you follow? Are there any mind or brain rituals that are worth discussing?

VA: I found that a ritual, a good night sleep is very helpful, especially a sleep who just disturbed, because we are not talking about the rest as much as the ability to put the more nervous energy in the emotion from the previous day away, so that when you wake up you are looking at a fresh day that works well so, and then I work backwards from that and after very tensed game I try to go for a long walk or I might even go to the gym, I am not going there for the exercise I am going there to tied up my self so that I will have a shower and just fall asleep and I will not waste energy thinking about the game, there are even players who prefer to do all their work at night, so they will work till the five or six in the morning, and then go to sleep and then wake up at 2 o'clock and go straight to the game, without any further work, and what they are fighting is if you wake up at 9 o'clock and your game is at 2 o'clock, I can do this but if I do this he might do that and if I do that he might do this and therefore what should I do? This could go wrong, that could go wrong, and you are using a

lot of nervous energy thinking about this stuff, so what they are trying to accomplish by waking up at 2 o'clock as they have no time to worry about the game they have done all their work at the last night and then they have gone to sleep, in my case that doesn't work because I can't stay awake till six in the morning but I will try to get a good night sleep then wake up, I like to work for some time, I found that superstition normally comes with that, if you had breakfast in the morning at 9 and won that game, you want to go at 9 next day and this kind of stuff, even though there shouldn't be no real connection but you have to decide that which is harmless and which is superstition which is driving you inside.

DJ: How do you think about sort of the conscious approach to preparation versus the subliminal processing that's going on? What's the take on that?

VA: I think if you keep in fascinate by chess you will see that all the interesting and unusual thing that happen, you will recall it now there is no way it will say that at the right moment you will come up with the right idea, but by looking at a lot of material you are increasing the chance that it will probably be the right decision I mean if there is critical mass of ideas, you will probably find the right decisions so you do that I try and now to control that very much I believe that it's important to learn almost like a child, if you are fascinated by subject it will go in effortlessly the subjects that bore you but then you have to do the reverse, you may not avoid the subjects that bore you so the thing is how do you find a way to make that interesting it can be against this guy I hate, I always lose this kind of position so I am going to work on this position though I don't like it, because one day he will not beat me I will get satisfaction of that, you can always work it backwards like that, and do that but, I think when you grow in chess you will learn in chess by being willing to learn new stuff and I can't refine it more than that.

DJ: How have you made chess interesting for yourself? What's the secret of staying interested in a topic for this long or is it something that comes naturally to you?

VA: One thing is to take breaks from it, I had mention many times that the you hit a point where you sick of the game you just being playing too much or studying too much and then you go one month without even switching on the computer or touching a chess board, and then you come back at the end of the month and suddenly you will find a lot of the stuff that used to bore you is become interesting so that's one thing the second thing is to work a new stuff, I mean working on all things sometimes even if you have everything worked out, your brain forgets what you keep on working beyond the certain point so it's good to drop something's for a while do other things and then come back and then you are ok but if you are only doing one thing all the time then it gets so routine that your brain stops been creative about it, it almost expects you to just get by muscle memory and that's not a good thing to have, and that's how you keep it interesting.

DJ: How do you infuse creativity what are you persuade outside of the chess that sort of bring creativity to your chess?

VA: I listen to the music, I will watch out the sports, I like astronomy, so I have that subjects that I follow I read anything that I loves to disconnect from the game, watch things on Netflix, house of cards was nice for a while.

DJ: What goes on let's say for a minute if you took the longest that you have ever made or the longest time you have ever taken to make a move is the bulk of time evaluating different possibilities or is it playing out scenarios and coming back, just break that for us how there's the time gets spend?

VA: I think the longest things I have had is over an hour in London once and basically what it happened was that the, I have got into the bit of the trouble then I realize that I am still very much in the game but it's like full of mind feels, here I make mistake there it's over, and that particular thing, you would not need an hour when you are spending an hour it means you are unable to think very clearly so first let's describe what think clearly is, thinking clearly is looking and saying these are the four alternative I have then you say ok 'A' this move and then you follow 'A' down to its logical conclusion you see what you like you comeback you do B, you come back and then you do C, then based on the information you have you make your move you've pick your one and then your make your move, and if I have done that I wouldn't have needed one hour but what happens is you go down A you come back, then you go down B you come back and suddenly you think wait I miss something in A and go back down A and comeback and so a lot of this work is wasted because it going on the stuff you have already gone but you think you found something new here and there that is what happens more often because sometimes the brain needs go down A, come back and think about something else but in the background it somehow working there and it will find something now if we could think an hour in every move it would be a different game but sometimes these critical moments you have to think like that, I think you can't try for perfection like I said the way your brain will present the answer is something you will just have to getting used to but you try to manage as much as possible on the efficient days you will do better job in someday you will just go overall material again and again, ideally the thinking is very clear you see the essential and you reject everything else but sometimes you get modelled.

DJ: Is there anything to be said about staying mindful, in this world of digital distraction how do you try and stay mindful, uninstall the distraction?

VA: I believe there are subjects where you will not attain any result unless you get to a certain level of concentration like with my chess I know that it's not enough for me to go to my computer work for five minutes and they go work somewhere else then comeback I will not get any progress that way, I need to go run the chess program and work for may be an hour before I understand the problems at a deep level and then I am able to find solutions so how do you bring that mindfulness to other things it's very difficult sometimes technology is itself a help, I find it very useful, something I won't remember about someone I will just write a memo to myself and then if I see that memo a couple of times then after one month I will have no difficulty remembering him, I found that it's very hard to remember all the things that you hear in this day in age so that's helpful on the other hand there are the times I can see that taping my phone way more than necessary at home at least aware of if am constantly with my phone I am setting a bad example for a Akhil, but when you are in an Airport and you are bored and then the flight is delayed you have no control, and it's pointless you keep on taping your phone because, but it's a kind of device raged it has to do nothing with any, there is just nothing that coming out of it, you are just surfing aimlessly with Akhil, we try to moderate it there are times we know we have to let him enjoy himself but at some point we have to control the hours when he is allowed to use gadgets and things like that because it's so easy to go wrong with the gadgets especially in the age where you can't see what's wrong with that? Couple of years back we have made, Aruna made a conscious decision to try and restrict his devices since that hours and that was very nice, and now he is copying my well, in fact problems seems to be more us these days.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Just a quick comment here. This reminds of my conversation with Vinita Bali (VB), a distinguished leader who has had a successful career across 6 countries in 5 continents. She spoke about her early childhood years where she got exposed to several extracurricular activities and how that has

informed her leadership style. It was interesting that she mentioned that this exposure enabled her to see things in a continuum rather than discrete compartments and helped her get her right brain and left brain capabilities to bear as a leader.

VB: *"I think the most significant part of thinking about since in multiple dimensions or not in a single dimension or thinking about things systemically I think comes from my exposure and my interest, I think it was my exposure which lead to my experience to a lot of things when one was growing up. In school I used to do sports, I used to do dramatics, I used to for a long time I was a student of Indian classical dance which I pursued in the evening outside of school, so I was interested in doing everything you might say and not that I thought about it but I was also the school selector, junior school captain and head girl and so on and so forth, and those roles in a strange way come with their own responsibility which seems like a lot when you are a school kid, So I think it was the combination of all of that and my exposure to the world of theatre to the world of classical music and dance, I think refined in many ways, my aesthetics or my thinking about things across a continuum rather than fragmenting that this is cool and this is extra curriculum in my life everything moved off from one to another"*

DJ: You might want to look up Nugget 16.02 on playtopotential.com if this is of interest. Marrying this back to Vishy's point, not only do these pursuits energize you by giving you a break, they can even help you in your core pursuit whether it is leading a business or pursuing a sport at the highest level. Now back to my conversation with Vishy.

DJ: I am curious about what you think about the role of the human being in that context when you have the best on offer; on let's say on the cloud where anybody can access then what's the competitive advantage that you bring to the table as a human what's your take on that? Where is the space for us to have voice in that equation?

VA: Man plus machine, advances Man plus Machines are actually be turned out to be a dead end it's not going anywhere because machines have gotten to the point, I will make this analogy, Machines have become like incredibly fast cars and let's say the best chess players are like athletes which means the athlete is in his best ever moment is not going to have slightest chance against the very fast car, now imagine that advance chess once upon a time was two athletes are getting into their cars being able to use their car and being able to intervene themselves when they felt it would help, now this will only work if you have fuel in sufficient for the entire ride and certain portion had to be driven and what happens now is that Man plus machine versus man plus machine is just often machine was versus machine, it's very hard when your intervention is better than the machine, and it's so infrequent that it's hard to pick out and the point is you may decide that your intervention is crucial but your rival still using the machine then you have to be sure that your human touch is not worse than what it's going to do that is turned out to be dead end, however chess has become spectacularly enriched by our ability to work with the machine at home and combine its ability to throw up unusual patterns unusual ideas I mean one of the things that forgotten sometimes is how rich chess seems now because the machine has shown us how many things we had rejected which turned out to be possible and how many areas we thought were close for ever have opened up again I mean if the machine is guilty of closing doors its responsible for opening far more doors than it closed and right now it's an golden time in terms of how rich the game seems and the other thing is done it made just accessible to everyone because if anyone has the world best coach if a slightly not very expressive one then every person on the planet has the world's best coach available for a price that means that once you know, how to ask the right question you can get the right answers and you can grow so the learning process become incredibly interesting but unfortunately advance has itself is turned out to a dead end.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: It is fascinating to see how technology is having such a profound impact on jobs and careers. I am reminded of my chat with Atul Kasbekar (AK), the celebrated photographer who is also a Producer now. He talks about how the world of photography (in some ways) has gotten democratized given the penetration of smart-phones.

AK: *"where it comes to photography there is a certain like I like to call it a democratization of a medium and it's just become massively accessible to everybody so on a given day your doctor could take a world class photo and by himself aided with some filters, apps etc whatever it is, that photo is unbelievable point is that can he do that time in time again and day after day then I guess you would be a great professional but why I say this this medium has become so democratic is because on a given day that doctor can take a great picture on no day can you either prescribed medicine for one of his patients nor can you perform a heart surgery"*

DJ: The big question facing all of us is how we stay relevant in this context. It raises some questions around the "Where to go" question. We need to ensure that what we are doing continues to be relevant in a world where machines are getting more and more intelligent. But technology is also such a wonderful enabler as we think about the "how to grow" question. As Vishy says, it is so easy to access some of the best minds in any profession. The equation has clearly shifted from a world of scarcity of supply to scarcity of time, will power and attention which often comes in the way of our development.

It is fascinating to see technology being the giver or the taker depending on the lens we choose to use to look at the situation. Now back to my conversation with Vishy

DJ: At the highest level today what's your take on capabilities and disciplines that separates the best from the rest, are there broader disciplines and capabilities that typically differentiate the top few from the rest?

VA: Generally best players in the world make fewer mistakes they tend not to make the last mistake, and that often is psychological, they think they are not going to make the last mistake so they don't make it, at that last moment after a six and half hour of struggle they suddenly able to sum and up the energy and concentrate 100% the opponent is not able to. Chess was always down to this little factor. And in fact it will never change because in any game between two humans these will be the decisive factors, so as long as both sides are willing to adapt the way of learning to the most successful methods, these tend to an differentiate factors till so the best player in the world is someone who outlasts.

DJ: I want to talk about the role of team work even seemingly solo sport like chess, I mean clearly the role of IQ in being a chess champion is often well understood but talk to us about the role of EQ in being a great player at the top how does it show up?

VA: I think EQ is being able to understand what are the circumstances that cause you to fail and what are the that cause you to succeed and very often it turns out to be related to your mood your attitude your spirit of ability to take risks, these things are strongly co related to the emotion and as you get, when I was young I tend it to dismiss, good move is a good move it's a good move, but as I got older I realize that good move may be a good move but for me to make one there these circumstances that had to right, and I think with the experience you become more self-aware, you have seen this movie before and you are not going to be able to predict it completely but you can

tell when, what's the good day what's not, I think you just understand yourself better, you also know how to control your unhealthy habits, how to learn from the other people?

DJ: Is there anything to be said about an approach to collaboration with fellow players that you have consciously adopted in your journey as a chess player?

VA: Yes overtime I have learnt that the first rule is think is actually well known, that you don't get into your first opinion first don't off over because once you off on an opinion you often spend a lot of energy defending your opinion rather than even when you think it's wrong you don't want to lose phase and so that when my team would show me stuff my first skill was to keep my mouth shut, because if what they say is turned out to be better, then this better not to have opposed in the beginning, in the sense I am more open to contradictory opinions of people who disagree with me violently because I realize well that's kind of the path to better understanding, over long periods of time you learned how the moody people are, you see their real side and you need a certain kind of tolerance with that you need a sense of how good or bad, pleasant or annoying you can be, what people may like in you in day 1 may not be what they in you at day 7 and you have to be aware of that I think you perceive these things much better, so over a long camp now a days I am able to tell if I am greeting on my trainer, he is greeting on me it's not perfect still but you know you get better at those things and in the end if you create the most, conquerable atmosphere you will produce the best ideas.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: The notion of speaking last when you have a team around you is an interesting switch that a lot of leaders struggle to make especially when they transition from a CXO role to a CEO role. High IQ and expertise often gets people to the top of a function where you are celebrated for your content spike and structurally, you are often the most informed person on a topic in the room. But when you become the CEO or a GM of a division with multiple functions reporting in, you often need to lead people who often know a lot more than you in their domain. That requires a completely different leadership style with a heavy dose of listening and collaborative problem solving. This is all the more relevant in today's world there are so many unknown unknowns that CEOs are often doing themselves a huge dis-service if they don't listen enough to the people around them. Now back to my conversation with Vishy.

DJ: If you had to be really modest with yourself and talk about what has helped you this far, and sustain your performance at the highest level for this long what would you attribute it to?

VA: When I was young because of the way chess I was very flexible and I was not very dogmatic or rigid in my views so I would say my biggest skill is flexibility, I am generally open to changing my approaches, I am a hard worker I think I work hard because chess interests me so I am not sure I will work hard and something bothers me but I am a hard worker at least chess and that includes you know learning to keep maintaining my fitness and things like that, I think chess is partly helped in this regard but I am quite open to learning new skills learning from other people, I mean when I observe to the other people and you think that's impressive then I try to see how I can apply that in some way, I am conscious of what I think will be able to apply and what I don't so my faith is maybe I am fairly realistic, many people who have made suggestions one of the suggestions was I think a psychologist will be good for you and I rejected it to the out of my hand because I felt that it wouldn't work for me it's a good idea that the people who will benefit from it but I felt it wouldn't work for me and I said I don't want to do this and I think that was an good example, so I have a good

sense of how to learn and willing to work hard and I think I am flexible in my approach fairly pragmatic if you like.

DJ: What's been your approach to staying level headed, is there something to be said about a mindset with which you look at a situation for you to stay level headed through a game?

VA: For some people, it comes very naturally I remember they would always say about the Karpov that for him the game always began in the current position and what that means that Karpov could be lost in the whole game and in some people if you lost the whole game then they are already dreaming of a draws that if the position turns violently and they suddenly have chance to win, they are not able to adapt they still try to give the draw, rather than take the extra points that's been given the phase when they were threatened with the defeat was is so strong that they are not able to completely forget it, Karpov which switch on a dime he would be lost this move he would be winning at the next move, so he was able to forget his again these things are exaggerate of course Karpov couldn't always do this and the rest of us, if the winning opportunity was easy enough you would have taken it and so on, within limits that requires almost a certain kind of cold bloodedness I am not very good at this I am aware that I am not very good at it and I thing being aware of what you should be looking out for in a game is one healthy method for staying calm in the game I find that the healthiest is just like I mention in the earlier move 40 the same example is to break the link which means you have to getup give your brain to a few minutes to get used to the new situation and then they has a kind of cleansing feeling when you says ok what happened, happened now my job is to fight for a draw no ego over the fact that I was winning before but now my job is to fight for a draw. You do whatever it is have to do you try to think of how happy opponent will be if he beats you or how miserable you will be or how happy you will be if you deprive him of this free point that he is getting or what someone else. You will find some hook which allows you to think and then you go with that maintaining your calm during a tournament is one of the great skills in chess and it's a very much work in progress.

DJ: Your ability to stay incredibly grounded despite your towering successes, how have you manage to stay that way, and the second thing in a way when you think about your son Akhil growing up he is growing up in a very different context given your successes how do you ensure that he grows up with the same set of values?

VA: I have found that a quite a lot of people that are famous or successful remain in some fundamental way the way they are, I think its connected up bringing my parents brought me up in a certain way there were certain things that they did at the certain things at the obvious they wouldn't do and you kind of approach it like that and essentially with your family with your classmates you can suddenly act differently because they will immediately will say what's wrong with you? So you have to act normal, with fans and so on, this is not like a huge effort but I make an effort to be friendly and nice because at some level I am aware that I have a job because of them it's not obvious to me what exactly I should do differently? There are times I feel that I am trying hard to be nice then people are invading my space and then sometimes or the next time I will impose it a bit more but generally I do what I am comfortable with and I am a fairly relaxed person as such and I don't like getting in conflicts with people and so I gravitate to that approach as for Akhil I hope we will up bring him like that and the idea is I think we will try to show him that first of all by example also try to make him value what we think are the most important things in life, what's really important and once it important then that's what you aim for, for the moment he is a very innocent kid just very curious and its quite easy to do so far.

DJ: What's been your approach to dealing with loses? What has been the best loss for you in terms of what you learnt the most from?

VA: I don't think there is the loss you enjoy or learn from, I believe there a loss will almost always because of the shock effect force you to question everything that you assumed for a while it makes you uncomfortable in a very good way so losses are good but no mean getting easier over experience in fact in anything I am much worse losing now than before, well people say you seem like a very well behave loser, but inside I am dying, I am just waiting get into the room and hit my head against the wall but you know you are frustrated and how do I cope? I try to get a grip on myself, I know that it's important to sleep and play the next game well, of course if you have a rest day your tournament is over then you react differently because then you can let go a bit slower but otherwise subconsciously you learn to focus on the next game because you have to clear the baggage from this one and it may force you to work bit harder for a while and the pain will help you more to work harder for a while, I don't think I have gotten better in any way handling losses.

DJ: Is there any technique that you use to stay present to sort of just focus on the moment it hands and forget the moment at hand at forget the baggage?

VA: Sometimes getting up stretching your arms stretching a bit taking a couple of deep breaths things like that help, I always say that you can't to calculate better, what you can do is show your brain enough examples that when the moment comes it conscious of threat effect, I think there are many things in chess that you cannot solve, simply by saying I am going to sit here and calculate it because that's not how the human brain works, essentially its standing on shoulder of the giant things, once you reached to a certain level, you can stand at that level and then suddenly you will see new things which you would not have been seen before, and like that you get better so if you see other people games it will show new concepts and once you seen a new concept it's easy to learn how to play it creatively but I don't think we can find things from the scratch and which is same in any career, I means a scientist is hardly get in a divining up new stuff based on good study of the history of science, his coming up with the new ideas and is very similar in chess.

DJ: I am curious about those spotting potential, what do you look for when you see a young athlete in any game, what do you look for you to say this person will rise all the way to the top, are there markers of potential that you look for? Apart from the capability in that sport?

VA: I think you look at some basic technical level, at least on the chess board if I see several good moves in a role or something like that, I mean one good move can be accidental but not five in a row, then you might think oh that's interesting, it's not in a single move it's the fact that five of them were good then you think oh wait that can be accidental, sometimes you look for an attitude someone who just sits there and willing to grind away well that's the different kind of sporting skill which also should be rewarded, with Olympic Gold Quest it's actually a lot of data but we take someone who's already been well trained if you like so someone who is already a National champion or a record holder or a common wealth thing, there is something that we work with and then Viren gets in touch we try to evaluate the their prospects what are the steps they need to get better, what are the best steps they need them to qualify in the Olympics what are the mile stones along the way you expect them to do, what are their training needs, what are their financial needs, practical needs things like that, how can we help? A lot of that but we don't do so much talent spotting yet, we are doing more and more spotting now as we work with the younger athletes but while I can tell if someone is reasonably talented, I can never say how high they are going to go because there are so many things along the way then it becomes unpredictable,

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DJ: It is interesting to see that there are a few things that need to come into play for us to harness potential. Building on what Vishy says, one needs to look for a certain consistency in performance coupled with an attitude to grind it out day after day over the long term. One also needs to put together a support plan or a development plan in a corporate context that is tailored to the need of the individual to fulfil their potential. In one of my earlier podcast conversations, Viren Rasquinha (VR) (who has played Hockey for India and is now the CEO of Olympic Gold Quest) spoke about this in some detail. He spoke about what he looked for when he was trying to spot potential

VR: *"for me the very important quality is the hunger and desire to be the best in the world, and not just being happy with being national champion or commonwealth game champion, we want our athletes to have dream and desire to be best in the world, and for that we need to gauge whether they are ready to run through a brick wall every single day in training."*

DJ: He also spoke about how at OGQ they try to tailor the development plan including the selection of the coach to cater to a specific developmental need for the athlete to fulfil their potential

VR: *"how do you pick a coach in context of player, so I will answer it with Mary Kom's example, in 2009 women's boxing was introduced in the London 2012 Olympics for the first time ever, Mary was already a five times world champion winner, but in the 46 KG weight category and 48 KG for last one, now when women's boxing was announced in 2009 that it would be for the first time in London 2012 Olympics, before that boxing was only a men's sport, but the least weight category for women was 51 Kgs so that means Mary Kom who was originally a 46 Kgs boxer to move into 51, which is two weight categories higher, I had been unheard of for a boxer to go two weight categories higher and win an Olympic medal now the challenge was because when you fight in weight category not only you have to put on the right kind of weight but you are fighting against taller opponent, which is a major technical challenge in boxing if you are fighting against taller opponent that's the big challenge, we researched a lot and found out a coach by the name of Charles Atkinson who's specialized in taking fighters up weight categories and making them into world champions"*

DJ: If I translate that to the corporate world, it implies that we need to have a razor sharp sense of the developmental need for a leader before we go and put together a development plan or pick a coach who is best in class for that issue. Now back to my conversation with Vishy.

DJ: **What's your take on creating a condition to create a pipeline of talent? What does it take?**

VA: I honestly don't know because clearly you have the Soviet school of chess you have the German football academy then you have then you have the Barcelona football academy, you have tennis academies and things like that, so there are examples of these things but I, but then there was nothing that anybody has done, which should have created a Navitex and a world champion, the chess champion I don't know anything that Switzerland did to get a great tennis player, so for every story where you say so these were the steps followed and we can make a factory out of this there's things that arise at just have no expectation and I simply don't know what it is that required? Why are not the Switzerland have such a good tennis player, there are just too many things that are not predictable I think all you can do with an academy is to set a reasonable expectations but that's it talent follows its own rules.

DJ: **Are there big parallels you see between the chess board and let's say the world of business, are there two three lessons about approach to risk, approach to judgement, approach to decision making that can sort of translate to the world of business?**

VA: I find in chess it is very easy to get into this mentality of saying this is what I am good at therefore the work I do in this area it's like let me be the most productive and therefore I will work on what I am good at but then there will come a time when you have to work on things you are not good at because you don't know, which is going to be the most successful area in a couple of years and there are many examples of businesses which didn't change their focuses and in time or didn't adapt to some new trend and they kept getting better and better what they were good at and suddenly they lost the plot completely and it's very easy to get into a situation where you used to seeing the world in a certain way and then you are unable to break free of that, that both in chess and in the business can be a big danger, in an organization of course you think that there are a lot of people working but even organizations can get into this thinking in a certain way that process is not very difficult, they are different from an individual and I think both chess and businesses how you respond to success how, how you respond to the failure not so much what happens then but what the changes that triggers in you those kinds of things are very important to keep track of and if you can develop a culture of responding in the right way to evince then overtime it makes that easier so when I say culture even in chess people who work regularly on things people will thinking have better results than people who simply do it from time to time so it has to be something that feels natural.

DJ: Rapid fire: Three books that have significantly influenced you when you are thinking

VA: Couple of them are chess books, I grew up with José Raúl Capablanca's book Chess Fundamentals and that was very nice even if it was imperfect, I mean right now it seems to be this book was very innocent but once upon a time I trusted it fully and I think it's better to be sure of something even if its inaccurate then not than to be in doubt all the time so if nothing else that the, I have liked Cosmos a lot, I mean the book, I liked that a lot because, it just so magical, interesting and I continued to be curious about subject of astronomy as well but I think you should read books like that just to open your mind and its fascinating and let say in business books something like Jack Welch's book, I remember once upon a time when I read it seemed really, you could make decisions like, if you want to get out at every business that I am not number one or number two in we are going to do this, we are going to do that and the world seems suddenly very easy, I have come to the conclusion now and I think JEE is also showing that interest that the world is much too messiest but once upon a time I remember reading that book and thinking it's so easy to apply this in chess I am only going to play the opening number one or number two is something like that, now a day I tend think this is misguided at its best and you can see that a lot of companies that right this books turned out much messy than they let out the world has convince me that its messy.

DJ: Movie character that you find inspiring?

VA: I like the Terminator movies though I think that's more about release than anything else it's a great script I like that a lot, I like quite some legal dramas because you know the atmosphere in the court room and how they, but a character that influence me it's very hard to say, a character who just having a very good time, it kinds of leads you towards the positive effect, I can't think of one.

DJ: Role models outside of chess?

VA: There are people I admire I don't know if I consider them as role models but there are quite many people I admire, I don't think I follow anyone that much, I think my role models at the end will turn out to be very close in a circle, you know, my family, and things like that.

DJ: What you might have been if chess had not been introduced to you?

VA: They have asked me that often and I always say that I can't remember having time for anything else because I was a chess player from six and essentially I never stopped being chess player, now a days there are so many fields that look interesting, I think I could be there either because I see other chess players there or things like that but I certainly don't feel I missed a lot by being a chess player, I still enjoy that very much, I guess I would have also gravitated, this is the way I answer the question earlier I would probably in something in research and something very similar to chess if it all.

DJ: In summary

VA: Yes I elucidate to this few times during the podcast which is that you tend to do something, something tends to be much easier if you are interested in than you uninterested in it and life is tough enough without you finding something that you are not good at or boring we started with the beginning of this Advertisement and I think that the point you should find and do something that you love rather than you don't

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DJ: The ad Vishy is referring to is on YouTube. You could just type in Vishy and Cricket and it is a short 40 second clip. It shows him facing a fast bowler and getting beaten a few times and clean bowled a few times. It was an Ad for AMD which basically makes the point picks the sport carefully. I find this to be a powerful metaphor for all of us. I do believe that as leaders grow through their career, they ask two questions at various points in time Where to go and How to grow? This is parallel to businesses asking Where to play and how to win in the context of their business strategy. The key is that if you haven't thought through where to play, you are going to have a hard time winning. Or to translate it back to individual journeys, if you haven't thought through where to go (which is often a function of your life objectives, career capital, passion, commercial constraints, geographical preferences, market conditions and so on, you will have a much harder time in playing to your potential).

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End of transcription

Nugget from Amish Tripathi that is referenced: [Transitioning from Financial Services to Writing](#).

Nugget from Nandan Nilekani that is referenced: [Reflections on Politics as a career](#).

Nugget from Vinita Bali that is referenced: [Early childhood wiring](#).

Nugget from Atul Kasbekar that is referenced: [Staying relevant over the long-term](#).

Nugget from Viren Rasquinha that is referenced: [Spotting potential](#).

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Viswanathan Anand - Nuggets

- 21.00 Viswanathan Anand - The Full Conversation
- 21.01 Viswanathan Anand - Committing to Chess as a career
- 21.02 Viswanathan Anand - Early formative years
- 21.03 Viswanathan Anand - Growing as a player and inflection points
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- 21.05 Viswanathan Anand - Understanding the Processor inside
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- 21.07 Viswanathan Anand - Performing at the top and staying grounded

- 21.08 Viswanathan Anand - Dealing with losses
- 21.09 Viswanathan Anand - Identifying and unlocking potential
- 21.10 Viswanathan Anand - Parallels between Chess and Business
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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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