



Guest

Harish Bhat is the Brand Custodian of Tata Sons. He has had a ~35 year career at the Tata Group and has held several leadership roles including COO - Watches and Accessories Business at Titan, MD & CEO of Tata Consumer Products, Chairman of the Board at Tata Coffee Limited and more.

He is the Author of four books. "#Tata Stories", 40 timeless tales to inspire you. "An extreme love of coffee", an exciting novel about coffee and magic. "Tata Log", inspiring stories from the contemporary history of the Tata Group. "The Curious Marketer", a free-flowing exploration of curiosity in marketing. He also writes frequently in several leading publications including The Mint and The Hindu Business Line.

In this conversation, we spoke about his journey, some of his key choices and his perspectives on storytelling and building culture through it. Then we dove into some of the stories and lessons from his book.

Context to the conversation

Welcome to the 80th conversation at the Play to Potential Podcast. I am your host Deepak Jayaraman. This podcast is a labour of love for the long term where I have conversations with leading practitioners, thinkers, authors, artists, sportsmen and other leading professionals to decode insights around leadership, transitions and careers. We started this podcast about 5 years back and recently we crossed 1 Million Listens. We realize the numbers are not stellar by popular media standards, it is the 100s of messages and stories that we get from listeners about how it has impacted their lives that makes it worth the while. Thank you for your support and your attention over the years. I feel, we are just getting started here.

In addition to curating this podcast, I work with leaders with a growth mindset as a Trusted Sounding Board helping them and organizations transform and play to their unique potential. To know more about what is in the podcast archives and the advisory work I do, you could just visit www.playtopotential.com. That is www.playtopotential.com

My Guest this time is Harish Bhat – Brand Custodian of Tata Sons and an Author of several books including the recently published book #TataStories, a collection of 40 stories from the 150+ years of History at the Tata Group. In our conversation, we initially spoke about his journey, his choices and his framework for making career decisions including how he thought about pausing to write when he completed 25 years in the Tata Group. We then go on to talk about some of the stories and the culture of the Tata Group. I specifically found his insights around the Art of Storytelling and how we can shape culture through that very thought provoking.

Without further ado, let us listen and learn from Harish Bhat of the Tata Group.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Harish, thanks so much for making the time to come on the Play to Potential Podcast, excited to be talking to you.

Harish Bhat (HB): Yes, Deepak. Thank you for calling me to speak to you of the Play to Potential Podcast. I am very excited and I look forward to this conversation with you.

DJ: Absolutely. Harish, in this conversation, we talk about people's journeys. The three themes we are curious about in the podcast are Leadership, Transitions and Careers. Maybe, before we go into the book you have just written about the Tata Group and the stories, I would love to understand your journey a little bit and maybe, just to frame the first question, it has been about 35 odd years since you graduated with a gold medal from IIM Ahmadabad, as you think about your journey and some of the key choices you have made, what are some of the key choices you would call out in this journey?

HB: Yeah. That is an interesting question, Deepak. So if I were to call out some of the key choices I made since I left campus at IIM Ahmadabad, the first I would call out was my decision to join the Tata Group. I did not know too much about the Tata Group at that time, to tell you frankly, in 1987. I had read about them but then I spoke to a few senior colleagues who worked with the Tata Group. But what strikes me about the choice is that I joined a group whose values have been greatly satisfying to me, and a group where I have been able to build a purposeful career because I know that a lot of work I do for the Tata Group eventually goes into building the community and giving back to the nation. And I think that is a choice which will stand out for me throughout my career as being one of the finest choices I have made. That is also the reason why, for the past 35 years, I have been working with the Tata Group. And I love going to office each morning to complete the rest of my work with them. The other key choice I would call out is after an initial process of exploration, looking at different functions within corporates, eventually, I veered towards marketing, consumer behavior, brands as the key area that I would like to focus on. Once again when I left campus, I do not think I knew my passions that well. I had graduated from IIM Ahmadabad doing a plethora of courses in Marketing, in Finance, in Information Systems and so forth. But as I started working within the Tata Group, and in those early days, it was Tata Tea, at a later stage, it was Titan, I discovered that I really loved the art of branding and marketing. I like the science of consumer behavior. And over the course of my journey, I think I made that choice as well that I would like to specialize within this discipline and try my best to become a master of it. So that is the second choice that stands out. The third choice that actually stands out, is I feel very happy that over the past 35 years, I have done my best to develop many professionals who have worked with me. And there is nothing more fulfilling in one's career journey than seeing people who have worked with you and developed under you, blossoming out and occupying senior roles in their own merit. So those are three important choices that I would call out.

DJ: Hmm. And going back to the first choice, Harish, what else did you have as an opportunity set?

HB: Well, to tell you the truth, the Tata Administrative Service was the first placement that I got out of campus. I had applied to other multinational companies as well. I had applied to Hindustan Lever, I had applied to Citibank, but immediately after I got the placement at Tata Administrative Service, I dropped out of the rest of placements. I spoke to a few people, understood what the Tata Group was like at a broad level, thought that this is the kind of job I would like to do, given the possibilities

of inter-industry movement, and the fact that I would be going to work with a well-reputed Indian company. So I dropped out of placement and I stuck to my choice with the Tata Administrative Service.

DJ: Hmm. And picking up the arc of your career, Harish, from running Marketing in Tata Tea, running Jewelry and Watches business in Titan, and then, Tata Consumer Products and now you are a Brand Custodian of the group, give us a sense of this arc if you will.

HB: So I started my career as the Executive Assistant to the then Joint Managing Director of Tata Tea. His name is Mr. RK Krishna Kumar. He later became the Vice Chairman of the company and also a Director of Tata Sons. After few years in that role, I went into the Marketing and Sales function in Tata Tea, helping build our sales and distribution network. We were competing at that time against Brooke Bond and Lipton who had then unified under the Unilever umbrella a couple of years later. So we were a small plantation company, trying to build our own brands and competing against a behemoth. So that entire sequence of events, the Executive Assistant role gave me an overview of what a company was like, what the entire value chain in a company was like. And I could also see difficult and important decisions being made at close proximity. But the Sales and Marketing role in Tata Tea taught me that eventually marketing is all about common sense, it is about understanding the consumer and catering to his or her need and if we could do that smartly enough, we could take on any large competitor. So we gained and gained market share, to the extent that several years later, Tata Tea actually became the market leader in the packaged tea market in India. Then, I transitioned to the Jewelry business in Titan. The Tata Group actually sought my transfer into Tanishq at that time. It was a loss-making business when I joined it. I joined when Mr. Xerxes Desai was the Managing Director of the company and directly handling the Jewelry business was Jacob Kurian, the Chief Operating Officer to whom I reported. Over the next six years there, what came my way was the opportunity to participate in the turning around of a business. From being a loss-making business with a brand which was not very well known, we then took time to build a very robust brand in the jewelry space. Many people were skeptical of it. Many people said that India is a country of family jewelers, building a corporate brand or a modern brand in jewelry may never be successful but I am very happy that in the end, once again through an extreme focus on the consumer and an extreme focus on our business associates and on positioning the brand very soundly, we succeeded. And I am delighted now as I look back over the past 20 years, I mean Tanishq just celebrated its 25th anniversary last month, Tanishq has become such a successful brand today. With the Watches business, by the time I became the Chief Operating Officer of the Watches business, Titan was already a very strong brand. But over the next six years, building Fasttrack and Sonata into very popular brands in India, Fastback, the preferred brand of choice for Indian youth at the largest and most exciting youth brand, and Sonata, the brand of choice for, you know, across heartland India, that was a very fulfilling voyage. Now what all these three stints taught me, the Tata Tea Marketing and Sales stint, the Jewelry Retailing and Marketing stint and the Watches Brand Building stint and running the business, was a masterclass in what it takes to run a business successfully and a business which is focused on consumers. So that long stint, lasting over about one and a half to two decades, was very crucial in building my understanding of consumer businesses. But it was also very crucial in my building a very good understanding of the Tata brand, what Tata stood for, as well as what it takes to build inspiration amongst people who actually operate the business. After that, I took a brief break. I took a brief break. I requested Titan and the Tata Group for a brief sabbatical to write my first book Tatalog. And I did that because it was 25 years after I joined the Tata Group, I was inspired with many of the tales of this group, and I was also very passionate about writing. So I wanted to put it down on paper so that it could inspire many many more people. That was in 2012, it was the year when Mr. Ratan Tata was retiring as the Chairman of Tata Sons, and I also wanted to write this book as a tribute to him. Thereafter, the Tata Group asked

me to take on the mantle of the Managing Director of Tata Consumer Products, which was then known as Tata Global Beverages. And a couple of years later, once again, the Tata Group sought my services in Tata Sons to look after the Consumer and Retail businesses of the group. So that is how that voyage has played out. It has been a seamless voyage. There have been choices that I have had to make in the interim. There were choices of joining the Jewelry business, there were choices of becoming Chief Operating Officer of the Watches business or becoming the Managing Director of Tata Global Beverages. So those are choices I have made. But in retrospect, I see it as a fairly seamless voyage. There have been successes and there have been failures along the way. Not every stint of mine and not everything I have done has been a success. But those failures have also taught me very valuable lessons.

DJ: And maybe given you have been one large institution for a long period of time, if you had to lay out the framework through which you have made some of these transition choices, when you are, let us say, at an inflection point from Tata Tea to Jewelry or from there to Consumer Products, how would you think about, you know, what would your advice be for people to navigate a long-term career in a large corporation, how should you think about some of these choices?

HB: So let me tell you what I thought about during the transition from Tata Tea to Jewelry, which happened in 2000. I was doing very well in Tata Tea, I was the Head of Marketing of the company at that stage, the brands of the company were growing, when I was offered an opportunity to run Marketing and Retailing in Tanishq, and Jewelry was a business that I knew nothing about, but I knew marketing by then, build brands like Gemini Dust, Chakra Gold, had begun the process of building Tata Tea in my role in Tata Tea. So I knew the consumer space in marketing and, in my mind, I thought those skills were transferable across businesses because marketing is marketing whichever consumer space you go into. But I think the critical points which kind of helped me make the decision were, in Tata Tea, I was perhaps in a zone of comfort at that time. I had handled only one category which was tea. So I thought I was young enough at that stage to push myself into a zone of discomfort, move from a category I knew well to a category I did not know anything about, tea to jewelry, also move from a company, which was quite profitable to a business, which was making losses and one never knew if that business would continue to exist after a few years. And that move into a zone of discomfort taught me many things as a professional and a person, which have held me in good stead across my life. So one lesson for young professionals of today is, do not stay for too long in a zone of comfort. If you want to learn, move into a zone of discomfort because that is when your learning curve is likely to be at its steepest. The few years that I spent in Tanishq, I learnt a hell of a lot. I probably would not have learned so much if I had stayed back in Tata Tea. So if you need learning and learning is critical to professional growth, I would say evaluate your choice and see whether you are moving to a zone of discomfort where your learning curve will probably be the steepest. The second choice I have made is, see, Tata is a huge organization, we have Consumer and Retail businesses, we have Industrial businesses, we have IT Services, we have Infrastructure businesses, Financial Services businesses, the second choice I made was to stay with the Consumer and Retail businesses. And that is because I thought that is where my competence lies, and I wanted to build depth in the Consumer and Retail businesses. And that once again, I would tell professionals, that is not a choice you should make too early in your career, but 5 or 10 years into your career, you also need to decide that this is the sphere or this is the area where I will build depth and then, give it your all, which is what I have done in the Jewelry business, the Watches business and Tata Tea, and which is what I am now also doing in my role as the Brand Custodian of the Tata Group. So I would probably leave only those two lessons. Lesson number one, try to move into a zone of discomfort where your learning curve is the steepest. Lesson number two, based on your inclination, your passion and your interest, choose an area that you love, choose a category that you love or an industry that you love and build depth in that industry or category.

DJ: It is a great point. And you say that, even I realized, you cannot do it too early, sometime needs to elapse before you get clarity on that I guess.

HB: Yes, I tell all my younger colleagues this, do not be in a rush to discover your passions, meander a little bit, work with two or three functions, and understand which of them provokes you the most, which of them is most fulfilling to you. Those kind of truths you do not discover very easily, they take some time and neither should you rush into them because you may actually end up making the wrong choice.

DJ: True. And going back to one of the things you said, Harish, around 2012, it was probably around 25 years post-graduation, you said you took a sabbatical to write the book. Was it easy? You know, one of the things I notice is, people, you know, just the notion of taking a pause, it is sort of countercultural to a lot of people, so talk to us a little bit about this notion of taking a pause and what it did to you.

HB: Yeah, so it was not easy. You know, I was the Chief Operating Officer of the Watches business in Titan. Then I took a sabbatical. I had to actually move out of that role because it was an important business for the company, and it needed to be spearheaded by a very dedicated person who would give 24x7 to that role. And I had to step aside from my line operating role to write a book. The question is why did I do it. And that is because, you know, it was an urge within me, and it became an irresistible urge that there are these inspiring stories and I think I need to tell them. You know, sometimes when such an urge seizes you, there is no stopping it. So I spoke to my boss at that time, Bhaskar Bhat in Titan, I spoke to Mr. Gopalakrishnan who at that time was leading the brand functions at Tata Sons. And I must credit the Tata Group with having permitted me to take a sabbatical of a few months to write my first book. That is one of the other things that I love about the Tata Group. I think they permit you to nurture what you think you are really good at. Well, I had many voices ask me, you know, why is he stepping away from a Chief Operating Officer role to write a book, is that the right thing to do when he is virtually at the peak of his career. I think those voices will always be there. It is important to pursue what you think is right. And if you are doing it with good intent, it always works out well. Taking a pause helped me reflect on my career until then and taking a pause to write this book also helped me see the Tata Group in its entirety. In many ways, I think, you know, in my current role as Brand Custodian, the writing of Tatalog, my first book which happened many years before I became Brand Custodian, in retrospect, it laid a very good foundation for my current role because I understood the Tata brand very well while writing that book. A pause in your career helps you to reflect, a pause in your career helps you to give window to a passion, which you have had in your life and your career until then, a pause also helps you to rediscover yourself. I am not suggesting that everyone take a pause in their career, but if you are really passionate about something alongside your career, it could be music, it could be writing, it could be travel, it could be any of these things, sometimes a pause is really helpful. But you have to look at your circumstances, you have to look at, are you ready mentally to take a pause, and then you have to deep dive into it.

DJ: Hmm. And moving to the Brand Custodian role, Harish, you know, I used to be a Search Consultant with Egon Zehnder in my previous life before I moved to setting up my own practice, what does good look like, how do you tell if you are adding value in the role?

HB: Yeah. It is a very broad role but I would say three four things. One, if you are a Brand Custodian of any brand, and I am the Brand Custodian of the Tata brand, one clear metric is, is the brand growing stronger from year to year. And in terms of brand being stronger, I am talking of the emotional connect with our stakeholders, the functional connect with our stakeholders, the respect, admiration and love that people have for the brand that you manage. And these are metrics, which

can be tracked through brand tracks. There are brand valuation agencies, which do independent tracks and report findings each year. I am of course delighted that the Tata brand has grown from strength to strength over the last several years and has a brand valuation of more than 21 billion dollars today. It is by far the most valuable Indian brand and the only Indian origin brand in the top 100 in the world, we have been growing our global ranking year after year, so that is very very fulfilling to me. So that is one metric that I would take, which is brand valuation, how brand track metrics score and so forth. The second is, all the brands which use the Tata brand name, and there are many of them in India who use the Tata brand name, Tata Tea, Tata Salt, Tata Motors, Tata Steel, most recently, Tata 1mg, so many of them which use the Tata brand name, I would look at how those brands are doing in terms of their appeal to consumers, are they gaining market share, are they becoming more competitive in the market. Of course, that is primarily driven by what each of these brands do to shore up their position, but it also reflects the strength of the Tata brand in the marketplace and with consumers. So that is a second kind of metric to which I would hold myself. The third is, there are values that the Tata brand is well known for. There are values of pioneering, there are values of excellence, but most importantly, is the value of keeping the community center stage and giving back to the community. And on each of these values or pillars of the Tata brand, I would examine what has happened in the year before and see whether each of these pillars is getting strengthened for the future because Tata is an iconic brand and it has been around for the last 153 years and grown and prospered over the last 153 years. So when you are a custodian of a brand like that, you have to ensure that the idea on which the brand is built gets stronger and stronger and stronger as you move forward. It is contemporized for the current generation but does not shift away from that core idea. The outer layers can get contemporized, but the core idea is still the same. And have I managed to do that very well is again a yardstick to which I would hold myself. The fourth is, of course, a brand is also based on its legends and stories. That is what leads to, at the end of the day, our lives are all about the stories of our life. And a brand is also all about the stories across the long arc of voyage that the brand has had. And more recently, I have been holding myself to account for are the stories of the Tata brand known very well by every single Indian. As a brand, Tata is very different from other modern brands, which are very well respected in the world, whether it is Apple, whether it is Microsoft, whether it is Google, I respect those brands, but the Tata brand is very different from those brands. And do our millennials, do the young people of India understand what the Tata brand is all about, have we been successful in communicating the stories, the inspiring stories of the Tata brand to the 1.3 billion people of India, that again would be another aspect of brand building that I hold myself to account. So there are all these areas that are important for a Brand Custodian to look at, but it is a broad role, it keeps evolving from year to year.

DJ: Of course. The other piece I was curious about, Harish, was, in a way, when you are running a business, you do exert a certain control and there are a few variables that you can play with, but in this kind of a role, I am guessing, it is heavily through influence where you work with various business heads and marketing heads to develop the group brand as a whole. From a personal style perspective, how has this transition been, what came easy, what was hard if you had to look at this?

HB: You are quite right. When you are running a company as a CEO, you have more control over all variables, which reside within that company. But the good thing about the Brand Custodian role is, particularly with the Tata brand, is that you are managing a brand which is very well respected and admired and all our companies want to add to that brand. So there is an alignment of interests between each of the operating companies and the Tata brand itself. Working through influence is very different from working through command and structure. Working through influence requires a few things. It requires, firstly, experience. I would say it requires a certain degree of credibility so that your voice is heard at the top table and heard across companies of the group. It requires a good amount of energy to convince people of some truth, pertaining to the brand and why something

should be done in a certain way and not in another way. So I would say working through influence, at its essence, I would say is intellectually very satisfying because it is the logic of your arguments and it is your ability to persuade, which actually wins or loses in the end. I see it as an intellectual challenge, and I also thoroughly enjoy the process because at the end of the day, I am working with many many Tata Group companies, which are aligned completely to the fact that we need to build the Tata brand for the future.

DJ: Got it. And going back to the art of storytelling, Harish, you spoke about stories, and we will get to the book in a minute, but I am curious about what you have learnt about the art of business storytelling, you know, what does it take to pick a good story, what does it take to tell it well, are there nuances that we should be aware of?

HB: Yeah. So, you know, my learnings about storytelling do not come from the corporate world, they come from great epics like the Ramayana and the Bible and the Mahabharat, many others. Also, non-religious epics like the Arabian Nights and they come from great works of literature, I love reading the books of Charles Dickens, I have grown up with them, I love reading Gabriel García Márquez and I have read so many times his One Hundred Years of Solitude, and I love reading many many works of fiction and history, and I have tried to bring those learnings into business storytelling and into brand storytelling. There are three or four principles that stand out for me, and these are principles, which I very much believe in. One is, a corporate story cannot be dry and factual. You need to have emotion in a story for people to relate to. If a story has no emotion to it, it is always flat. For instance, I would ask you, do you remember just reams of data and facts or do you remember a very good movie, which is told in a very emotional way. So the first truth that I have discovered about business brand storytelling is that it should have emotion to it and it should be able to connect with the reader through that emotion. The second truth I have discovered is, brand or business storytelling is not about corporates, it is about people, it is about people who build the brand, it is about people who build the business, people who have succeeded or failed, people who have overcome challenges, people who have seized opportunities. So it is about people and it is about the human spirit. Those are the kind of business and brand stories, which readers like to relate to. So the story is about the human spirit and not really about inanimate corporate. But the human spirit brings alive the idea of that corporate and makes it a living corporate. So that is the second lesson that I have learnt as I have gone along. The third lesson that I have learnt is, a business or a brand story has to be very simple. In the corporate world, a lot of strategy, a lot of presentations become very complex and become very, there is a lot of jargon to them. In fact, many professionals take pride in the jargon. That is not how a story works. A story has to be narrated in a very simple and lucid manner where people find it easy to imbibe, easy to listen to or easy to read. And that is very very important in the case of business or brand storytelling. Brands which have done that very well, have won in the battle of storytelling. The fourth and final lesson I would say is, if a business or brand story that you are narrating also holds a lesson for the reader, then the story really resonates because at the end of the day, all of us want to learn, all of us want to add value to ourselves. And if a story that you are reading can inspire you to do more with your own lives, what better? And I believe there are enough business and brand stories, not just with the Tata Group, but with many corporates across the world and in India, which are very inspiring in their own right. Therefore, if I were to summarize these four, I would say, first and foremost, the story has to have emotion in it. Second, it needs to be a story about human spirit, more than just about a corporate. Of course, how the human spirit builds the corporate or the brand can still be articulated post that. The third point which I made about storytelling is that it has to be very simple and very lucid, shorn of all jargon, and that is sometimes challenging for corporate people to do. And the fourth is, if you really wanted to resonate with the reader, you also need to ask yourself what is the value add to the reader, am I just entertaining the reader or being informative to the reader or am I leaving behind a lesson, which will

provoke the reader, inspire him or her to do something more with his or her life. So those are my learnings about business and brand storytelling that I have discovered over the years.

DJ: Fascinating. I was talking to a senior leader from the ad agency world, and he said, the good stories are a bit like a homeopathy pill. He said they are sort of entertaining and engaging on the outside but inside, there is a medicine and sometimes, you do not realize but there is a lesson, not in a preachy way, but when you sleep over it, there is something that helps you grow as a person.

HB: Of course. I think a business or brand storyteller should also not be preaching. Preachiness turns people off. Our job is to narrate a story, with all the facts of the case, but built to a storyline, which is entrancing and which holds people's interest. And let the reader digest that story and come to a conclusion herself on what is the lesson I can take forward from here into my life. You have to permit the reader that liberty. That is not the writer's prerogative. The writer's prerogative is to put forward the story. The reader's prerogative is what he or she wants to take out of it.

DJ: Hmm. And in terms of brand stories that stand out, I am sure there are several Tata stories, but outside of the Tata Group, who do you look for, who do you find inspiring in terms of the way they tell the story, which brands?

HB: Of course, the stories of the Tata Group are the ones that most appeal to me and that is quite natural. I have spent the last 34 years in this group, and I am greatly inspired by it. I think it is a timeless institution and there are thousands of inspiring stories over the arc of the last 153 years, which are resident within the Tata Group. But it is interesting you asked this because just yesterday, I was reading another fascinating brand and business story. I was reading this book called Harsh Realities, which has been authored by Harsh Mariwala, the Founder and Chairman of Marico, the company which has built powerful brands like Parachute and Saffola. This is a book which is co-authored by Harsh Mariwala and Dr. Ram Charan and they tell the brand story once again beautifully, the business story of Marico. Again, it is told as the story of the human spirit, it is told as the story of what people including Harsh have done to build the brand. But if I look at other Indian brands, I would say, Amul tells its story really well, the story of the co-operative of milk farmers, the story of how Amul has actually added value to them, the story of how Amul knows milk best. Through many many touchpoints, the Amul's story has kind of permeated into Indian consumers' lives. So I would hold that out as another very inspiring Indian brand, which has told its story very beautifully over the past several years.

DJ: Any international brand, just the top of the pile that appeal to you?

HB: I think a brand like Apple has told its story really well. Whether it is through the biography of Steve Jobs or whether it is about books written about Apple, the Apple's story sits deep in the minds of many people. Starbucks has told its story really well. I have read some of the early books written by Howard Schultz or books written about Starbucks or how Starbucks tells its story through each touchpoint, I have a great amount of admiration for how Starbucks is able to authentically craft and articulate its stories.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This is your host Deepak Jayaraman here. I must mention that Harish speaks about Harsh Mariwala. We will be publishing the conversation him on the podcast in a few weeks time. In my work experience, I grew up in a consulting context where the emphasis was on brevity, getting to

the answer and saying things as crisply as possible. Storytelling is not a muscle that was developed explicitly.

So, when I met Indranil Chakraborty (IC), the Author of Stories at Work, an expert in the realm of business storytelling, I asked him about whether he thought there was a trade-off between storytelling and brevity. This is what he said:

IC: "Not at all in fact one of the key things I teach and, in the book, also talk about it is brevity in storytelling. So, what happens is when you have a story to tell and why are we doing storytelling in business? We are trying to harness three big powers of story. One is stories are easy to understand, stories are easy to remember and stories are easy to retell. Some of the things that you do not get in a business situation how many off sites have you been to? Where the CEO or some senior leader has explained the next year strategy and then when people have come back and their teams have said boss what was discussed in Goa he said strategy of next year what is the strategy? Or one power point will come, why is not repeatable? Because all those hours of so called business clear with lots of brevity has not landed. Now, when you use stories or story structures you get that power and you can do it in that same amount of time you would have otherwise taken because in many cases because of the layers of different English lines and sentences you are trying to explain very simple can be done with a story actually sometimes even shorter, so I don't see any fight between brevity, the desire for brevity and storytelling, in fact in the work of storytelling one of the critical things is brevity because brevity is best delivered when there is simplicity in communication and I love a Leonardo Vinci quote which said "Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication" and so when you are able to get very simple with your message you are not going to be long with it but that simple tight story will deliver much more than what a long paragraph of a lot of huge English word will have manage to do."

DJ: If you want to tune into more of this, you might find the conversation with Indranil Chakraborty of value. You might also like the Curated Playlist on Storytelling where several thinkers and practitioners speak about their take on the role of storytelling in business and in life.

Thank you for listening. If you find the podcast of value, do take a moment to rate and review on Apple Podcasts, Google or Spotify, wherever you consume the content.

Could I also bring to your attention a Social Cause that I am associated with. I have had the opportunity to spend time with Saurabh Taneja (ST), an IIT Delhi Graduate, a Teach For India fellow who now is the CEO of Akanksha Foundation. For over 30 years, Akanksha has educated children from low-income communities across Mumbai and Pune. I was speaking with Saurabh recently and he shared an exciting Project around Heart for Art. If you are deriving value from the podcast, it would be great if you take a moment and contribute to this cause. Here is Saurabh speaking about this initiative.

ST: "As you know we at Akanksha Foundation run 277 schools today in Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur all in partnership with the city government and our currently serving nearly 11,000 children and 4,000 alumni. We at Akanksha we have always believed in the potential of every child no matter what background they come from and we are tremendously proud of our alumni and what they have achieved today. And Deepak I really wanted to share with you is this unique initiative that our team thought of last year at the time of school closure called "Heart for Art" where we sent an art kit to every single child's home during the pandemic. It was meant with the purpose that every child has an opportunity to express themselves through art which is always been an integral part of Akanksha's curriculum and the pieces of the work that the students have produced have just blown all of us away and you know that's why we have launched this really exciting campaign a #Heartforart Deepak where we are seeking funds for our most urgent three priorities today and you know the first is to

buy tablets for some of our younger students who still continue to be at home and will still haven't interrupted school year looking by the plans for the reopening this year. Second is to put our alumni through to a college and the third is supporting a child's education in an Akansha school and through each of these initiative a contributed where haven't opportunity to own the piece of the beautiful art that our students have produced along with that the back story of what got them to produce it."

DJ: To know more, you can just go to Akanksha.org/heart-for-art.

Lets now get back to the conversation with Harish Bhat.

DJ: Harish, changing track from your journey to the book that you have just written, #TataStories: 40 Timeless Tales To Inspire You, give us a sense of the why behind the book, why did you choose to write this book and more importantly, you know, there are thousands of stories across 150 plus years that one could have picked from, I am guessing it must have been a real challenge to get to the 40 that you did, give us a sense of the why the book and also how you arrived at this super short list.

HB: So why the book is a very interesting question. The writing of this book happened in the first 10 months of the pandemic in 2020. So the pandemic came upon us, I think, quite unannounced and also quite unwelcome into our lives and like many others, I was also stuck at home, working out of home. And the reason I began writing the first few stories, when I still did not have the notion that they would become a book later, was because the pandemic has been a very challenging period for the whole of humanity and for many Indians. And I thought to myself, there are many inspiring stories sitting within the Tata Group and at this point in time, stories which elevate our minds, stories which inspire us, will probably be welcomed by readers across the country or even across the world. And then I thought to myself there are so many of these stories sitting within the Tata Group, why do not I start narrating a few of them. I still remember the first story that I wrote, it was the story of Lady Meherbai Tata, and I posted it on LinkedIn after writing it, with a preface saying that, here is an elevating story from the Tata Group, I hope it inspires you, particularly at this time of the pandemic. What happened after that surprised me. As I posted a few of these stories, the reader response was fabulous. Several hundred readers would spontaneously respond on LinkedIn with their comments and insights. People told me they were inspired by these stories. The first four-five Tata stories that I published, readers used beautiful words, such as Pride, Goosebumps, Motivation, Astonishment, Joy to describe their reactions. I remember one early reader writing about these stories is that, "what a stunning story, it inspires me to do a lot more with my own life." And another reader, a young woman professional, said that she has begun reading out these stories to her daughter, her young daughter who is about six or seven years of age, she said, today I tell Tata stories to my four-year daughter, and she says, "it helps them to value the qualities of true leaders and look at what a life with honest is like." And she said, "her daughter has many questions to ask her in each story." So that kind of encouraged me to write many more stories. And eventually, when I had written 40 to 50 of them, there was keen interest from Penguin Random House to publish all these stories together as a book so that the reach is not held up only to the platform of LinkedIn but can go to a much wider audience. And equally, this is also part of my role as Brand Custodian of Tata Sons. I have to take the lead in propagating the inspiring stories of our group and our brand and making sure that enough people know these stories and are inspired by these stories. So that is the why of how #TataStories came about. And the book was published in June this year, June 2021 and I am really amazed by the love and affection and wide readership that it has gained across the country. Virtually every day, there are people writing into me or writing on LinkedIn, commenting on the book, saying how it has inspired them. So I have only been an instrument of narration of these stories. What is at the root of this is that there are such inspiring stories within the group, and I must also give due credit to the Tata Central Archives and my colleague Rajendra Prasad Narla who is the

Chief Archivist there for helping me research these stories and helping me bring out some little known facts through which I could narrate these stories. So that is the why the book #TataStories was written. How did I pick these 40 timeless tales, I must be very frank with you that it is true that there are hundreds of these stories across the Tata Group and to tell you the truth, like I have said in the introduction to this book, I picked the stories, which have appealed most to my imagination based on my current knowledge. So I do not claim that #TataStories as a book is comprehensive. It certainly is not. I have chosen to narrate a set of 40 Tata stories, which I think appeal greatly, but I have no doubt that there are many more equally inspiring stories within the Tata Group, which are still waiting to be told. And the stories within #TataStories within this book are not narrated in any particular chronological order, narrated in a sequence, which takes you back and forth over the years. But as you read them, as you read all these Tata stories, you realize that there is a glue, which binds them and that glue is the values of the Tata Group and the pillars on which the Tata brand stands.

DJ: I think the one thing that strikes the reader when I read this book, Harish, just this notion of making a difference to the world, right. Even recent top 50 givers list prepared by Hurun Report and EdelGive Foundation, Jamsetji Tata has emerged as a biggest philanthropist globally in the last century, and they had put a number like 102 billion in terms of the amount that has been given, what got me curious was, how does the group, across its various companies, drive this vision of impacting the wider community where the group operates.

HB: Yeah. So the community is truly center stage at the Tata Group and Jamsetji Tata, our Founder, articulated that vision when he said he wants to build a corporation or an institution, where the community is center stage and not just another stakeholder. Now his sons and he created the Tata charitable trusts, the JN Tata Endowment Trust was created by Jamsetji Tata himself in 1892 for the overseas education of Indians, the Sir Ratan Tata Trust was created by one of his sons and the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust was created by his elder son, Dorabji Tata, and there have been other Tata charitable trusts as well. But what is unique is that these trusts have owned and have continued to own a large majority of the equity shares in our parent company Tata Sons. Today, about 66% of the equity capital of our parent company Tata Sons is held by these charitable trusts. What does that mean? What it means is 66% of the dividends issued by Tata Sons go to the Tata charitable trusts, which then use this money to contribute back to the community. So over the course of the past 100 years, the Tata trusts have used this money to build institutions, such as the Tata Memorial Hospital, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, NCPA, the National Center for Performing Arts, and, of course, right at the beginning, Jamsetji Tata used his own personal wealth to also build the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, which is one of the finest universities in the world today. So there are many such institutions, institutions of national importance, which have contributed back to our community, which has been built by these Tata trusts over a long period of time. So even now as we speak, the Tata trusts are leading the fight against cancer, the Tata Medical Center came up in Kolkata in 2012, and just now, the Tata trusts are working with the several state governments in India. They are building cancer hospitals in those states, so this includes cancer facility networks that are coming up in Assam, Odisha, Jharkhand, Telangana and Nagaland, cancer research and treatment centers coming up in Varanasi, Tirupati, Bhubaneswar, Ranchi, Allahabad and Mangalore. So that is one way through, and of course, in the more recent past, the fight against COVID-19, where the Tata trusts have partnered with Tata Sons to contribute a very significant amount, you know, right at the beginning of the pandemic, 1,500 crores was committed to the fight against the pandemic. So the ownership structure of the Tata Group, where the Tata charitable trusts own 66% of the parent company Tata Sons, is one way by which the Tata Group gives back to the community. The second is each of our companies also give back to the community in their own right. And let me illustrate this by two or three examples. For

instance, with Tata Steel, Tata Steel manages the town of Jamshedpur, one of the best run towns in the country. But in addition, Tata Steel is also doing a lot to uplift the lives of tribals in that entire region of Eastern India. But let me take a very different example. Let us take an example of Tata Chemicals, Tata chemicals operates in the Okhamandal region of Gujarat, a very dry region of this country, and once again, inhabited by the Rabari tribals and many other tribal communities. Tata Chemicals has put in place a Tata Chemicals Foundation for the development of these communities and one outcrop of that is a brand like Okhai, which is a brand of garments based on the weaving skills and the visual skills and the handicraft skills of the Rabari tribals of that area. And the story of Okhai is one of the 40 stories in #TataStories, a very moving story to read. But a third way I would say is, look at a brand like Tata Tea. Tata Tea, over the years, has built a very powerful platform for Jaago Re, which is about civic consciousness. Initially, it was positioned against corruption. Later, it was positioned in the area of encouraging women to vote. In the more recent past, it has been positioned as things that you can proactively do in your community to encourage sports people, for instance. So that whole thread of, let us say, civic consciousness is what Jaago Re has been able to build and that is also contributing back to the community. Or if I look at Tanishq, our jewelry brand, which I have associated with for many years. Tanishq, of course, markets beautiful jewelry and is, by far, the best-known brand of jewelry in India, but did you know that they also do a lot to support jewelry karigars, the artisans who actually produce jewelry. They give them hygienic working conditions, they ensure that they are paid fairly and in time, they have set up jewelry or karigar parks across the country. So those are examples of how our companies contribute to the community. I would say there are three predominant methods through which the Tata Group's contribution to the community happens. One is through the Tata charitable trusts, which are majority owners of Tata Sons, and the fight against cancer is a story, which I have narrated in my book #TataStories, which pertains to that part of community contribution. The second is through the CSR work, which a lot of our companies do in communities in and around them. Like, for instance, the work that Tata Steel or Tata Chemicals do with the tribal communities that live in their hinterlands. The third is the work that the Tata brands do. You know, either Tanishq or Tata Tea, I gave you examples of karigar parks, of the Jaago Re platform, and this work could be at the back end or it could be at the front end communication, which once again goes towards serving the community. So it is a combination of all these through which the Tata Group tries its best to give back to the community. You know, in the words of JRD Tata, a lot of stories in #TataStories are about JRD Tata who was Chairman of the group for 50 years, in one of his most resident words, he says, what comes from the people goes back to the people over and over again. I think that has been a guiding philosophy of that book.

DJ: And sticking with this for a couple of minutes, Harish, at the highest level, Tata trusts serving social causes, it is structurally set up to do that, but at a company level, given there is a profit objective that a lot of the leaders are going after, how do you ensure that while pursuing profit, they do not lose sight of this community piece, how is it handled at the company level?

HB: I think it is, in most, if not all Tata Group companies, community is inbuilt into the DNA of a company. I think, many many of our group companies understand that that is the reason why we were established. It is not an either/or situation. I think, you build a very profitable business based on sustainable competitive advantages, which varies from industry to industry, but you also ensure that a part of those profits go towards nurturing the community around you. And I would say that is a positive spiral because you nurture the communities around you and you live in harmony with the communities around you, there is also a great deal of respect, which builds up for the brand, and that respect then translates into customer affection also.

DJ: Hmm. The other quote that stuck with me in the book, Harish, in one of the stories, you speak about Gandhiji coming to Jamshedpur in August 1925 and in his speech, you quote that Gandhiji

says, my identification with labor does not conflict with my friendship with capital, and when I think about the Tata Group in a way, it seems to straddle these two worlds effectively. Can you talk a little bit about how the group walks the tightrope?

HB: So firstly, let me stay on the story you just mentioned of Gandhiji in Jamshedpur. I really enjoyed researching and then narrating the story. I enjoyed reading the long speech that he delivered in Jamshedpur, and why he went to Jamshedpur and what he saw there and what he said. You are quite right, one of the quotes is what you mentioned just now that, even though I have been obliged to range myself seemingly against capital, capitalists have in the end regarded me as their true friend and he says, my identification with labor does not conflict with my friendship with capital. But there is another powerful quote in the same story, which has sat deeply in my mind and this is the, you know, towards the end of the speech that Gandhiji delivered in Jamshedpur in 1925, he says, May God grant that, in serving the Tatas, you will also serve India, and will always realize that you are here for a much higher mission than merely working for an Industrial enterprise. What a powerful statement that is! It must have moved every member of the Tata Steel family who was present in Jamshedpur, listening to Gandhiji that day. It moves me and many of my colleagues in the Tata Group even today. So that is a beautiful story, Gandhiji in Jamshedpur. I think all of you who are listening to this podcast, even if you read one story in the book or two stories in the book, read the story of Jamsetji Tata and Swami Vivekanand, read the story of Gandhiji in Jamshedpur. These are two amongst many stories in this book, which exemplify what the Tata Group is all about and why it has continued to do very well and prosper on its voyage.

DJ: Hmm. And maybe just exploring that quote, identification with labor does not conflict with the friendship with capital, I am curious about where you see the tension, Harish, in the day-to-day workings of the group.

HB: Yeah. So let me go to another story from #TataStories to actually explain that, and where is the tension and how the tension can be resolved, and let me go to story number 8, The Creche at Empress Mills. Now, the Empress Mills was the very first industrial enterprise established by Jamsetji Tata. It happened in the year 1874. So it was a long time before us. It opened on the 1st of January 1877, more than a 140 years ago. Empress Mills soon became a very very profitable business enterprise. Why, because Jamsetji Tata decided to use the highest quality of cotton, he established this mill in Nagpur, which was in the midst of the cotton growing area, and therefore, the quality of the products that he produced was widely respected from this textile mill. The second thing that he also did was he innovated, he brought in place many manufacturing Innovations, which were not even being used in the UK at that time. For instance, he brought in place the ring spindle, which substantially improved the output of the factory. And so Empress Mills became a very profitable enterprise. However, what he did simultaneously, so that was the use of capital I would say. He used capital very wisely or in today's phraseology, his capital allocation to the right things within the mill made it a very profitable enterprise. And if you look at profits alone, by 1920, the total profits of the Empress Mills were 50 times the original capital, shareholders had gained splendidly, and so forth. And what Jamsetji Tata also did is that he pioneered a number of initiatives for worker welfare in the Empress Mills. In 1887, he introduced a pension fund, first of its kind in India. 1895, he established an accident compensation fund for its workers. 1901, he introduced something that all of us take for granted in India today, he introduced for the first time ever in the country a provident fund scheme for his workers. He introduced gymnasias for his workers. He introduced a creche, Empress Mills established a creche a few years later for the children of women who worked within Empress Mills. And he was asked to explain why he was investing so much in worker welfare. And speaking in 1895, perhaps the only long speech of Jamsetji Tata during which he said, we do not claim to be more unselfish, more generous or more philanthropic than other people, but we think we started on sound and straightforward business principles, considering the interests of our shareholders our

own. Note what he says, the interests of our shareholders our own, and the health and welfare of our employees, the sure foundation of our prosperity. So if you look at this statement, which was made more than 140 years ago, you see the equal emphasis on making capital work well for shareholders, and at the same time, giving back to employees and making that the sure foundation of our prosperity, that is the philosophy which has been running through the Tata Group. Even today, if the Tata Group is known as a corporation, which is fair to its employees and takes care of its employees, it is also known as a business corporation, which delivers splendid shareholder returns to its shareholders. So empirically, over the last 153 years, the voyage of the Tata Group is proof enough that there is no inherent conflict between capital, the use of capital in the most efficient manner, and ensuring that some of the benefits of that efficient use of capital flow back to the people who have actually made that happen. I think 153 years is a long time for empirical proof points.

DJ: True. The other thing that struck me, Harish, while reading the various stories, I was just noticing the phenomenal diversity in the number of businesses and ventures Tata Group is in, right, Motor, Steel, Software, Watches, Cancer Treatment, Sericulture, Beverages, Retail, Chemicals, Communications, Air Conditioning, and I am sure I am not even scratching the surface of the entire list, given that you have a sort of a group wide view now, how does the group think about core competence, in essence, you know, you spoke about how you drew your sphere saying consumer goods, right, and you sort of operated within it, but as a group, how does the group think about, you know, what is the canvas that it will play in and not play in?

HB: You know, our group website talks about this. I mean the Group Chairman has spoken about it a few times. There are specific industry sectors in which we are present, where we try to develop and have developed deep competence. There is IT Services, there is Steel, there is Motors or Automobiles, there is Consumer and Retail, there is the Infrastructure in defense sector, there is Financial Services. So there is a choice the group has made on the business sectors that it has to be present in, and in those business sectors, it takes all efforts to ensure that we develop deep competence and offer our customers exceedingly good products and services at very good value. So that choice is made by the Board of Tata Sons, which considers capital allocation across these industry sectors for now and in the future. So in the most recent past, you might have heard our Chairman speak about the digital ventures, which the group is now getting into, that is the capital allocation choice, which the group is making for the future because digital is soon going to become the default way for many many millions of Indian consumers and for a lot of Indian society. I think the group has also, consistently over its history, made choices about the businesses that it does not want to be present in. And that is also clear to us from a capital allocation perspective. So you will find certain kinds of businesses, which the group has never entered and will probably never enter in the future either.

DJ: Hmm. And just changing track a little bit before coming back to your book, Harish, clearly, there is a role of stories in the way consumers think about a brand, stories also help in building culture in a company and in driving a certain set of values, what have you learnt about the internal application of stories if you will, what are the three-four things companies need to bear in mind to get that right?

HB: What do you mean by the internal application of stories?

DJ: In essence, within the Tata Group, you know, I realize there is a certain discipline in the way stories are shared in different forums, the way the stories are, you know, what are the topics around which you share stories, there is an opportunity to be deliberate about how we use stories as a vehicle for transmitting values, transmitting culture from what I see, so I was wondering if that is a piece that I was talking about.

HB: You can take #TataStories and this book. The stories fall into three categories. There are stories of pioneers who have broken new ground, entered new industries, gone through tribulations of entering new industries and eventually made successes of them, so there are stories of pioneering. There are stories of excellence. If you look at JRD Tata and his complete focus on excellence or Nani Palkhivala, those are stories of excellence. There are stories of pioneering, our stories of Jamsetji Tata and his quest for an integrated steel plant in India or stories of Ratan Tata and his quest for India's first indigenous car or stories of JRD Tata and his quest for India's first commercial airline. So there are stories of pioneering, there are stories of excellence and there are stories of giving back to the community in this book. If you look at #TataStories, there are stories about the fight against cancer, there are stories of the establishment of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research or the Indian Institute of Science or NCPA. So most of the stories within the Tata Group, which are consumed either externally or internally, are around these three very powerful pillars. They are around pioneering, around excellence and around community because authentically, these are the three pillars, which have stood the Tata brand aloft. So I would say one important lesson for me is different brands may have different pillars and different brands may have different ideals holding them up. But it is very very important for a brand to be authentic to what it stands about and have a discipline of narrating those stories, which are authentic to the idea of the brand and which are true to the idea of the brand. So that is one discipline that the Tata Group always bears in mind. The second thing that we bear in mind is that the legends of the Tata Group, such as Jamsetji Tata, our Founder, such as JRD Tata who was our Chairman for 50 years, a lot of our principles are derived from them. So, to be true to that, what we do is on the 3rd of March, we celebrate Founder's Day, which was Jamsetji Tata's birthday, on the 29th of July, we celebrate JRD Tata's birthday, and we use those days also to reflect on the stories of these giants on whose shoulders we stand today. So that is also a discipline that the group pursues every single year. Both 3rd March and 29th July are secret dates on our calendar where stories of these legends are celebrated and we pay tribute to them once again.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This is your host Deepak Jayaraman here once again. Another institution that does a great job of Storytelling is the Armed Forces. Here is Captain Raghu Raman (RR) speaking about the power of Stories in building culture in a unit.

RR: "I think, how the forces do it is by storytelling, by creating a narrative of that organization which is so strong and so powerful, that any time a person puts on that uniform and he has got the shoulder badge and whatever it may be, Jat Regiment, Rajput, Bihar, Rashtriya Rifle, 22 Mech and the moment you adopt that, you sort of put on that clothing on yourself and you become part of that unit, you also are immersed into the legends of that unit. So, for example, one of the rituals that happen in a battalion is as soon as new soldiers are commissioned in and they may come in a batch of 15 to 20 or 30 or whatever they are actually taken around the officers' mess and the quarter guard and they are shown all the trophies. Every narrative is 'To retrieve this flag, we lost 30 people in that battle; to recover the dead body of one of our comrades, we launched seven attacks and we lost several more in the process, but we did not leave the body of one of our soldiers behind'. By the time you listen to the third or the fourth or the fifth story, your hair is standing on end, and you realize that you are in a temple, you are in the presence of your ancestors who have left this legacy behind, and that's the expectation from you."

DJ: If you liked this topic, you might want to look up playtopotential.com and look for the Playlists on Culture and Storytelling.

If you are interested in receiving short 2 min extracts of wisdom from the podcast served up a couple of times a week, consider signing up by sending a Whatsapp message at +918591452129. I repeat the number is +918591452129. Here, we share short extracts across the various guests we have at the podcast. Typically, it is one small extract on a Wednesday and one on a Saturday. Let's now get back to the conversation with Harish Bhat.

DJ: One of the stories that caught my attention in the book, Harish, was the one of JRD Tata and Aspi Engineer, responding to the challenge set out by His Highness the Aga Khan for the first Indian to fly between England and India and there is a segment around the spark plug, which was fascinating for me. Without breaking suspense, I would love for you to share a little bit of context around this story and maybe, just to ask the following question as well, you know, the story is about competing yet collaborating, so if you could give us a sense of the story and what it means to the Tata Group in the way it operates its businesses.

HB: So let me not take away from the suspense of the story, I think listener should read the story yourself, that is the way it would best come to life, but this was a race announced by the Aga Khan way back in 1930 for the person who would complete the fastest solo flight between India and England in that year. JRD Tata was one of the competitors in the race and Aspi Engineer, a young Parsi boy was the other competitor in the race, and there was a third competitor called Manmohan Singh as well. It is an exciting story because you will see the way each of these people proceeded on their voyage, Aspi Engineer was actually flying from England to India, JRD Tata was flying from India to England, so JRD Tata took off from Karachi, Aspi Engineer took off from London and you could go either way in the race. The pivotal point is actually a point at which Aspi Engineer and JRD Tata meet somewhere in Egypt, an airfield in the midst of their respective voyages and JRD Tata asks Aspi Engineer what are you doing here, why is your flight parked here and why are you not moving forward and Aspi Engineer tells him that listen, my spark plugs have malfunctioned, so I am waiting for other spark plugs to come but that may take some time, in the middle of Egypt, you do not get spark plugs that easily. And then JRD Tata actually offers Aspi Engineer some of his own spark plugs so that Aspi Engineer does not need to wait and can take off quickly. Aspi Engineer wins that race by a couple of hours. JRD loses that specific race but both of them win friends for life. And I am not going to narrate the second half of that story here because it will be taking away, let us say, the thunder from the story if I do that. But as you read the latter half of that story, it is really heartwarming to see where their friendship led to because over the course of the next 40 or 50 years, both became great sons of India, JRD Tata became Chairman of the Tata Group and a legend in the country, and Aspi Engineer became the Air Chief Marshal, the Head of the Indian Air Force, and himself became a legend amongst the Air Force and the Armed Forces and across the nation. So they were competing with each other, and who also collaborated with each other. And JRD Tata calls it one of the most fulfilling experiences of his own life as he reflects on that adventure.

DJ: And I love the way you say it he lost that specific race, right. And that is the perspective that is helpful to have.

HB: See, I believe in life, it is not important to win every specific race. It is important to win the more, it is important to win the races, which are truly meaningful and where you are adding value to the company you are part of, the people you are working with in a very meaningful and significant way. And winning a race in a graceful gentlemanly way, you can be competitive, yet gentlemanly, winning a race, which is competitive, yet you do it in a very graceful gentlemanly way, I believe are some of the best races that you can win.

DJ: On that note, Harish, this podcast is titled Play to Potential, what does this term mean to you, how have you thought about playing to your full potential at various points in time?

HB: So what I would take out from it is, each of us is born with some talents and there are other talents that we develop in our life, other capabilities that we develop in our life. So, for instance, at this point in my career and my life, I know I have certain capabilities to bring to bear in the sphere of marketing, brand building and consumer behavior. I also know I have capabilities in the area of writing and storytelling. And as I outlook my life in the years ahead, I am now 59 years of age, so as I outlook the next 15 or 20 years of my life, I would ask myself, am I going to leverage these capabilities that I have to the best of my ability, am I going to reach the potential, which I can, say, achieve by using these capabilities in the best possible manner. That is what Play to Potential means. It means each of us has inherent potential, which we can build on and since we live life just once, how do we use that potential to its fullest, is what I got out of Play to Potential. That requires focus, it requires energy, it requires discipline, but it also requires creativity and lateral thinking. Most importantly, it requires a purpose that you work towards in your life and how do you use your capabilities to help realize that purpose, which can make life very fulfilling to you. So that is what the theme Play to Potential means to me.

DJ: Got it. Harish, it has been a pleasure having you on the podcast. Thank you so much for being generous with your time.

HB: Thank you, Deepak. It has been a pleasure speaking with you and to all your listeners, I would urge you if you have not already read #TataStories, this is my invitation to you to pick up the book and read it. Many many stories in this book will provoke you, will inspire you, will probably even move you to more meaningful action in your own lives. Thanks a lot for this conversation.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Thank you for listening. I hope you found the conversation purposeful. A couple of messages before we wrap up.

If you are interested in receiving short 2 min extracts of wisdom from the podcast served up a couple of times a week, consider signing up by sending a Whatsapp message at +918591452129. I repeat the number is +918591452129. Here, we share short extracts across the various guests we have at the podcast. Typically, it is one small extract on a Wednesday and one on a Saturday.

Do also rate and review the show on Apple podcasts or wherever you consume the content. It might seem like a repetitive ask. But trust me it makes a big difference in people discovering this podcast amidst a lot of noise out there given the boom in the podcast supply in India in the last few months. It also helps us attract good quality speakers.

As mentioned earlier, to take a moment to visit www.akanksha.org/heart-for-art to see how you can contribute to the education of children from low-income communities and help them play to their potential.

To know more about what is in the podcast archives and the advisory work I do, you could just visit www.playtopotential.com

Thank you and hope to have you tune into one of the subsequent conversations at the podcast. Bye now.

End of transcription

Nugget from Indranil Chakraborty that is referenced: [Demystifying Business storytelling](#).

Nugget from Captain Raghu Raman that is referenced: [Building Culture a lesson from the Army](#).

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Early Career: We live in a world of abundance of choices and that can be disconcerting and paralyzing. Leaders across fields talk about how individuals should think about some of their early career moves including the very first job that they need to think of when they graduate from an educational institution. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Mid-Career: Some leaders talk about how they changed course from one trajectory to another mid-career. This can be an unnerving passage of play where there is a chance of the individual feeling “stuck”. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Navigational Principles: Leaders discuss their personal frameworks around how they made choices around pivotal moments in their lives. They articulate the set of criteria we should consider having when we are at a fork on the road and have to pick between disparate options. Arguably one of the most critical skills of the future as we navigate a world of abundance. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Pursuing your passion: “Follow your heart” is an advice that is commonly doled out to individuals that are trying to make career choices. However, the reality is little more nuanced. People who have followed their heart talk about how they have weaved it into their lives or in some cases, how they have been pragmatic about taking the plunge. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Inflection points: Inflection points are when the notion of “what got you here won’t get you there” hold. Whether it is a company moving from a start-up to a scale-up or a leader moving from a CXO to a CEO role, these passages of play have to be navigated carefully as there is a high risk of derailment. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Storytelling: Perspectives from practitioners and thought leaders on how we could use the power of stories at the work place in order to build a stronger culture. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Social Impact: Leaders across domains talk about how they have thought about Social Impact and where the seeds of giving were sown. They discuss their approach to philanthropy and the underlying principles they have used to get to what they are doing now. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Culture: Culture eats Strategy for breakfast but how does one build it. Leaders across domains (Academics, Armed Forces, Silicon Valley, Bollywood, Venture Investing) talk about the notion of culture and how they go about building it in their organizations. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Teamwork: Insights from different walks of life on what it takes to drive a culture of teamwork in a unit. You can access the playlist [here](#).

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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Harish Bhat - Nuggets

- 80.01 Harish Bhat - Key choices along the way
- 80.02 Harish Bhat - Perspectives on Navigating Career
- 80.03 Harish Bhat - Taking a pause
- 80.04 Harish Bhat - Art of storytelling
- 80.05 Harish Bhat - Profits with purpose
- 80.06 Harish Bhat - Identification with Labour AND Capital
- 80.07 Harish Bhat - Shaping culture through stories
- 80.08 Harish Bhat - Competing with a collaborative spirit
- 80.09 Harish Bhat - In Summary - Playing to Potential

About Deepak Jayaraman

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

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