



Guest

Raghu is formally trained as an engineer with an MS in Bio-Medical Engineering from IIT, Madras, He has been in immersive involvement in questions of human life.

He says that three extraordinary teachers mentored him when he was going through a very difficult phase of life, namely, J Krishnamurti, Yogacharya Krishnamacharya and Pulin K Garg. He was intimately involved with them for more than a decade from his late twenties. This engagement not only transformed him, it gifted him with the path that he has walked, his Sadhana.

He has been Cofounder of the Sumedhas Academy of Human Context since 1995, and of the Barefoot Academy of Governance with TISS since 2012. As Director of FLAME TAO Knoware Pvt Ltd his work spans the commercial world of consulting by helping redesign the client organization for greater alignment and synergy. His work revolves around helping individuals, groups and organizations discover their dharma, and become the best they can be. This aligns with his own personal Sadhana.

His recent book - 5 Seats of Power - Discovering the best you can be through the Mahabharata - provides thought-provoking frameworks drawn from Indic Wisdom for understanding leadership and culture-building. In our conversation we dig into details around Raghu's journey and his insights from the book.

Context to the conversation

Welcome to the 93rd conversation at the Play to Potential Podcast, a series of reflective conversations from leading people from various domains on three broad themes – Leadership, Transitions and Careers. Just like businesses think about where to play and how to win in the context of their strategy, we all think about the two questions – where to go and how to grow at various points in our lives. These questions become that much harder in a world of abundance, multiplicity of options and limited feedback. Through this podcast, I hope to share some insights that might help you navigate these questions in a more thoughtful way.

While podcasting accounts for 10-20% of my time and effort, my primary vocation is that of an Executive Coach and a Discreet Sounding Board with CEOs/Entrepreneurs. I engage with leaders and organizations with a growth mindset and helping them play to their unique potential. You can learn more about the podcast and my work at www.playtopotential.com.

My guest this time is Raghu Ananthanarayanan. I had first crossed paths with him about 25 years back when I was at IIM Ahmedabad. We had done this course called Exploring Roles and Identities – ERI where we went out to the deserts of the Rann of Kutch in Gujarat and had conversations around some of these topics. I must confess, at that stage, I didn't quite process all that was going on but I just wanted to say that Raghu has been in this field of studying Wisdom from Indian sources whether

it is Yoga or Mahabharata for several decades now. He talks about some of these things in detail in our conversation. I would rather you hear about it from him in his words.

Without further ado, let us listen and learn from a Master who has been honing his craft and working on himself over the last several decades. After a long time, it was wonderful to have a podcast conversation in person at his home in Kotagiri near Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Raghu, thank you so much for making the time on the Play to Potential podcast.

Raghu Ananthanarayanan (RA): Yeah, I am happy to...

DJ: And it's lovely to do this in the lovely place you have in Kotagiri, so thank you for hosting us here.

RA: You have to thank my wife for that, Deepak.

DJ: I think, two years of Covid and most of the conversations have been on Zoom and online platforms. So, it's really refreshing to be able to sit across the table, across the chair...

RA: That's true...

DJ: ...and chat with somebody so thank you once again.

RA: That's true, yeah.

DJ: Raghu, in this podcast series, we will get to the insights from the book you have recently published but before that we end up spending a lot of time on people's journeys and their choices. So, maybe just to give the listeners a sense of where you come from, can you talk to us a little bit about your childhood and how it shaped you?

RA: Okay. I might be one of the few people around now whose childhood started in a joint family, a large house and my grandfather was very much into culture. I think, since you asked about what shaped me, I think, that definitely had a huge influence. He was a very well-known author on income tax and things like that, but his passion was to look at artists. Like Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar was somebody with whom he patronised. So, we would have a lot of concerts of Chembai at home. There was a huge room in which people would gather and there were these concerts. Apart from that, there was a person called Sushila Achutharaman who was distantly related to us and she was into Harikatha. So, she would come off over and recite the maha... you know, the whole storytelling tradition and that was one very strong thing I remember. Plus, I think, one other thing I go back to very often is my grandfather used to tell us stories, and he had a... he would read the Mahabharata or the Ramayana and he would recite some of those things, stop, tell us the meaning and once in a while, he'll stop and he'll tell you a self-reflective story. So, I distinctly remember when this whole thing about Sita and all that came up, he actually wept and he said you don't know, I have treated your grandmother badly and things like that. So, quite often nowadays I wonder whether the way I

teach is very much like that; it's very self-reflective. The book is also completely self-reflective and that's the whole journey. So, I don't know, maybe that was a... that was a big influence.

DJ: Wow, and I am sure we can go deeper but just to move the conversation forward, you went to IIT Madras as well?

RA: That's right.

DJ: Several batches before, I went to campus but post IIT you made a set of choices which are I would say quite different from a lot of the others. So, can you talk a little bit about some of the key choices you might have made post that and maybe you also talk a little bit about what you do now?

RA: See, I think most of the choices that I made were actually set in the last couple of years of study. I finished in 72. So, seventies were a very... very important time across the globe because there were lot of student revolutions happening all over the world. Vietnam was happening, and I got to meet people who were part of the Vietnam Resistance in America, who were traveling the world, who drop into IIT and these were very interesting kind of movements. So, at a time when the general idea in IIT is to go abroad, I was confronted with now really looking at many of these influences, which made me deeply question what should I do with my life? One of my friends was very interested in Sri Aurobindo, so we would read that together and things like that. So, these were very critical things, and the other critical thing was meeting up with Dharampal; unfortunately, not very many people know about Dharampal. He was a Gandhian who had worked with the Panchayati Raj, setting up the Panchayati Raj system in India and he has done a lot of study of what was India like in the 17th-18th century just when the British came in. And his recounting of it, which interestingly is largely from Vice... you know, the records of the British, the Vice-Regal records in Britain, he went there spent a long time is a fascinating study. And when you hear people like this who have been in the movement, who have really studied this speak to you about India, it really moves you, the kind of sacrifices that were made. His own direct experience of Gandhiji. And then there was another very important Professor called, we used to call him Caesar, Seshadri, Dr. Seshadri. He was another big influence because he was one of the people in IIT who challenged the idea of why we are doing science, why are we doing technology, what should we focus on? So, though immediately after IIT, I went into working with a medium scale company; my dad was running a company making printing machines, I got in heading manufacturing but very soon things changed because when I went in things seem hunky-dory from the outside, so when you go in you discover how the organisation is working and I went right into a turnaround situation. And I did a lot of work on the shop floor, which is like bringing in flow manufacturing and things like that. My focus was operations research. So, a lot of the work that I did was on that production manufacturing. So, I did that and did bring about a turnaround as far as the operations were concerned. So, slash down the turnaround time of manufacturing the machine to one-third of what it was and things like that. But the other thing that happened was I discovered how many mistakes my dad had made in running the business and abhipraya bhedam like you call. So, I just I had to leave, and that's when the choices became much more critical. And by that time this whole... Dharampal was in Chennai over a period of time so constant engagement with him plus other influences and things like that. So, one of the critical things I think that happened which really changed the course was a conversation that I had with Dharampal, many of us, not just me, where he asked a group of us what are you going to do with your education? Are you going to run behind the tales of the West or are you going to invest it in India? How do you make India great? Can you do it by going abroad? What's your idea? And also, this whole question of what does it mean to be Indian. And the necessity of going back to your roots in order to build that you can't import ideas and graft them on a culture that is not compatible. So, several ideas like this. So, that's when one of the suggestions he made was that each of us take up an area of study, go to a teacher, study for at least 10 years and study a text in depth and see why it

is relevant for India today. So, his advice was very, very simple. He said, don't go and study to glorify India; go and study to see if there is something real out here. So, many of us took up different areas of studies. So, I went into yoga particularly to look at psyche, how the psyche works, my wife Sashi, she was also a part of this, there was a movement called The People's Patriotic Science and Technology. So, she went to study Vastushastra, Balu studied Vriksha Ayurveda, MD went into, MD Srinivasan went into studying Indian Mathematics and Science, Nayjyoti went into studying Aesthetics. So, it was not just me, many of us...

DJ: What's fascinating as I hear you Raghu is the pathway, you spent 10 years go deep, there are no easy answers at the surface, you need to really go deep, it takes 10 years and then see what you can do with it. That's such a refreshing approach to driving change rather than just running with it.

RA: Yeah, of course.

DJ: And cutting to today Raghu you work with a lot of people on.... one of the things that struck me when I was doing the research for this conversation as in your website to define your dharma as helping people becoming a better version of themselves. Can you talk a little bit about just this just to understand the language when you say dharma, what do you have in mind when you say that, and how did you get here in your journey?

RA: See, the word dharma is actually a very simple word. It gets complicated but it's a very simple word. The word the way I am translating it is when I am doing something, I have to ask myself three questions. First is, how is it enlivening me, how is my action enlivening me. How is it enlivening you or whoever I am interacting with and how is it enlivening the context that all of us depend upon, which might be the Earth which might be a larger context. Now, if all three are yes simultaneously, it's dharmic.

DJ: And when you say enlivening can you expand on that?

RA: Because I am quite simple, you make cosmetics and you push somebody to wear cosmetics because the brown colour will become white; this is not that dharmic. It might increase your profitability but you are creating in the person who's using it a self-deprecating mind. Half the stuff that is put in there is bad chemicals, might even give skin problems, how is this dharmic? Whereas Aravind Eye Clinic, obviously dharmic, the way they serve people, the way they work within themselves, it's a fabulous way of doing business. So, any action you can ask this question, it's not a difficult question to ask, but it's a difficult question to answer. And it's very obvious that the Earth, all the crises that we are facing today is because enough number of people have not asked the dharmic question.

DJ: And in your journey, Raghu, how have you gotten to defining what is your dharma which is in line with...

RA: See, there are two three parallel lines that I have been following in my life. The underlying question has always been how do people work, what makes them tick and things like that, because I was interested in that question for myself. And like I told you when I went into work the first thing, I hit was a turnaround situation. What I found there was that the mindset was impacting the business much more than the actual dynamics of the business; how things were understood. Now, after this, I got into a series of consulting assignments most all of which were turnarounds. So, I worked with Parry Sugar, that was a turnaround situation. I worked with a yacht making company, again, turnaround. Everywhere it's very, very clear that the psyche of the person, how they look at business, how they understand the world impacts the whole culture and that is very critical. So, that

was a very important question when I went into organisations. Now, the Dharampal thing had also triggered a whole set of engagement with craft and with grassroots work. We have done a fair amount of work with Dalit Groups and with various developmental things. So, everywhere you go finally people are using resources or people are reacting to situations. So, you have to ask the question how can each of us be the best that we can be? And that includes the dharma question. You cannot believe that you are doing something honourable, and you are doing the best without saying whether what I am doing is dharmic or not so... and I think it's a natural thing. Most people tend to be compassionate; most people tend to think of larger things. I think there is a current discourse which is pushing individuality and pushing self-centeredness, because when I meet people, there is a tension inside them. When they are doing something which is self-centred, they know and they pay a price through hell, through relationship issues; one way or the other they pay a price.

DJ: Let's move to your book, Raghu, *Five Seats of Power*. Congratulations on the book and for me, I have been a... I won't say I have studied Mahabharata, but I have been influenced by Mahabharata and I have spent some time thinking about it. Even during the lockdown, we spent some time watching the Mahabharata with family or the kids. So, I think the way you have sort of taken it and analysed it opened up a lot of questions for me. Answers will take some time to evolve but definitely the questions got provoked, but talk to us a little bit about the genesis of the book.

RA: Yeah, just to go back to the earlier thing I said, the idea of the book is not to give you answers. The idea of the book is to help you ask the right questions. Because all of Indian thought is actually meant to ask for you to ask the right questions and then for you to discover the answers in your life. Like this dharma thing is a question. If somebody gives you an answer, don't follow it because you will have to ask this question in different contexts and discover your answer. So, my book if it triggers questions, I am very happy; if it gives too many answers, I am a little worried.

DJ: I think, it did leave me with a lot of questions.

RA: Good.

DJ: So, do you want to talk a little bit about how... the story behind the book?

RA: Yeah, sure, sure. See, I was telling you about some of the grassroots work I have done and things like that. One of the areas of my work has been with a group called Koothu-P-Pattarai, you know, there's a very well-known theatre group and Na Muthuswamy, who is the key person, the inspiration whatever behind it, and I have been interacting for many, many years and I have helped Koothu-P-Pattarai also, I was mentoring... and I was on the board for a while. The central inspiration of Koothu-P-Pattarai is Theru-k-Koothu and Bharatha Kothu and generally people look at the village theatre as some archaic thing; it is not. When you go into it, it's a huge depth of understanding that these artists have. It's a sad thing that some of the best koothu artists today for their life, for example, Kannappa Thambiran's son is an auto driver to make things meet, but he goes back for his performances. You speak to them about the Mahabharata, it's fascinating, the detail that they know it. The way they talk to each other and even that, even in our homes it's quite common, my grandmother would say, nada, why are you behaving like Duryodhana or why don't you be like Bheema. So, these characters in the Mahabharata are not in the book, they are in everyday reality. And the koothu especially really goes into the depth of each character and looks at the human parallels, how these are part of one human being. Like, for example, there is this whole tradition where the Mahabharata is supposed to be seen as something coming out of Vyasa's psyche, that's the ground, and there are two trees that are growing. One the Duryodhana tree and one is the Yudhishtira tree. Now, if you look at it like that then the Mahabharata becomes my story, when I am reading it, I am Vyasa, I am understanding it through my meaning-making. So, if I then start using

it as a self-reflective process, it's extremely powerful. So, then it's today's story, it's now story; that's how Na Muthuswamy would look at it. And when I was doing leadership training, I would juxtapose the idea of a human mind and leadership and so on that was current in the organisation with the depth and the beauty of leadership and power and all that that the Mahabharata talks about. So, for a long time I have been bringing the Mahabharata as a training tool. See, like in behavioural training you can't talk and do a chalk and talk or a PowerPoint these days about behaviour. I have to confront you with behaviour. So, I use theatre for that, and the best theatre to use to understand power is the Mahabharata. So, that became something that I delved into along with my yoga thing for three-four decades. So, encouraging people to look at it, encouraging people to have dialogues about how their action is reflecting one of these forms of power. So, that's something I have been working with for quite some time.

DJ: Lucky. I think just getting into the book, Raghu, you talk about the five Pandava archetypes and you say that each archetype is a different type of power that we can unleash, each one of us. You also talk about the distinction between an archetype and a stereotype...

RA: That's right.

DJ: ...which I found really illuminating. So, can you talk about the five archetypes for the purpose of listeners, just paint a picture of what those are and also make the distinction between the archetypes and the stereotypes.

RA: Stereotypes and the archetypes. You were watching the television series Mahabharata? If I am not mistaken, Dara Singh comes as Bheema?

DJ: You might be right, correct.

RA: Yeah, I think so.

DJ: Correct, I am trying to...

RA: That's a stereotype, okay? That Bheema is this big guy and he's got this...

DJ: No, Dara Singh, actually comes as Hanuman in Ramayana.

RA: In Ramayana, okay, that's also a stereotype.

DJ: Bheema was someone else, I think.

RA: Yeah, but Bheema will be one of these big guys year, it can't be anybody else, right? Now, that is a stereotype and the archetype has nothing to do with this external form. The archetype are the essential characteristics of any figure. Now, if you take Bheema the essential characteristics are love for adventure, passion, he loves Draupadi the most of all the brothers. So, these kinds of essential characteristics are the archetypes. Now, when you boil something like this down to the archetype then Bheema can be inside you, Bheema can be inside me, I don't have to have rippling muscles to be Bheema. When I awaken this part of me which has passion and adventure, Bheema inhabits me. When I invoke or evoke the part of me that loves order, that loves stability and uses all my energies to establish that I am a Yudhishtira. When I invoke compassion and service in me, I am a Nakula. And when I invoke love of knowledge and curiosity, I am a Sahadeva. And when I can confront paradoxes of life, the dharma sankatas of life, the dilemmas of life and ask deep existential questions, I am an Arjuna. So, the moment you understand them as archetypes, they are in all of us and the book suggests... it's very clear in the book itself, that it ought to be read like this, the

introductory things in the book starts where there are questions between Vyasa and Brahma, why should I write this book? So, he says, write it so people can reflect and he also says write the book, replete with the rasas of life because people cannot understand the truth from the Upanishads and all these things. But if you write in a way that is evocative of the rasas of living, they will understand, So, the Mahabharata is... one of the most important psychologists in India, Girindrasekhar Bose has called the Mahabharata the most complete compendium of case studies. So, any human situation, you will find a story which reflects the human situation, there will be characters there who exemplify different types of behaviours. So, the whole book is situations where there are different types of behaviour: dharmic behaviour, behaviour that is not dharmic and what happens.

DJ: And what I find fascinating as well is each person is shown in several shades of grey...

RA: Of course.

DJ: ...and not as a...

RA: Yeah, no monoliths.

DJ: And no right and no wrong.

RA: Yeah, no right no wrong, that's right.

DJ: And every person under different circumstances...

RA: Can evoke a dharmic or an adharmic response. Like talking about archetype, the Bheema and the Duryodhana are the same archetype and it's set beautifully in the Mahabharata, they both study with the same teacher, Balarama, both are gadadharis and they are both powerful people. And the way Bheema brings alive these capabilities and the way Duryodhana brings them alive are very different.

DJ: Let's talk about that Raghu, I was going to get to that. You talk about the notion of counterpoints in the book for at the least the Pandava archetype.

RA: Not Pandavas, in Kauravas.

DJ: In the Kauravas. So, can you talk a little bit about, you know, in the book you talk about Bheema and Duryodhana, Yudhishtira and Bhishma on the other side. Arjuna and Karna on the other side, Nakula and Gandhari on the other side, and Sahadeva and Shakuni on the other side. So, can you just shine the light on just the distinction between these two and how they end up on different sides?

RA: Yeah, see if you look at the essential character of Yudhishtira, this is a person who will use his psyche, his everything to respond to order and see how the situation is orderly disorderly and bring it back to order. There's even a very interesting discussion at the end of the war on the 18th day, who should lead the war? Should Bheema lead the war or Yudhishtira lead the war, because it has to be a decisive battle. So, they go to Krishna because they can't resolve this question. So, Krishna says, Yudhishtira has to lead the war because Bheema will escalate the war. He will not know how to fight in a way that you can bring peace at the end of the war. This is brilliant. So, the Yudhishtira's power lies in going into areas of chaos and bringing in order. You take Bhishma, he is also a person with great knowledge, wants to create order, but he is so rigid about it that he cannot respond to the context. So, when the Draupadi vastra-haran is happening he is the final arbiter of truth. He is the one who has the power. He simply isn't willing to say that rules are rigid, dharma is

not following the rules. So, he ends up in the Kauravas side. You take Nakula, he's serving, you hardly hear about him the whole of the Mahabharata but he is always there in every scene, he is mentioned, but there's nothing much mentioned about him because he is setting the context. He sacrificed himself completely for the context. You take what Gandhari has done. She has gone into a situation which is terrible, she is betrayed, her husband is blind and all that fine, but if I want to serve will I blind myself also or will I be the eyes? So, in the idea of service that Gandhari brings in, there are lots of very, very, you know, nice things but she has self-sacrificed herself to the detriment of the context. You take Shakuni and Sahadeva and it's interesting in many of the battles these are the people who have to fight and kill each other and only one of them can survive in the Mahabharata battle. So, you have this intelligent person who can see who has forethought, who has foresight, and the way Sahadeva uses foresight and the way Shakuni uses foresight, they are the counter points. So that's the brilliance of the Mahabharata. So, it tells you in different contexts how a dharmic mind of a certain archetype will act, and how the same archetype if it awakens an adharmic motivation how they will act and how this will lead inevitably to a confrontation, which is destructive.

DJ: And back to the Pandava archetypes Raghu, you also say that each of these archetypes have a shadow side.

RA: That's right.

DJ: So, can you talk a little bit about how we think about that and how do we manage that?

RA: Yeah. See, the most famous scene in the Mahabharata is Draupadi's vastra-haran. And what is happening there. Just imagine yourself as like this Bhishma, Yudhishtira archetype, always doing the right thing, whatever but you are human. There's a part of you that will rebel against this kind of rigid, keeping aside my feelings, keeping aside my intuitions, keeping aside my passion and doing the right thing. So, what happens to that energy? You keep pushing it, you keep pushing it. So, here you have Shakuni who has understood this so he has seen your shadow. So, he tempts you and you as Yudhishtira give the most exalted reasons to actually gamble. That's the shadow side of you. And these are related. So, this side would like to play, it would like to just say, damn the rules, damn order, damn what's right and wrong, just let me go. Now, these sides are there in all the Pandavas, because every one of them at some point of time or the other screws up, they make a mistake. Now, the fundamental difference between the Pandavas and the Kauravas is every time they make a mistake, the Pandavas go into a period of agyantavasa, they go into retreat and they ask themselves in doing what I was doing what was I really doing, where did it come from? And then they go and meet sages, they do tapas, it's all described, how they work with it, and how they work with themselves, and it's very interesting because especially after this gambling scene in the agyantavasa when they go into the exile, they meet sages who tell them stories about other people who did something similar and how they came out of it.

DJ: Fascinating.

RA: And at the end of that the actual agyantavasa period when they become exiles to themselves is a fascinating story. Each of them, there's actually a discussion before they go in to Virata where they ask who will be the... how will we not be recognised at all, disguise. So, it is described like this that Yudhishtira smiles and says I will go as the gambling companion to the king. So, these shadow sides which are my strangers and to myself in a sense have to be met, have to be understood fully so they have to live with it for one year. And these are five people who have always been kings, they have to be servants. They have always been together; they have to be completely alone. So, they have to go and explore parts of themselves that have never been touched. So, imagine that I am a leader who

has not worked with my shadow selves. What will I do with my power when the context triggers the shadow, triggers the compulsive parts of me. They will just come out and I will use my power to justify it, I will use it to cover it up and it's a disaster. We have seen leaders, national leaders and so on who have just been rampant with power, they have not worked with their shadows. So, the Mahabharata makes it very, very clear, unless you have really, really worked with your shadow, you cannot enter a dharmic war.

DJ: And relating that to let's say a contemporary business life Raghu, what would the equivalent of an agyatavasa mean? Would that mean going to a meditation retreat, would it be something else?

RA: No, going into agyatavasa in a current context would mean two things for me. I mean, most of the CEOs I have coached also this has been my advice. One is, see, most people who come to a CEO level and very senior levels are fundamentally intelligent people and they also have an ability to look at themselves, it's not as though they don't have that ability, but when you get these compulsions and the shadows opened up, they overpower you, they are more powerful than you. So, there are two-three things that are necessary. One, you have to have a daily practice where you set aside time to sit back and ask fundamental questions of yourself; I call it the Arjuna time. Every leader must set that aside and ask very deep questions plus health and whatever, that is a separate thing. The other thing is it is necessary to go on a retreat every now and again to really pull out of what you are doing and go and do something that will really help you to touch parts of yourself that lie completely hidden in your normal everyday life. The other is to read books like Mahabharata, not to read the usual thing that says, this is how you have to be a leader, that's how you have to be a leader but to read a wide variety of things. So, it allows you to reflect off your thinking and so on and also do thought experiments. Take up a situation and do a complete thought experiment, different triggers will come up. So, you take the thought experiment fully. There are texts like there is a text called the Tripura Rahasya in which the wife coaches the husband how to be a good king.

DJ: Isn't that true in all houses... just joking.

RA: But this is an old book that tells you exactly how to do it. And one of the things that is done is this whole thing of this guy has taken on a few complete thought experiments where he lives one life out, he lives another life out and all that to understand fully and I don't know if you have read the book Hermann Hesse's, Siddhartha, there also there are these things where he uses this thought experiment thing fully. But it requires courage and why a coach becomes useful is because when you do these by yourself your mind can play tricks on you and when you have to really look at the difficult parts of yourself, you will quietly do an escape trick and think that you have got the logic.

DJ: One of the things you spoke about when you described your experience in your father's business, you spoke about the role of mindsets. I think as I was reflecting on the book and the counterpoints, in my work as a sounding board, as a coach with leaders, sometimes there is a mindset situation, for example, if I may take a thought experiment, imagine you have been assigned as a coach to a Duryodhana or a Bhishma or a Karna or a Shakuni, how does one as a coach help move them to the other side?

RA: You can't. See, one of the critical things in coaching which comes in the Mahabharata itself is unless the person has a question, that's why I said the question is more important than the answer. Unless the person has a question, you can't do anything from the outside. And there are also these scenes that are described when Krishna has a discussion with Duryodhana before the war, why don't you stop the war kind of a thing. Duryodhana tells him I know who you are, I know what you are telling me, but my mind has become so completely caught with envy and with this enmity with these people I can't do anything, I am caught.

DJ: He is fully aware of what he is...

RA: He is aware but he is caught with the shadow, with the envy. In fact, there is a beautiful passage in the Mahabharata right early in the game when the Pandavas come out of the forest and then they meet the Kaurava brothers and then they are, I think it's in a place where they are learning things together and Bheema shows his power and Drona says wow or something like that, some scene like this and then they describe that envy entered Duryodhana's heart. He's called Suyodhana till then. So that's the point when Suyodhana became Duryodhana and Susshasana became Dusshasana. Now, when it enters, it is not as though it hasn't entered the Pandavas at some point of time or the other, the Pandavas then question it, they go to a teacher, they go to a sage and say, hey, this is happening to me. So, if that question has not arisen, you can't do a thing. Coaching is only helping this person who comes to you as a coachee to really reflect and get insights into their own behaviour, otherwise coaching simply becomes what is called behaviour modification? How can I be more powerful? So, Duryodhana will go to somebody who will teach him how to beat up the...

DJ: How to win.

RA: ...how to win. I don't think that is coaching; I wouldn't do that kind of coaching. It might still be called coaching, I don't know in the current context how it is called, it might be because then the only thing I can do is hone his skills, make him a little more cunning or something like that. But is that coaching, I don't know, not in this context in any case.

DJ: I want to talk about one of the other elements in the book, dharmasankata. And you talk about that in several situations and you say that Arjuna archetype is a lot about confronting these dharmasankatas is really resolving them. You know, one of the other professors I have studied a gentleman called Joseph Badaracco in Harvard talks about this concept of right versus right. He says in leadership it's not right versus wrong. Very often you have to choose between right versus right. So, what's your approach... I mean, we can have a full two-hour conversation just on this but as an advice for leaders resolving dharmasankatas as they go through their journeys, what have you learned from the Mahabharata that can help leaders?

RA: Yeah, see, one of the things that has always troubled me like I told you is the current discourse or, you know, till recently. Now, there's a lot of people who are talking about contextual intelligence and all that, last five-six years, the idea of a leader being a powerful leader, a Bheema type leader comes from a military understanding of leadership and all of that. And I am sure you know this that most books on management have actually come out of studying war and war theories. So, you know, words like progress, all the strategy, all the critical words in management are all drawn from war literature.

DJ: As an aside, my father was a Retired Brigadier in the Indian Army so I have also had conversations about leadership in the Army.

RA: Yeah, I have questions about leadership in the Army and team-building in the Army.

DJ: We'll come back to that.

RA: Yeah, and also, I think the colonising, last 200 years of colonisation has also given a very different idea of leadership as fundamentally plunder and acquisition. Now, the Indian idea of leadership has always been somebody who can deal with dharmasankata. Vikramaditya is the original model, and I am sure all of us have read Vikramaditya and Betaal. Every story is a double bind dilemma dharmasankata story and how he resolves it is what shows his wisdom. To solve a dharmasankata

kind of a situation requires wisdom, it's not other capabilities. It also requires a deep understanding of the situation of the various forces in the situation and how to balance them. The word mandala, for example, which is the word in India that's used for any, you know, Chalamandalam, the word mandala means there are diverse forces that have to be brought into coherence. Now, if you have been in leadership, you know that it's always, always a question of balancing priorities. Quality versus cost, cost versus delivery, delivery versus product development or whatever. You are always talking payoffs. And there was one management scientist I forget his name who brought in the word satisficing. It's a very interesting term and that is what... a dharmanankata you can never have an optimum solution. You can only have a satisficing solution and if you really have been in leadership situations you know that neither part of this dilemma is going to go away. You solve it for now and in another context, it is going to reappear in a different way. So, wisdom lies in how beautifully you understand this context and how you solve it in a way that it is most coherent. That is leadership. I have a big problem with many of the current ideas of leadership. Every leader knows this, long term versus short-term. Everything you answer has this kind of a... and these are not binaries. These are two sides of a polarity and like a like a magnet they will always be there. You try to cut it; you will have a north and a south again. So, that's the difference between great leaders and successful leaders who don't leave a great company behind.

DJ: And if you look at, if we persist with this Raghu, the leaders who are good at resolving dharmanankata versus those that struggle with it, is there something that is common to some of these leaders who have that wisdom?

RA: Yeah. See, there are two-three things that I find with leaders who are capable of looking at dharmanankata. They are also people who understand different types of power, who are not linear, who are not one-dimensional, who actually understand that different contexts require different parts which is the five seats of power types. Very often I find that these are people whose reading is very wide, they are phenomenally well-read. So, it becomes possible for them to model a situation not in the terms of the situation, but to use something else to change and that helps to change the paradigm. So, they actually have a kaleidoscope kind of possibility of different associations. Many of them have an aesthetic sensibility. There are people who know music, there are people who know art, who are interested in it, many of them are pattern thinkers and that's not very common. They actually think, they can actually think systems, they can actually think systems, no not systems, thinking whatever, not a force thinks. They actually see different parts of the puzzle and they can play with it.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This is your host, Deepak Jayaraman.

I love the point Raghu makes about having different mental models and frames from which we see a situation. Something similar came up in a different context in my conversation with Ashish Dhawan (AD), Philanthropist and former Private Equity investor at ChrysCapital. When I asked him about what it takes to be a good PE investor, he spoke about how it is critical to be a macroeconomist and a historian in equal measure.

AD: *"you have to be a big picture person, almost a macroeconomist and a historian. Macro because you got to understand how the economy works, different sectors, what the drivers are and at a very fundamental level have a sense of that. But historian because you have to understand how industries have developed over time, how market cycles have played out, having that perspective of how it has happened before, how bubbles were created, what were the best times to invest. So, I think having*

historical perspective I believe is absolutely critical and being a little bit of a big picture thinker is important. You can't just say oh, I am looking at this company and doing due diligence, you get too narrow and you are... you lose the forest for the trees in a sense. So, I think, having that trait is important."

DJ: I guess all of us have a certain lens with which we see the world given our training and early wiring. To Raghu's point, it is critical for us to get exposure to different ways of looking at the world and form our mental models.

If you want to dig deeper into this notion of resolving Dharmasankatas, you might like my conversation with Sir Andrew Likierman of London Business School who was on this podcast earlier speaking about the notion of building Judgment.

If you are deriving value from the podcast, do take a moment to rate and review on Apple Podcasts or Spotify or whichever platform you use to consume the content. It will make a big difference to us in terms of people discovering us and speakers building trust with the platform. When they decide if they want to be on the show.

Let's now get back to the conversation with Raghu.

DJ: One of the things in the book which really caught my attention was you say that actually Bhagavad Gita might very well have been a conversation between Karna and Krishna, and the fact that it didn't happen was a lost opportunity. Karna of course did not even see that as an opportunity and eventually it ended up being a conversation between Arjuna and Krishna.

RA: That's right.

DJ: Could you expand on that how just the implication of that insight in daily life, you know, if you want to sort of...

RA: Yeah, sure. See, there's one very, very exciting thing in the Tamil Bharatha Kotthu, where there is a conversation between Sanjaya and Dhritarashtra, which is a retelling of the whole Mahabharata. And it's very, very interesting because the whole dialogue goes like this.

Dhritarashtra says, hey, tell me the story again so that I can understand where I screwed up. So, Sanjaya goes through the whole story and he goes step by step, he says aha, that is where I lost the war. He goes through this thing of his son having been envious and he comes and talks to Dhritarashtra from that envy. He says I lost the war then and like that he goes through step by step each step where if the Kaurava side had responded differently there would have been no war. Now, if you look at the character of Karna, he is a Pandava but abandoned and he holds deep, deep wounds of orphanhood, of honour and things like this. And there are many stories that tell you how he is actually a greater warrior than Arjuna in many ways; he is much more capable. But there is this deep anger and angst and hurt in him apart from his other greatness. And if you look at many situations you will see that people with tremendous capability but with a deep wound have used all their capability in vengeful vengeance, or in some way to keep compensating for the hurt never healing the hurt. Now, if Karna who is very, you know, he's very alive today. Every person with a grouse about us and there is a Karna, every person who feels deprived or denied or discriminated against is a Karna. And these are people with lot of ability, lot of capability whom society has said because you are not of certain pedigree your beauty and your capability will not be honoured. And almost every crisis today you can trace it back to this kind of a violation of human beings. So, if I can have a conversation with this hurt psyche and help this psyche heal and say I will move from using

my power for retribution using my power for some vengefulness to looking at how to build a beautiful world, it would change to change everything. That's what they tried in South Africa, truth and reconciliation, that's what Gandhiji tried of saying how can I assert myself; how can I ask for independence without hating the oppressor. Because once you hate the oppressor, you internalise the oppressor and you then become extremely oppressive yourself. You can see that in history. So, this conversation is waiting to be had and if enough people who are suffering from the reality of... all colonised people in the world are waiting for this dialogue. And then they become the oppressors or many of the people in the so-called West who have misused their power, you go back, they will have a story of vengefulness, of hate. So, if you can have a conversation with a Krishna where this hate is dissolved, the world will be a different place.

DJ: And building on that Raghu who then plays the role of Krishna to facilitate these conversations?

RA: Krishna is not a human being Deepak. Krishna is this divine intelligence, the consciousness within.

DJ: Raghu, if we bring this to our current situation and context, the Karna and Krishna discussion, do you see that happening, has it been had in different situations that you observed?

RA: Yes, yes. I think it's been had. For example, this truth and reconciliation thing that was tried out in South Africa was clearly an attempt to enable people who have been violated to have a conversation with their violators in a larger context not of retribution but of some kind of a healing process. I think this has qualities of what I am talking about. The way Gandhiji spoke about swaraj about swatantrata was I think another step in this direction, where he was clearly not coming from a hate of the oppressor but he took Tilak's statement, swaraj is my birth right to a very beautiful level. So, I don't have to ask for the independence from you, I claim my independence but this claiming of independence if it's with anger and hate, it's not independence.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I want to pause here and play a small clip from Ramachandra Guha who made a similar point at the podcast about what Swaraj meant for Gandhiji.

RG: "for Gandhi political independence meant nothing at all unless it was accompanied by religious harmony, caste and gender equality and the development of self-respect in every Indian, other patriot had used the Hindi word Swaraj to signify national independence. Gandhi made Indians aware of its true or original meaning Swa-Raj or self-Rule. So that is Gandhi in his own words and that is also as I told you a little while ago, I don't believe in saying this is the most important thing the only cause just a one route to success"

DJ: Let's get back to Raghu now.

RA: So, there is a deep healing of wounds here and a listening to a voice which helps you dissolve this anger, dissolves vengefulness and so on. Martin Luther King has talked about it. There are people today working in the Israel-Palestine context who are speaking about similar things where Israelis and Palestinians are talking about how we get beyond mutuality of hurt and violence of this kind and look at each other as human beings. So, it's not as though there are no indications of this, but I think it has to be emphasised, it has to have a very, very strong presence.

DJ: And Krishna at some level is not a person, but it's a concept but who...

RA: No, more than a concept; it's not just a concept. See, when I dissolve my sense of self, in the yoga tradition this is very, very clear and partly this is what is discussed in the Bhagavad Gita also. When the sense of self is dissolved completely, then the mind becomes silent. In that silence there is the voice of pure intelligence of consciousness that can be heard. That voice is the voice of Krishna; that is Krishna. Now, it is portrayed in a human form for the dramatic thing and to build up that whole context and so on, and also if you look at the Indian context, all the gods grow with you. So, Krishna initially will be shown as this little guy who loves butter so the child can relate to this but you are also told that these are the kalyana gunas, these are all the most beautiful qualities of this child. Then he becomes an adolescent, and then he becomes a young person. Finally, you are told that Krishna is the deep indigo colour of the sky when there is no moon. So, you are having a conversation with that whatever you want to call it. Krishna, so you call it Krishna. You are just referring to this colour, to dark matter.

DJ: A related point you mention in the book, Raghu, is you talk about the distinction between heroic and asuric action and you say that often the difference is the state of emotion one operates from, you touched upon it right now. And you go on to say that we all need to operate from a state of equanimity or shantam. Can you say more about this?

RA: See, shantam is a very, very highly valued state of being. All of yoga actually attempts to bring you to that state of shantam or equanimity. Shantam is usually translated as peace, which is, you know, it's not peace. It's the state of quiet high potential but completely quiet. It's like a good like Federer or a good batsman who is still and watching the ball. He is not pre-committed in any way. He is very alive. That is shantam. And he can respond immediately to whatever is appropriate. If you are pre-committed, you can't do that. So, shantam is that pregnant powerful silence.

DJ: Fully alert and fully alive.

RA: Fully alert, fully alive, all possibilities. Now, if I can find a way of getting there and being there most of the time, imagine how powerful I will be, and every action of mine will then be the best that I can be in that moment. But most of us are caught with conditioning. That's the compulsion, compulsiveness and all that, that I talked about. We are caught at different other states which are much more suboptimal than this. So, shantam is a very, very prized way to be, I mean, Chanakya has written a book on why a leader should be a yogi, why a king should be a.... he has written about yoga and he emphasises this. How does this person stay in shantam? And then when you are adjudicating, you are going to be as wise as you can be, when you decide to fight somebody, you know whether it's a real fight or a self-acquisitive fight. So, if you can be in shantam, the chances are you will respond from a deeper intelligence. That's the Krishna voice that I said. But if you are not, the chances are you are going to respond from a self-centred space either in pleasure-seeking or pain avoidance, either acquisitive or violent-reactive; any action that comes out of self-centeredness will turn out to be asuric, it's not dharmic.

DJ: And for busy leaders in the corporate world, you have done a lot of work with leaders in the corporate world, what do you advise them to start at least to go in the direction of accessing shantam? What are some of the practices that you are...

RA: See, I think there is a greater and greater understanding today that mindfulness at least is understood as an important thing. And I know a lot of leaders, I have had a long conversation with what's his name... Bansi... who's that guy, he is there in the book also, Vallabh Bhansali. I have had a long conversation with Vallabh Bhansali. Now, he talks about the importance of vipassana

meditation and how it helped him as a human being. There are many younger people, Vellayan, whom again I have interviewed in the book, he speaks about how much he has been influenced by Sadhguru. There's a Musthafa whom I discuss with, he speaks about how studying the Quran in depth has helped him to understand how to make decisions and his life is a very interesting life.

PC Mustapha of ID Fresh Food?

RA: Yeah, PC Mustapha, ID Foods, phenomenal. So, there are many people who have this intent, they know that they are gifted, something in their life has told them I must use this gift in ways that are dharmic that help people and the leadership that they exhibit, the way they deal with people is of a different order. There are other people whom I have seen whom I have met who got triggered by an opportunity in the market or this or that. Their approach definitely has an acquisitiveness where utilitarian philosophy using oneself as a tool and using other people around as tools predominates. I don't see these organisations unless there is some big shift that happens becoming institutions. Like the Tatas, for example, you see them describe many of their decision-making processes, it's profoundly human, it has a huge dharmic underlying thing around it, they might make mistakes here and there, that's fine. But most of the leaders I have met there have this ability to be self-reflective to ask the larger question and things like that. And I am absolutely certain if the world has to go forward from where we are now, unless there are many, many leaders of this kind, you cannot look at a meaningful future. We are at the brink.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

This is your host Deepak Jayaraman once again.

DJ: I love the metaphor of Sport. Every moment is almost like facing a new ball in cricket. And as they say, we need to see if it is a yorker, a bouncer, a juicy over-pitched ball, a googly or something else and play the ball on its merit. If we try and get a boundary every ball or defend every ball, it just wouldn't make sense. I guess every moment is a bit like that. We need to play each moment as it shows up without pre-meditating a shot.

Something similar came up in my conversation with Rich Fernandez (RF) who heads Search Inside Yourself, a Leadership Development organization incubated in Google. He speaks about the notion of response flexibility versus reacting to every moment.

RF: *"something that we teach we call it response flexibility the ability to respond rather than react to challenging situations and most people in business face challenging situation all the time but if you are only reacting to them and being very hot and angry all the time you are being responsible actually. You are not being balanced and you are not being clear headed and that's the difference being response flexible in the face of challenges and disruption is a critical skills for business leaders and for technical leaders and it does very much have to do with your own internal landscape and that's why we call the curriculum Search Inside Yourself because we believe that to be an effective leader and a thriving person a lot more you need to develop those skills of awareness and self-knowledge and self-management in order to be effective."*

DJ: Subsequently, in that conversation, Rich uses the example of Captain Sully Sullenberger, who successfully landed a plane on the Hudson and saved 100+ lives. He speaks about the santham frame from where Captain Sully operated from. If this is of interest, please look up my conversation with Rich Fernandez in the Guests section of the podcast. Even better go and see the movie Sully where Tom Hanks plays the central character.

Now let's get back to our conversation with Raghu.

DJ: Raghu, you have been doing this work for the last several decades, four decades. When you look at the paradigm of leadership today versus maybe two or three decades back and I think you alluded to it in the conversation. When I looked at the Mahabharata, Pandava archetypes, I got a sense that the relevance of the Nakula's style of leadership as compared to the Bheema style of leadership is greater. Can you talk a little about how the leadership ask has evolved over time in the state of business?

RA: See, I think all the five powers that we are talking about are critical. And if you look at organisations that have lasted for a long time either by design or by luck the right type of leadership has come up and somebody has recognised it and celebrated it. But what has happened is that the popular discourse and the popular idea of leadership till I think 20-30 years back has rested largely in the colonising kind of thing. You go, you capture market, this capture and market share and all of that. This Pepsi versus Coca-Cola model has been very prevalent. Now, when you are constantly looking at this and you are saying there is danger, there is danger, you tend to forget a lot of other things. Whereas when you take a Tatas, for example, when they say we also make steel, they mean it. I don't think many people know that the first people in the world to say, let's bring a social scientist to an organisation to see how to build culture was the Tatas. That is Nakula leadership, where you really understand the value of people and you invest in them for the long term. Now, very obviously last 20-30 years, innovation has become very, very critical. So, you see a lot of places like Microsoft and things like that, the real leader is the Sahadeva, but he has a Bheema type person who is doing the marketing face, but the real power, the access of the power is in the Sahadeva type of leadership. My feeling is that with the fast pace of change in the world and things like this, the Arjuna Nakula, Sahadeva will gain prominence. Contextual intelligence is going to become very critical, knowing how to really nurture key people and to create a core of institution-building people is going to become very important, innovation is going to become very important. It's not as though entrepreneurship or bringing order and predictability are not very important. But I think these will have to take the lead because if there's too much of building order it becomes static. If there's too much of this let's go and the start-up kind of a thing you don't build an organisation. The organisation building comes when all five in a sense dance with each other, but I think long-term you have to invest in key people. The faster the reality changes, the less you are going to be able to collect knowledge and collect ways of working and real that what they call site technology, we will all be in the heads of people. It's only when you have the same thing happening over a long time that you can convert it into SOPs and this and that and knowledge can get spread, but if you are going to have to keep innovating, keep changing, its people who are key.

DJ: And in the book along similar lines, you talk about the ABCD of timeless leadership which I found, you know, it sorts of, it felt easy to absorb the way you have sort of framed it. Awareness, Balance, Contextual Intelligence and Dharmasankata, understanding dharmasankata. Can you sort of expand on this about why do you say these are timeless and you single these out?

RA: See, fundamentally, I was trying to decode what I thought were the key aspects of the Mahabharata characters. Now, if you look at... let me give you a story from a Zen context. See there's a discussion about who is going to win and what does it mean to be in a fight between a sensei and a student. So, the sensei asks the student what do you think is the most important thing for you to focus on? He says, the knife, the guy says, you are dead. Then he asks the question again. What do you think is the most important thing to focus on? So, he says, I have to look at the guy and the knife. And then he asks again, what is the most important thing? So, it goes on like that till the teacher says, you have to look at the guy, you have to look at the knife, you have to know that there

is a crowd around watching it and you have to know that there are pebbles on the ground that can trip you up. If you don't have this width of awareness, you can't win. And there's a book by "Miyamoto Musashi" about the types of stances you take. There he emphasises the stance of silence and the stance of space, which is completely relaxed. In yoga it's called Sthira Sukham, you are completely at rest but you are completely aware, that is balance. So, when you are there, you can be tipped off, you can be pushed but you won't fall, but if you are rigid, one push and you will fall. So, an organisation needs this balance.

DJ: State of equilibrium.

RA: A state of equilibrium, peace but readiness; that's Sthiram sukham. And contextual intelligence is obvious here. I mean, if I don't know the trends, you will be like Lehman Brothers. You will be preparing, one of your friends must have been doing that... the PPT, the famous PPT that was supposed to be presented next week. There were beautiful PPTs being presented about the long-term future of Lehman, except that next week it didn't exist. So, contextual intelligence is very, very key to know what are the macro trends, what is going to happen, how things are going to move, and now a business becomes more and more complex, from exchange rates to war and this and that. So, if you don't have contextual intelligence, how do you navigate, how do you make choices? And like we discussed before, for leadership it's always balancing of forces. It's not some victory somewhere and in so many fields here, you don't know who is your customer and who is your competitor, and who is your collaborator. In IT, you can be buying something from IBM at one level and working with IBM to deliver something at another level; in a third place, you could actually be fighting IBM for a job. In that context, it's all balancing of forces and how do you keep this going. And balancing of forces to me is also dharma. When it's not just your stakeholders who you are talking about like, talking about the Earth, you are talking about sustainability. So, all that requires an understanding of this balance of forces.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This is your host Deepak here.

I happened to speak with Jennifer Garvey Berger, an Executive Coach and Author of *Unlocking Leadership Mind traps*. She speaks about the kind of leaders we need in the future.

JGB: *"I think that leaders in the future will need to respond not to the short term but to the long term; we are seeing that right now, not to the disconnected but to the interdependent. I think leaders will need to respond with their whole selves, their mind, their bodies, their emotions and to the whole selves of other people, their minds, their bodies and their emotions and in a much clearer way away from competition which has often fuelled humans and organizations and into a deep sense of interconnectivity because here we are all together and trying to find a way for all of us to thrive is going to be every leaders' job into the future."*

DJ: *And as you look around Jennifer any role models you see while it is still early? Any role models of leadership that you see emerging as you see different people deal with this crisis that's in front of us?*

JGB: *I mean, I have a bias here, but I am just finishing a blog today that highlights Jacinda Ardern, the Prime Minister of New Zealand who has had to face more crisis in her time as prime minister than other New Zealand prime ministers had to in many, many years, and I find her blend of clarity, humanity and experimental approach, I find that refreshing and incredibly helpful and hopeful for what great leadership looks like in the future."*

DJ: This does sound quite a bit like a combination of Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva as Raghu mentions!

Let's get back to the conversation with Raghu.

DJ: The other distinction I wanted to talk about Raghu was the one you bring up between doing and being and you use a phrase, which really stayed with me. You speak about being as a regenerative process, something that heals and nurtures. Can you speak about this and how those manifests?

RA: See, I was talking to you about the state of shantam, that's available to all of us. When we sleep, deep sleep, we actually get into the state of shantam except that we are not aware of it. That is when even biologically, that's when your regeneration takes place. That's when healing takes place, your brain gets reordered, and all of this kind of thing happens in deep sleep. That is when you get in touch with your being without any external pull or push or any disturbance. So, in the Gita, when they talk finally about Sanyasa Yogam and then Arjuna goes into battle, he is in this state of shantam, he's in the state of quietude inside while being prepared for battle. So, he is not depleting his energies. If I am in the doing mode, I am using my energies and then I have to come back to be replenished, but if I can be anchored in the being, in the quietness while I am acting, I don't get depleted. I can maintain intensity for a long period of time. I can stay in dhyana for three hours like it is recommended. And I am sure if a leader can really be in dhyana on his most interesting and difficult problems, he will get insights from an intelligence much bigger than himself.

DJ: And how does one get there Raghu to ensure that we are operating from a state of being?

RA: See, you have to look at the Mahabharata as a text of yoga. In fact, the first text that discusses ideas of sankhya and yoga and all that is the Mahabharata and between stories between many things there are lots of key ideas of yoga that are discussed. In the last discussion between Bhishma and Yudhisthira lot of ideas of yoga and all that are discussed. The practice of yoga is the practice of how do you get a mind which is normally external, normally depleting itself to quieten itself and become capable of dhyana. That's the key aspect of yoga. I think, anybody who wants to seriously look at business and use of resources of the world, seriously look at science has to understand this mind. He has to develop this mind which means he has to practice some form of yoga and come to this mind, which is capable of this kind of insightful looking at a problem otherwise it would become very stressful. Because why do you need a leader? You need a leader to help you take decisions in times which are difficult, which are anxiety-provoking, otherwise every manager will take his decision, that's what happens mostly. It's only in crisis that you need leadership. At this point of time if you don't have a person who can absorb that anxiety and be in shantam, be in quietude and have a mind that can really look at everything and stay in focus, you will get jerky answers.

DJ: A related thought Raghu.

RA: Even Chanakya says this, by the way, not just me saying.

DJ: As I was reflecting on this doing versus being, I was wondering is there an insight here around the kinds of choices people make so that you end up in situations where there's resonance between what you are doing and who you are being. Is there something in that space?

RA: There is, there is. I think, there is. See, when you choose to engage in business and things like that, I have seen a lot of people for whom their business is their conviction. There is no internal dissonance between the choices they make in business and the choices they had made as individuals

as to what is honourable to do. This internal coherence brings a lot of things with it. It brings the ability to be calm, it brings the ability to be clear. Now, whether you have one battle won or not you know that you are doing the right thing. So, these kinds of internal coherence are what leads to being and doing being in harmony. When this internal coherence is not there you do, I am sure because I have talked to many of these leaders, they experience internal dissonance and they will tell you sooner or later, you know what, I am doing this, I am compelled to do this, my heart is somewhere else. When I talk to many senior leaders, I find this one set of leaders for whom what they are doing comes from conviction. The business they are in what they are doing comes from conviction. They can deal with failures; they can deal with stress with a much greater degree of internal anchorage and internal coherence than people who don't feel this. So, this is being and doing in harmony whereas where a person's internal conviction is not very strong, they are doing it for the money or they are doing it for something else, or position, whatever and they really want to do something else. So, in the conversation sooner or later, you know, I wish I could be teaching, I wish I could be doing something else and classically I am sure you have experienced it too, this happens around 35-40. People are calling it midlife crisis, and I don't see it as a midlife crisis. You have got into work when you are in your 20s because of so many compulsions. And initially, you want to be competent, you want to do this that and the other. So, you are actually working at that point of time for external reasons, and you know that if you have to succeed, your satisfaction is not as important as how satisfied your boss is with your work. So, you are working for recognition not for meaning. Once that threshold is crossed, you have got your own car and two houses or whatever it is, then meaning starts becoming much more important than all this, then this doing being stuff starts surfacing. And that is called midlife crisis. It's really that this person knows exactly... at 40, you know, what you are capable of, what you are not capable of. At 40 you know the world pretty well.

DJ: And you know yourself to some extent as well?

RA: You know yourself quite enough man, you have done enough things, you have failed, you have succeeded, you know your competence. So, then you have also got a certain level of stability by that time. So, then you start asking this question, what should I do for the rest of my life? What will give me meaning for the rest of my life? And if you find that there will be all this, work-life balance, this being-doing balance, all that will happen if this coherence happens. If this coherence doesn't happen, it will always be a question.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This is your host Deepak Jayaraman here.

When I am working with a leader, an exercise we often do is making a TO BE list. We often have a To Do list which speaks about What all we want to get done in a day. But often, that doesn't quite address the state we are in when we do those things. I ask the leaders to pick one or two elements in a To Be list – to be generous, to be compassionate, to be thoughtful, to be still, to be mindful, to be tolerant and so on. Again, this is not a long list. But a couple of things that you want to bring your attention to time and again.

I think there is also something to be said about the kinds of choices we make in our personal and professional life especially a few years in.

This topic is at the sweet-spot of the kinds of topics we spend time on at the podcast. I could go on and on here with related insights that have come up at the podcast. If you want to dig in more, you can tune into the Curated Playlists – Navigational Principles and Reinventing Self. You might also like

the conversations with Bruce Feiler, Herminia Ibarra and Lynda Gratton. Here is an insight from Lloyd Reeb (LB) who runs the Half Time Institute. They work with successful leaders and help them towards a life of meaning and purpose. He speaks about the notion of each one of us being our own Chief Life Officer.

LB: *"the onus is on each of us to think in terms of being chief life officer. If you are going to have to zig and zag and reinvent yourself more than just twice, you know, used to be, I had 20 years of preparation, 30-year career, 30 years of retirement. If you look back even further, the average life expectancy was 48 or 49 just a 100 years ago; that was the average life expectancy here in America. So, you didn't even have the last 30 years. You basically came to your 50s and you retired worn out, you were a manual worker not a knowledge worker, your contribution dropped off with your energy dropping off. Today, so many talented smart people in India, their contribution can continue well into their 80s. And very many of them have global exposure because India is such a part of the global supply chain. And so, it's true that they are going to have endless opportunities going forward and the more opportunities you face the more important it is to know who you are, what you care about, why you do what you do and to have some metrics along the way and then to revisit that plan. One of the things that Peter Drucker challenged Bob to do early on was to create a life decades exercise. And that was to start with the current decade and define it using a single word or two. And that takes a little bit of difficult thinking, right? To put a... to describe the current decade of your life with a single word or two and then to go back to the decade prior, when you were younger, and describe it with a single word or two and how you spent your time, and then go back a decade earlier, pretty soon you are in your teen years. But the power of the exercise is as you look forward and you describe the next decade of your life with a single word or two and then two decades after that and all the way into your 80s or 90s and what happens is it starts to provide a trajectory in your mind and you start to realize that you have agency, you have responsibility to be planning and thinking about the future. So, we have so many options, comes the responsibility to learn, both the leadership and the intentionality and the skills to be an effective chief life officer. You can no longer rely on your company to map out your life for you. And chances are if you come home from your company and you have given it all you have got, and you have nothing creative to give to your spouse or your family or your neighbors or your community that you will end up largely disappointed in the second half of your life or the next season of your life."*

DJ: Personally speaking, when I was an Executive Search Consultant at EgonZehnder, I felt a disconnect with having many evaluative and borderline salesy conversations with the people around me. I was deriving energy from conversations where I would be on the candidate's side helping them resolve the situations they were in but that is not the primary agenda of a Search Consultant. After transitioning from the world of Poaching to Coaching, I am finding greater resonance between who I am being and what I am doing and I feel I can see that play out in how I show up in some of the other domains of life.

Back to what Raghu says, solving for coherence between Who you are being and what you are doing is paramount for us especially towards the later years of our life.

A gentle reminder once again to rate and review the show on Spotify or Apple Podcasts when you have a moment.

Let's get back to the conversation with Raghu.

DJ: Raghu, one of the themes I am curious about in the podcast is around transitions, both organisation transitions and leader transitions. In the book, in one of the sections you say that

organisations often praise the Bheema types or a Sahadeva types. They are often visible and they are celebrated but the Nakula types often are behind the scenes connecting the...

RA: That is the Nakula archetype.

DJ: So, when the Nakula, let's say, people with a dominant Nakula characteristic transition from one company to another what has been your observation on how they build trust and how they build traction as they take on charge in a new environment?

RA: See, there are couple of questions that come to my mind in what you are asking. One is, has an organisation selected you and said I need you, a Nakula type to come in.

DJ: Yes.

RA: Yeah, then it's a wise choice. So, this organisation has probably been through an entrepreneurial phase, and now it needs to create a stable team and create order. If you keep on pushing the Bheema at this point of time, the organisation will never stabilise.

DJ: Correct.

RA: So, it's a wise thing to do to bring in a Nakula person to really create the institutional grounding, not just the win but the us and what does it mean to be us, who are we and why do we exist, what does it mean to work together? These are the kind of questions that a Nakula can enable, that energy can enable. You also need stability and certainty. So, you actually need these three people to work together. So, if the organisation has made a wise choice, it is very easy then because the Nakula is valued already when they are coming in and they have a space and others also know this space though the basic characteristic of a Nakula is to stay in the background, is to create the infrastructure.

DJ: In fact, coming there Raghu, I used to be a search consultant earlier in my previous life and in a lot of these situations I would notice that the hiring manager often appreciates the Nakula characteristics and often has made the choice. But if you look at the leaders, incoming leaders' playground, the subordinates, the peers, and some of the others may not, may have to discover that characteristic, may not know that on day zero. So, sometimes, I find that in those situations' derailments can happen, so I was wondering.

RA: It is difficult but see it depends on... I might have a dominant Nakula characteristic but I can also supplement it with some Bheema and others. Now, to get into certain general management areas, if I am in a specialised management area then let's say if I am a very good Sahadeva, I don't have to worry about creating too many other capabilities, but if I am in a general management area, I have to balance my dominant propensity with other capabilities. A Nakula, for example, has to know how to bargain, has to know how to say no and things like this. If they don't the probability of their being taken for granted is high. And the other... and this is why I was talking about understanding the shadow and all that before. The Nakulas generally tend to wait to be bestowed honour, or bestowed recognition, they very rarely ask for it. If as a Nakula, I am not aware of this and if I don't know how to look at it and say, okay, I have to learn how to draw boundaries and say no, it will become a problem. And general tendency is not to understand how much of value a Nakula brings in.

DJ: True.

RA: It's their absence that pinches because people have taken this person's offering for granted and gone on doing all kinds of things. Like, even in the Mahabharata, Arjuna goes gallivanting all over. If Nakula hasn't kept his weapons clean and his horse ready and all that, when Arjuna comes back there will be no horse or weapons to fight with.

DJ: He's the enabler.

RA: He is seen absolutely essential enabler and I have a feeling going forward you were asking me earlier, the more uncertain the world becomes, the more the creation of reliable infrastructure will become crucial. You can't make agile changes without a stable infrastructure.

DJ: That's interesting when you say infrastructure it's not just the traditional sense in which it is used but also this human infrastructure.

RA: You come suddenly and you tell me, hey man, yesterday's business is gone, tomorrow's business is this, if I don't have a strong feeling of us, if I don't have a place to speak about my anxieties and discover a way of responding, it's going to become very disturbing. So, who creates this emotional infrastructure specially to take sharp changes in the reality of the world? Without this emotional infrastructure it would be very difficult.

DJ: Another tradition context you talk about Raghu in the book, I will read from the book, you say, Mahabharata tells us that the mark of a leader is not one who's great at solving problems like a Hercules but one who can understand a dharmasankata, inflection points call for wisdom and re-anchoring of one's values, finding new inner resources to make the right choices and investing one's full conviction and energy in that choice. I found the, you know, it's not somebody who comes and pushes and pushes but somebody who can sort of question that paradigm and move the system. So, can you expand on this?

RA: See, traditionally leadership has been looked at from the centre of the organisation. The moment you click and you say organogram there will be one pyramid that comes up. Now, this is an archaic, I think, in today's context meaningless way of thinking of an organisation. What you really need for leadership is somebody who's at the edge of the organisation not sitting in the centre. Now, what is this person doing sitting at the edge of the organisation? He's having a view of the world as it is emerging and he's having a view inside to see what are the capabilities of this organisation. And it's very simple Ashby's law. The capabilities of an organism have to be greater than the challenges from the environment for if it has to survive. So, leadership today in a changing context is to continuously ensure that the capabilities of the organisation are one step ahead of the challenges that are going to come from the environment. You are not going to know this if you are sitting on top here and trying to make people do what you want, you got to be at the edge and be able to look at what the future is and then communicate it back and create a response structure which can follow this. That is critically the Arjuna capability, the capability of staying at the boundary, where does Arjuna ask all his great questions between the two armies.

DJ: Middle of the ground.

RA: So, you have to stand there, understand what's going to happen here and then pull from here and say, hey, this is what's going to happen. And if you have this Nakula, this thing of a very capable set of core group, and you have created the capabilities here, they will know how to respond, you don't have to direct them beyond that. That's the ABCD I talked about. So, this person has to be aware, balanced, contextually intelligent and know the values. He cannot... the values of an organisation cannot be changed quickly because they are the deepest layer. You can change the

technology, you can change some structure and systems, but the value thing you cannot change. So, why am I in business at a human level has to be answered clearly. And then the navigation you can do is largely based on that; that will not shift that easily.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This is Deepak Jayaraman here again.

I am reminded of an insight on this podcast from Amy Edmondson (AE) of Harvard Business School. She was recently voted as the Number 1 Management Thinker in the world by Thinkers 50, in what is considered to be the equivalent of Oscar Awards for Management Thinkers. She has been studying Psychological Safety for several decades' way before Google and some of the others popularized it.

AE: *"So, I define it as an environment where people feel free to take interpersonal risks and maybe I should clarify what an interpersonal risk is. That's anything that you might do or say that creates a risk that others might think less well of you, right? So, if I ask a question, you might think I am stupid. If I offer an idea that you think is really a crazy idea you might think I am not in touch with reality. If I ask for help, you might think I am weak, right? So, all of those are in the category of interpersonal risks, and I would argue those are the interpersonal risks that good employees take every day because if you aren't offering ideas or asking questions or asking for help in a complex interdependent world, you are not doing your job."*

DJ: Like Amy says, psychological safety or Emotional Infrastructure as Raghu says is a prerequisite for companies and if I may say, families to be agile in these times. If we look at how families came out of Covid, I would say, one could see the difference in outcomes between families that had that infrastructure and families where that didn't exist and that showed up in all kinds of ways in terms of mental health problems, separations and so on.

Let's get back to the conversation with Raghu.

DJ: The other distinction I wanted to pick up from the book Raghu was the distinction you make between shakti and balam, you say external and internal strength.

RA: That's right.

DJ: Can you expand on that for us?

RA: See, there's quite a bit that's been talked about this, intrinsic motivators, extrinsic motivators and things like that so that's... it's there in current discourse. See in, I think, it comes in the Mahabharata only and I don't remember which text it comes in, it talks clearly about shakti and balam. There are many balams that are talked about but essentially it talks about three forms of balam and balam actually has to do with my... it's a competency issue. So, these three kinds of balams: one is called asana balam so, what is the position, what is the status I am in, what is the resources given to me by society or by the organisation, that is asana balam. The second is yoga balam. How good am I at politics, who are my friends, who are my enemies, how am I creating this. So, Yudhishtira when he has gone away those 13 years is also creating this balam, he is talking to the right people and saying, will you fight for me or not? And then there is kala balam. So, there's another conversation again in the Mahabharata where Draupadi and Bheema come and say why are you here, you are a coward, you don't have shakti so you are not fighting. So, he says it's not a

question of shakti, it's a question of timing. You can't fight too early. I might have an internal conviction. So, shakti is our internal things. And the three critical shaktis that have been talked about over and over again is ichha shakti which is conviction and really, I will do this, deep intent. Jnana shakti, just ichha shakti will just make you jump up and down, you have to have jnana which is intelligence, competencies, and... and kriya shakti. So, these three are internal shaktis, if these match with balam, this is also the being and doing, then it's all aligned and there is tremendous power. And you know it's there in Sun Tzu's Art of War, it's there in several things saying that knowing how to wait for the right time is a tremendously important thing. Right time also means that my balam has come together, not just the shakti, I might have a strong intention and wish and I have the capabilities at one level to do something, but if the external doesn't respond, the balam is lost. Look at some of the greatest people whom we celebrate today, Kafka, was not known when in his life his time hadn't come. You have so many artists now, van Gogh, he was not celebrated at his time, but he has been celebrated later because in that context suddenly this whole thing makes sense. He had the shakti, but the external combination didn't work. There are a lot of products, I mean, Microsoft wasn't the best, Tandem, there were Osborne, there were other people at that time who had done very good things, but they didn't have this combination of the balam outside. They had one or the other shakti, they were actually better products if I understand it right; they didn't make it.

DJ: I was just reflecting on your point about Van Gogh. Again, a thought experiment, given what we know about how to lead life from the Mahabharata, should he have approached life differently in a sense to get the timing right?

RA: He couldn't have, given who he was his, I mean, he did the best he could do. See the balam aspect is not just internally decided. The balam is all external. See, the asana balam is not, I don't create my asana balam, there is a seat available, I go and sit in that seat or some context is available when somebody says, okay, take on leadership, that is asana balam. Kala balam is the external context timing is right. And yoga balam is also other people who say, yeah, you are making sense, I will be friends with you and so on; these are all external factors. Shaktis are all internal factors. I cannot dictate the external factors but I can be intelligent and know when the external factors are right.

DJ: That's a point you made about operating in the edge of the organisation.

RA: Exactly, exactly.

DJ: Fascinating. As we bring the conversation to a close, Raghu, couple of questions. One is more personal; I am on this journey of being a coach and a sounding board for leaders and you have been doing this for decades. One of the questions I keep asking myself is how do I continue my growth over time? When you look at your journey Raghu, what's been the nature of evolution? Let's say if you look at the kinds of conversations you have with leaders today and compare them to maybe the kinds of conversations you had two decades back or three decades back, what are the kinds of dimensions in which you have grown over time?

RA: See, if I look at my growth, I don't think, you know, a large part of my growth has been through dialogues with leaders that we know in business. See, if I look back, I look at myself more as an action research person than a consultant, or a coach, or whatever. And there have been three areas which I have been working on in depth. One is, of course, systems engineering and how systems work. The second has been studying with Krishnamacharya and yoga in depth, really understanding the yoga sutras' psyche. And the third has been process work with Professor Pulin Garg, theatre, all of these kinds of things. I have always been innovating between these three. And where can I innovate? I can only innovate in an organisation. So, I have had this tremendous good fortune of

CEOs who have trusted me. So, there's Mr. Subbaiah; he and I have had a very nice relationship over time and he invited me to work with Parry; it was a turnaround situation. So, I did my study, whatever, whatever and then they asked me to work with Parry Sugar. And there, I was also, my orientation towards working in organisations has been to look at operations first, value creation and things like that and then see how other factors are coming in to aid it or stop it. So, I actually had to work with an organisation, which I stayed in a house that Clive had stayed in on my way to Nellikuppam. So, some of the mindsets there are that archaic. And here you have to design an organisation for response because that's why it's going sick, there's some responsiveness issue there. So, when I went in and I was working with the organisation, I had to contend with how to create a sense of flow and accountability this way horizontal versus the high colonised idea of vertical control. So, I played with it and that's when this idea of totally aligned organisation came up. Because by that time from my initial work and all that, I had also got in touch with... Productivity Consulting Group from the US had got in touch with me. There was a guy called Norman Bodek, who is generally called Grandfather Lean now, but he was one of the first people to study Japanese management, bring it to the world, phenomenal guy. So, they were looking for Indian partners and they are Muktananda followers. So, he was looking for a person who was involved with yoga and all that so whatever this combination happened. So, I was learning these Japanese methods which are very powerful and obviously, I mean, it went very well with my OR thing and you go into an organisation, you start working with this horizontal thing and the management is vertical. So, the culture it does not fit flow. So, then I experimented with how do you get these mindsets to change. So, like I told you, I don't do behavioural lessons, I make exercises and games. So, I have made this game and made them play and there are two teams, one is vertical, the other one is completely customer-faced. So, how do you organise yourselves, whatever, whatever, the lessons are very, very clear. But I asked him to give themselves names. So, one of these guys said, sir, we are an aligned organisation, we are a boss-face organisation. So, that is when I developed this whole thing of what does it mean to create a totally aligned organisation, total alignment, which will go with TQM and TPM and all the rest of it. And Mr. Subbaiah was willing, I mean, I discussed it with him and the CEO was willing to look at all this and work with it. So, once you do this, the organisation then doesn't look vertical with all these things. It looks like a rocket or a bird because like I told you, the CEO is at the edge, he is saying this is where you go. So, he is pointing the organisation to the customer and the value chain gets aligned behind it. And then you have the financial things that are helping this process, you have the human processes helpings to make sure that flow is happening. This is an agile organisation; this cannot be an agile organisation. And then I had to work with Parry what became Parry Agro, CWC was taken over, again colonial. So, all these lovely tea fields with these huge colonial bungalows and all that. And when Parry took over, they are not that mindset. So, we worked with it and there the issue was how do you read the fine work so that it's not so saheb based and things like that. And there, I developed this whole thing of saying can we shift the focus of work from being oriented towards job towards being oriented towards my links with people. Yeah, that's what comes from the earlier picture also, but here it had to be very clearly defined; we had the issue of redefining work itself, So, like that now I have been applying from this and that and developing answers to situations and each of them would take a couple of years but because the trust I had like, for example, Mahabharata, this book is actually based on ten years of working with TCS on a program called The Leader Prepares. We have done about 100 odd things where the Mahabharata is the core. So, I bring in theatre, I bring in lots of ideas from yoga quietly, we do some yoga practice but also peppered in the program and the Mahabharata insights. We actually make them do theatre; we make them do a lot of these things over a five-day six-day period. But the origin of that was in the Murugappa Group where I did a leadership training program, which was a two-week thing at that time. One week was theatre; the second was outward bound. So, these have been really the incubating spaces.

See, while most of my initial work was actually supported by Mr. Subbaiah, there's a lot of space and trust whatever I was given by the Handas, Sushil Handa and Sunil Handa, where I worked with them for more than maybe 20-25 years or more, I am not sure, but it was like, an ongoing thing where I would look at the organisation, there would be a problem to be solved, how do you look at it, bring all these elements together and things like that. So, at one point of time now they had to really look at their cash flow and things. So, we set up this goal of saying, what's one rupee going into the organisation, when is it coming back. So, can you make that the one point around which the whole organisation works? So, from 240, 250 something we said, 120 and then 60 and so on. So, all of this you set out the problem and then you discuss with the CEO saying, I am going to try this, I am going to try this. And then I am bringing in something from systems theory, I am bringing in something from theatre, I am bringing in something from yoga and seeing how it works and working it through. And the other space that I got was in TCS where Mr. Ramadorai and his team gave a lot of space to first study the organisation; there's a whole model that I have developed called the Tensegrity Mandala, which is based on Tripura Rahasaya. So, going back to Dharampal, study something, take the principles, see how it can be applied. So, the Tripura Rahasaya talks about how the entire universe is actually a tetrahedral with chit shakti, ichha shakti and jnana shakti and kriya shakti and how this whole thing happens. Now, at the same time, there's a very good friend of mine called Prasad Kaipa, who's also used tetrahedrons. So, I worked with this and developed a whole model of how to look at the organisation. And then we worked a couple of years with the top management team and things like that and then developed this training program and all that. So, without these kinds of spaces and the trust that was placed on me by these CEOs and their team, I wouldn't have developed anything. So, that's the action research part which happened in that space with the CEOs willing to incubate these things.

DJ: Fascinating. And for somebody who wants to get in touch with you Raghu, are there any websites or any places you can point them to?

RA: Yeah, they can get in touch with TAO, totallyalignedorganization.com or fiveseatsofpower.in

DJ: Got it. And just the final question, Raghu, I ask this with all the people I talk to. The podcast is titled Play to Potential, when you look at that phrase what does that phrase mean to you?

RA: That's exactly what I have been talking about, can you play to potential, I love this word play, because if you take yourself too seriously you are never going to be the best that you can be. But if you don't take your potential seriously you are not going to be the best that you can be; I love this, play to potential. Maybe we should adopt it for our organisation. We enable you to play to potential, sounds good.

DJ: Raghu, thank you so much for making the time, pleasure.

RA: Welcome, welcome. Thank you. Very interesting, this dialogue I have had. Thanks for this time.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Thank you for listening. If you want to listen more on this topic, you might like two of the Curated Playlists we have at the podcast – Self Awareness and Mindfulness. You will find them at the Curated Playlists section at www.playtopotential.com.

Thanks for your time and attention and look forward to having you at a subsequent conversation at the Play to Potential podcast. To know more about the Advisory work I do, you can just visit playtopotential.com and look at the section About Deepak. Bye now.

End of transcription

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

Nugget from Ramachandra Guha that is referenced: [Multiple identities of Gandhiji](#).

Nugget from Rich Fernandez that is referenced: [Meta-distress and Response-flexibility](#).

Nugget from Lloyd Reeb that is referenced: [Being a Chief Life Officer](#).

Nugget from Jennifer Garvey Berger that is referenced: [The Full Conversation](#).

Nugget from Amy Edmondson that is referenced: [Nuances of Psychological Safety](#).

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Deliberate Practice: Deliberate practice refers to a special type of practice that is purposeful and systematic. While regular practice might include mindless repetitions, deliberate practice requires focused attention and is conducted with the specific goal of improving performance. Leaders across fields talk about how they think about this topic in their respective fields. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Judgment: Judgment is a key trait that differentiates the great leaders from the average ones. How do you make decisions and exercise choices in a world full of options and grey areas with multiple stakeholders around you. In addition, the playlist has nuggets that discuss how one creates a climate for the people around you to exercise good judgment. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Listening: When you talk, you are only repeating what you already know. But if you listen, you may learn something new”. This is a quote by Dalai Lama. Several leaders talk about their experiences with listening and how they have grown with it. More specifically, leaders also reflect on the criticality of listening when transitioning into a new context. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Mindfulness: Given we live in a world with exponential increase in content creation and with firms like Google, Facebook, Amazon and Apple vying for our attention, it is quite hard to reclaim our own space and attention. In this context, being mindful could be a key differentiator and a competitive advantage. Some leaders talk about how they created that space for themselves amidst the noise. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Identity: Identity refers to the reputation, characteristics etc. of a person that makes the individual or the people around him/her think about them in a certain way. To put simply, how do we think of ourselves and what do the others think of us. Identity is a key element that we need to wrestle with during pivotal transitions. Herminia Ibarra shares her insights on how we should treat Identity as a Work in Progress that gets influenced by the journey we go through and the choices we make. Ram Guha speaks about the multiple identities of Gandhiji. Atul Kasbekar speaks about how he saw his identity evolve from being a photographer to a producer. All this and more in this playlist. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Settling into a new context: Figuring out “where to go” is only a part of the challenge for leaders in transition. How you land effectively in a new context is as critical. Hair line cracks often become full blown fractures if not attended to carefully. Leaders talk about some key lessons Individuals could bear in mind as they transition across contexts (Army to Business world, US to India, MNC to Family Business, Consulting to Industry/Investing etc.) You can access the playlist [here](#).

Psychological Safety: Insights around what it takes to create a Psychologically safe environment for leaders and teams to feel safe for taking interpersonal risks which is at the heart of learning, taking risk and much more which drives effectiveness in teams especially in an environment of significant complexity and interdependency. 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](#).

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Raghu Ananthanarayanan - Nuggets

- 93.01 Raghu Ananthanarayanan - Listening to stories as a child
- 93.02 Raghu Ananthanarayanan - Key choices in the journey
- 93.03 Raghu Ananthanarayanan - Being Dharmic
- 93.04 Raghu Ananthanarayanan - Five Pandava archetypes
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- 93.06 Raghu Ananthanarayanan - Resolving Dharmasankatas
- 93.07 Raghu Ananthanarayanan - Karna and Krishna - the conversation that never happened
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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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