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## Context to the nugget

Prakash talks about how he has thought about his goal post at different points in time and how he finds his True North. He shares a nuanced view on how one should think about value in the pursuit of the sweet spot in which one could consider operating.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): The other piece that I find helpful reflecting on is how people set their goalpost as they go through the journey. If you take stock of the last three decades, how's that formed and moved over time? Have there been discrete points in time where it's shifted significantly? I would love your perspectives on how you think about that.

Prakash Iyer (PI): Like a lot of other kids coming out of middle-class India, financial goals were important in the early stages of our lives. Therefore, it was important for you to kind of make enough bread and butter and some jam. Beyond that, I guess, I've been swayed by this guy. There is this interesting story of how Joseph Heller apparently was at this party thrown by an investment banker in New York.

DJ: That's the guy who wrote 'Catch-22'?

PI: That's right. A friend of his took him along and said, come, it's a great party, and you'll meet all the who's who of the city. It was a great evening, lots of crystal, the finest wine, and as Joseph Heller stood sipping a drink, his friend said, 'Do you realize, our host the investment banker, probably makes more money in a day than you have in a lifetime?' And Joseph Heller said, 'That's probably true, but I have something he will never have.' And the friend says, 'What?' Joseph Heller says, 'Enough!' And that's a story that's kind of stayed with me. In a sense, I think, I've spent the last few years of my life saying, hey, I think, I need to learn to say enough. And the minute you know you have enough, you are sorted. You don't really need to worry about it. Then, you are free to go and do what you want to do. So, to be fair, financial goals were important, but I'd probably say, at some stage, I said, enough. And then, it doesn't excite you. More of the same didn't excite me. And what really excited me was the euphoria, the fun of going out and either writing something which people will read or saying something which people will listen to and say, wow that made a difference to my life. That, for me, was a big turn on. So, to me, the goals changed in that sense from the first, maybe, 15–20 years of my life to perhaps what I do now.

DJ: Staying on that theme, one is, sort of having clarity on as they say how much you need versus how much you want and knowing what that enough point is. But having crossed that bridge, how do you think about impact? Or how do you think about success? Are there a few things that you think

about against which you say, OK, that was a fulfilling year or fulfilling passage of play over a period of time? Do you think about that?

PI: I do, and I'd be lying if I said I don't think about it. I probably want to connect this to the set of earlier questions you asked, which is how do you recognize whether this is something that you should be doing, how do you find that little thing that says, yup, this is really what my calling in life is going to be. And I like to think of this as that Venn diagram. You know, it's got those three circles. The first is really your passion, what are you passionate about? And you've got to really be saying what is it that really excites you, gets you out of your bed and you want to be doing for the rest of your life. That's really what you're passionate about. That comes with another circle which is, what are you really good at and do you get a chance to do stuff where people say, wow, you know what, you do this really well or you are particularly good at it. So, what are you distinctively, uniquely good at? So, I think those two circles need to intersect. Then, you have a third which is, really, what adds value? And, I think, that's an important piece, because it's not enough to say I do what I enjoy and I am pretty good at it, because if people don't value it, then clearly something is missing.

DJ: That's where the commercial case sometimes kicks in, right?

PI: Therefore, there has to be a commercial case. Now, you could argue that you know what; you really don't need the money. There is value, you may not take it and you might decide to do something else, you might want to change the world, you might want to work with parts of our society which can't afford it, which is all terrific. But there is value, and real value that's being created.

So, I think, it's important to have these three circles intersecting passion, strengths, value. I think, the intersection of these three is really your sweet spot. And I keep telling myself that in everything that I do, it's important to be ensuring that that value circle is also coming into it. People must value it. And I've also recognized that if they don't value it, no one's going to take you seriously, and you're probably not doing justice to your strengths and you're probably not doing as much as you can if people don't value it enough. For me, value can also be in the early days, when I wrote my first book, I still remember, I got this email from someone saying, 'I am sitting in my engineering lab in Varanasi. And until today, I used to be cursing my parents for sending me here. I've just finished reading your book and now I'm telling myself, you know what, it's not their fault. I'm responsible for what's happening in my life. Thank you for making a difference.' And I just think, wow, here is someone I've never met, probably never will meet, but if I have managed to get a switch to get turned on in his head, it's been worth my while.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I find it interesting that sometimes when I talk to leaders in transition, they often focus on the revenue line and want to ensure that it grows well over time. There is nothing wrong with it. There isn't often as much reflection on the coast line (the answer to which possibly comes from the inside world of how much you actually need). Often recognizing what that need curve looks like can be quite liberating in terms of the options one could pursue once you have clarity about how much is enough and how much you need.

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## End of nugget transcription

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### About Deepak Jayaraman

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

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