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Context to the nugget

KV Sridhar (Pops) talks about how he thought about an early fork in the road where he had to choose between disparate options in front of him. One was to become a Medical Representative which was highly lucrative in those days, second was to become a Drawing teacher and the third was to pursue art in the world of advertising. He discusses how he walked the tightrope where the mind and heart were pulling him in different directions.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): How did you make sense of these seemingly diverging roads and how and how did you pick, which road to walk on?

KV Sridhar (KV.S): So while there is certain rational thinking towards that because I have always been caught up with very emotional and rational both because of being a science graduate it makes you reason things and being an **Artist** it make you think everything emotional way, retrospective you can fit in a lot of rational reasons, but like Swamy Vivekananda said "If there were to be ever a conflict between your heart and mind go by your heart" I think that was the conflict, the mind says you get paid well in a Medical Rep. you have the competency in that you understand make the money there and then use it for your painting.

The second one is being a drawing teacher which gives you anonymous amount of time to do what you want to do but you will end up not having money and your art scene was not as good as it is today those days it was nothing, it was like cricket, Test match if there is also you out, you are a disaster, today IPL is there, it takes 100 and 150, so there are far more choices which are available those days it was not available. So it was very difficult to really choose the subject of doing drawing in the school and not getting paid and even if you have three months of holiday every year what are you going to do with that time? When you don't have money.

The third one which is far more pragmatic and I said let me stay in what I like which is painting and then this is also a form of art so I can pursue, so there is Art and then there is a bit of science in understanding so I can use both the skills, so ended up being in advertising which offered both the skills.

DJ: How did you make sense of these seemingly diversion roads and how and how did you pick, which road to walk on?

KV.S: I think Indian parents put too much of pressure on children to excel academically not everybody can be first so finally if we have 3000 schools out there can only be three thousand kids

who can be first, can't be more than the number of schools. So, parents don't realize they want their children to achieve their best so a lot of people, especially in IIT's, I have seen many kids who come up to IIT because they have to prove to their parents and then to the world that I am good enough to clear the test of IIT, they come in very reluctantly into IIT, and then after the first year they drop out, and then some of them continue to finish it and then prove to the world that I can be an IIT graduate and then within a year or two after they get their placement they have even proved that they have got the job they are intelligent enough to do all that and *then make their career choice*, so there are two things in that, *what have you learnt? What you really like doing?* So what you have learnt may not be of waste but you should always pursue what you really want to do and my advice is without knowing those days education was not as evolved as it is today I pick two things where I have capabilities, my interest lies in painting which also I have studied academically and then my training and my background is also science, so I said when you take art and science together you will have a career which you will not regret because both you like both are part of you. So, if you are a mechanical engineer and you like photography, there is nothing on earth which stops you in using your mechanical engineering talent and also your knowledge into building Drones which can take Aerial Photography, there are three kids who are doing not just Aerial Photography as in still on movie they are doing Aerial photography for VR, so they are three IIT kids so they are doing that another three IIT kids who are actually building the first battery intelligence scooter which runs on your android phone so a lot of things, where your interest lies?, what your academically qualifications are you can match, for instance, you might like cricket and then you ended up being an MBBS doctor, so twenty years back it end of life today you can be a physio to cricket teams, you can be a surgeon who can actually perform a quicker surgery and then give them a relief. So, there are combinations of things which you can use today which actually allow you to live your passion and also use your knowledge and skill to really ignite your passion.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Three things struck me here. First is the point he makes about the quote from Swami Vivekananda where if there is a conflict between mind and heart, go with your heart. But things are often not as simple as that. It is critical to ensure that we don't swing too far following our heart and miss out on being pragmatic. It was very interesting to hear Pops talk about why picked Advertising over being a drawing teacher because of commercial considerations. Sometimes, it is important for us to understand this trade-offs and walk the tight rope carefully. In this instance, if Pops had solved just for maximizing money at that stage, he would have become a Medical Rep, if had solved just for following his passion, he might have become a drawing teacher. Who knows, he might have been as successful there. But when I look at various journeys, I find that the people who walk the tight rope in a pragmatic manner are able to sustain the direction over a longer time horizon. If this is of interest, do tune into my conversation with Amish Tripathi who spoke about a similar trade-off when he moved from the world of Banking to Writing.

AT: *"It was a pragmatic decision, look I come from middle class family so I always joke "Bhai mere pass baap dada ka ashirvad hai jaaydat kuch nahi" so I have to be pragmatic and practical in my career decisions, I have responsibilities you know I am blessed with the child, I have a wife so I resigned only after second book when my royalty cheque became greater than my salary cheque."*

DJ: The other thing that struck me was the reference he made to some of the students that go to IITs. Having just returned from a 20 year reunion at IIT Madras, I could see the difference between how some of the trajectories had played out. The one thing that was really striking was that people who were self-aware and had good navigational principles have been able to make meaningful choices and get to a meaningful place in whatever they were doing. And as I thought about it, I

realized that the education system like an IIT is like preparing a race horse but nobody tells the horse where to run. So, when the horse is left in an open field, it doesn't have a framework to process the "where to go" question. I guess, as we go through the journey, it is helpful if we start reflecting and building navigational principles for ourselves.

Finally, Pops talking about career opportunities like building drones or becoming a Physio for the cricket team reminded me of the book – So good they cannot ignore you by Cal Newport. In the book, he talks about the fact that "follow your passion" is bad advice and then goes on to talk about how to explore things at the intersection of capability and interest.

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End of nugget transcription

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

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KV Sridhar - Nuggets

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- 23.03 KV Sridhar - Early career choices - Medical Rep/Painting/Advertising
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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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