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## Context to the nugget

Jayashri talks about her collaboration with Sir Ang Lee where when she collaborated with him to sing for the movie – Life of Pi. The song was eventually nominated for the Oscars for the Best Original Song (first Tamil song to be nominated). She talks about how Sir Ang Lee brought out the best in her during the five days that she spent recording the 5 odd lines of the song.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): You have worked with ... in the context of life of pi, I am curious about working with people from different cultures and backgrounds as let's say as compare to maybe Carnatic music where most of the others might have come from a similar let's say cultural or a musical upbringing, what's some of the shifts that you need to make when you work with somebody from a very different space?

Bombay Jayashri (BJ): One is to be open minded and to what that opportunity so when they called me up and they read out the list of names I was jumping with joy that I blessed with this opportunity with reference to Ang Lee he is zen like, he is calm and he speaks very little but he will affectionately prod you to deliver what he wants, while rendering this song I remember, we recorded this in Bombay and the song is very small, it's about four or six lines but it took over a week to record that, to get finally where sir Ang wanted us to in Mychael Danna at the end I think what he told me is, I want the child not to sleep to your lullaby, I want the child to feel safe and I want that in your voice and if you look at the way they have, the song plays through the film, of course it lulls the child to sleep it also wakes by up, it gives them the courage and more importantly its, the song the track is used as a connect between the audience and Pi through-out and even when I thought deeply I realized, how the song plays through the movie so to work with someone sir Ang is universal he maybe Taiwanese on paper but it's fascinating to work with somebody like him, who loves what he do and he does knows what to get from the artist that he is working with.

DJ: Five days for a six line song, so how do you break that up, what happens in those five days in the sense in even that simple thing that you said about, understanding the emotion of the song and bringing it into your voice, how does that play out for an artist?

BJ: I think it was very similar to how I practice Carnatic music, basically over that five days, those five lines or four lines, I was internalising the melody and it was simple melody, it was intense but very simple melody so I remember even in sleep those four lines were going on in my head and I think that process is what was beautiful and that what was required and that was why I was given the time, so I could internalise and not just, if you see a mother singing to a child, it's not something she learnt five minutes ago it's something she may have heard her grandmother singing or mother

singing, which was inside her and I was lucky that I was giving the time for to internalise it at least for five days and interestingly neither of them knew Tamil but they wanted words that sounded, that had that relationship, when you hear they wanted that warmth that affection that motherly love, so I would pick words and they are saying not this, this is a little harsh, and they were constantly telling me no, I want a word ending with aa, I want a word ending with oh, I don't want too much of sounds like which is there in Tamil but they wanted the whole thing to be soft melting butter like, because any of the audiences it a universal audience and they wanted the sounds emanating from the la la by just not the voice but the sound had to be that affection.

DJ: For people striving for excellence where do you hit a point where you know OK, I think we are done, I think we have the version that sort of, which is as good as it can get.

BJ: I think it's just the clock. Given a choice we go on and on and say yet another chance some more time but no, its five days and you have to say stop and then you have to tell yourself, maybe I have given everything that's inside me, I have to wait for the another song to give another version of the beauty.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Couple of things that strike me in this context.

First is the point Jayashri makes about how Sir Ang Lee gave her a nuance to the song where he said the voice needs to make the child safe and not just sleep to the melody. I find that great leaders inspire the people that work with them by giving them a sense of WHY and the purpose that helps the people give that extra 10% which sometimes makes all the difference.

The second is the point Jayashri made about knowing when it is complete. It was fascinating to hear her say that the clock was what led to them shutting shop at the end of 5 days. I guess, excellence indeed is not a goal post but an attitude.

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## Bombay Jayashri - Nuggets

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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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