



The banner features the 'play to potential' logo on the left. To its right are contact details: a WhatsApp icon with the number '+91 85914 52129*', a Twitter icon with '@PlayToPotential', and a globe icon with 'playtopotential.com'. Further right, under the heading 'Also available on:', are icons for Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts. On the right side of the banner is a portrait of a man in a suit and glasses, identified as 'Podcast Host Deepak Jayaraman'. At the bottom left of the banner, a small note reads: '*Just send us a Whatsapp with your name, number and email and we will add you to our distribution list.'

Context to the nugget

Arun talks about how he was at a cross-road when he had to move from a successful stint as an executive in Tata Motors to a role as a consultant with Arthur D Little in the United States. He talks about the circumstances in which he took the decision (including a nudge from JRD Tata) and how he had to adjust his style to be effective in a new professional and cultural context. It is not very often that you see a leader transition from being a Business Leader to a Business Consultant.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Why move to the advisory after a long stint to the industry and more importantly talk to us about what were the challenges in settling into the new way of life if you will, moving from the industry to advisory side?

Arun Miara (AM): Sometimes choices are forced on one, the need to make choice is first on one so I was extremely satisfied and with my growth and development and even with the sense of achievement in my years with TATAs, 25 years already I found myself as growing up and I am thinking back of those years now, so pleased with what life gave me in those years and then something happens in life as you say in life because the human being is not just sort of self-fulfilling, self-actualising you have other relationships and obligation and certainly if you have a family you get married and you have children I mean that's all are part of your life now and so things happen in other people's life who are part of your family which can compel you to have to make decisions about your life. So, in this case it was my daughter who had finished her high school in India and then got herself at a pretty young age a full scholarship to go do her undergraduate studies in the United States very far away, living there by herself and she got rather unwell in the end of the first year in Wellesley and doctors there the best doctors are there could not figure out what was wrong with her and so just after that her vacations was starting anyway so she came home and we got the very best doctors in India to look at her because the doctors in US found some tropical disease that she had and maybe doctors here would know what to do, the doctors over here also couldn't figure what the disease if anything was with her so in that moment when she was otherwise functioning as a human being but something was decaying inside her and no one could figure out what was causing it to happen so as it comes you know in such situations in people have worst things like cancer also and you say you carry on life or you retreat from life and worry about whether you are going to get well or not and certainly at that age she was a spunky girl, she said no, I am just going back to college and no one can figure out what is wrong and might as well be there and I am going to be, but she was decaying and so my wife naturally as a mother, first child and she says I just have to be with her and so the question comes what am I going to do? And more importantly in those years, this is more importantly from my perspective because I have to support the family it was not possible for us to send money from India and there wasn't much money for my wife to live there or for any treatments

there, so it was suggested to me by Mr. JRD Tata that why don't I look for something to do in United States like a sabbatical and that would perhaps enable me to live with my family as well as earn and so think of that now what would I do? At that age in I am 45 and the very senior position on the board of the Indian's largest company and these sort of people are not taken into consulting and when you get people fresh out of business school, so he said that he knew a firm Arthur D Little who hired senior people there were different sort of consulting people with experience because the work they did was to guide governments and senior people and he said they had been consultants to the Indian government on India's defence policy a Nuclear policy, and JRD Tata was associated with it we had great respect for them and he said you know people like you are in that firm so I write to them, good relationships and maybe may interview and like you go work with them and they will pay you something, you can live there and come back whenever your daughter is well, so it was very hard for me because I was really on a high with work and on the cusp if you will of even people thought bigger things for myself, so should I go to something strange and I mean new country, new firm, new profession, it was going to be tough at 45, it was midlife crisis sort of in reverse going to be thrown at me and JRD Tata called me to his room and he could see I was struggling, I should stay or I should go? So he said look I am going to have to tell you something which is going to hurt you but I have to say it, you are one father only for your daughter and at this age she needs father, you are very good and great and bright and we have love for you but we will find another Maira and she can't find another father and that's all he said, and that's the greatness of the man, so I took off, yes it was tough there as was anticipated and that was much worse than I thought would be, I mean to go into an organization where no one knows you except for three four people who had interviewed me or who can connected with some work we had done that's all and whereas in Tata's everybody was Mr. Miara, and in India you are in Tata's it was a big thing and here nobody, in your own organization nobody in society or the countries personally, very difficult who appreciates you who knows you, the profession was very different too, I mean let's forget the culture of America which was in some ways nice and you had freedom to do things and learn to do things for yourself, it shouldn't have to do here but otherwise in terms of the profession it was very new, because here I was in a situation where I had the power if you are making changes in Tatas and we have made some remarkable things yeah I was the big boss if I got the B in my bonnet then we gathered together and of course we discussed other's ideas and mine and we could do it, because I could say alright decision taken do it and then take the rap if it went wrong and celebrate if it went right, there I wasn't the boss of the clients organization then they had to do something to succeed and so how can one be helpful to someone else on their journey. It is no longer your journey I was here on a very successful happy journey myself how could I be useful to someone else on journeys which could be as aspirational as mine was in my professional life thus far, so when I got to that question I said here's something new to learn is how one could be a leader without having the hands on the controls, so in a way yes I am leading something but I am not the person with the hands on the control that is can be seen as a leader and should be the leader too. So the learning about the journeys of others what goes on, on the journeys of others and if one understands that then only one can be helpful to that journey, one can say I did this I was very successful, you therefore must do this it won't work, fortunately for me as I said earlier that I was in the strange set up where now one knew me, so here in India if I got into a consulting situation people would say you know Mr. Maira you have done so well in Tatas tell us and they would also take it without questioning it. Over there now one knew me so if I was giving advice to somebody they wouldn't accept it just because I was a successful person, I had to get them to appreciate the value of that advice for them from zero coming from someone who personally is a zero but the advice itself must resonate with that person so that was very good.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: A couple of things struck me here. One is Arun talking about what Mr JRD Tata tells him about him being the only father for his daughter. I experienced something similar almost exactly a decade back. I was working as a consultant with McKinsey in New Jersey and I got a call from Chennai in India that my father was diagnosed with Stage 4, Colon Cancer. It changed a lot of things for me because I had a loan to pay back and we had set off on a trajectory and if I had to be honest with myself, I was 50-50 about the decision. But when I look at it with hindsight, relocating to India to take care of his treatment and spending the last 6 months of his life being close to him has been immensely fulfilling. It was an absolute no-brainer.

Something similar came up in my conversation with Meher Pudumjee (MP), Chairperson of Thermax. She spoke about losing her father and brother in quick succession and how not having regrets helped her healing process.

MP: "and another big thing that I have learnt from death with both my brother and my father if you had to rewind the clock and say would you have lived your life differently without knowing that your dad will die at 60 and your brother and your brother at 25 would you do anything different and I would say predominantly so, not a lot, so the relationship that I had with both was so strong that I don't think I would have changed very much and therefore there was no guilt after death and I find that, that really helped in my healing process"

DJ: There is enough research that says that over the long run, people regret their omissions much more than their commissions. Having some clarity over priorities on the work and home front, I feel is critical.

The second point that struck me was that the role in the US came through an introduction from JRD Tata to Arthur D Little. I find that when people get senior and when you are reinventing yourself in a new context (whether it is a new profession or geography), it is critical to play on the balance sheet of the relationships you have built till date and use that as a bridge of trust to cross over to a different domain.

So, just ensuring that you leave with your relationships intact and even leveraging your relationships as you move to a new context is critical. Thank you for listening. For more please visit playtopotential.com.

End of nugget transcription

Nugget from Meher Pudumjee that is referenced: [Dealing with shocks](#).

RELATED PLAYLISTS YOU MIGHT LIKE

Reinventing self: "How do I stay relevant" is a question that all of us have to grapple with as we go through our respective journeys. Careers aren't linear any more. Some of the leaders talk about how they managed to pivot during their journeys and significantly change trajectories. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Inflection points: Inflection points are when the notion of "what got you here won't get you there" hold. Whether it is a company moving from a start-up to a scale-up or a leader moving from a CXO to

a CEO role, these passages of play have to be navigated carefully as there is a high risk of derailment. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Leadership transitions: Perspectives around moving from one role from another especially while moving from Functional Leadership to General Management; Leaders also talk about how they thought about inter-generational transition as business owners. You can access the playlist [here](#).

SIGN UP TO OUR COMMUNICATION

Podcast Newsletter: Join 1000s of leaders who benefit from the Podcast newsletter. Not more than 1-2 emails a month including keeping you posted on the new content that comes up at the podcast. High on signal, low on noise. Sign up for the podcast newsletter [here](#).

Nuggets on Whatsapp: We also have a **Podcast Whatsapp distribution group (+91 85914 52129)** where we share 2-3 nuggets a week from the Podcast archives to provoke reflection. If that is of interest, please click [here](#) and send a message stating "INTERESTED". Do also add this number to your Phone Contacts so that we can broadcast our messages to you when we share a nugget.

Arun Miara - Nuggets

- 34.00 Arun Miara - The Full Conversation
- 34.01 Arun Miara - Art of asking good questions
- 34.02 Arun Miara - Steering by listening
- 34.03 Arun Miara - Giving feedback by listening
- 34.04 Arun Miara - Having deep conversations at scale
- 34.05 Arun Miara - The art of facilitation
- 34.06 Arun Miara - Judgment and values
- 34.07 Arun Miara - Listening & "Thinking fast and slow"
- 34.08 Arun Miara - Being heard in a noisier world
- 34.09 Arun Miara - Reinventing oneself at 45
- 34.10 Arun Miara - Transitioning across contexts
- 34.11 Arun Miara - Leadership in an open system
- 34.12 Arun Miara - In Summary - Playing to Potential

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](#).

Disclaimer and clarification of intent behind the transcripts

This written transcript of the conversation is being made available to make it easier for some people to digest the content in the podcast. Several listeners felt that the written format would be helpful.

This may not make sense as an independent document. Very often spoken word does not necessarily read well. Several of the guests have published books and the language in their books might be quite different from the way they speak. We request the readers to appreciate that this transcript is being offered as a service to derive greater value from the podcast content. We request you not to apply journalistic standards to this document.

This document is a transcription obtained through a third party/voice recognition software. There is no claim to accuracy on the content provided in this document, and occasional divergence from the audio file are to be expected. As a transcription, this is not a legal document in itself, and should not be considered binding to advice intelligence, but merely a convenience for reference.

The tags that are used to organize the nuggets in the podcast are evolving and work in progress. You might find that there could be a discrepancy between the nuggets as referenced here and in the actual podcast given this is a static document.

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in any retrieval system of any nature without prior written permission.