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Context to the nugget

Dr Guha talks about how Gandhiji openly spoke and wrote about his flaws (defects, manias, lusts, passions and superstitions) without any inhibition. This approach is in such a stark contrast to how several leaders of today manage their personal image. He also spoke about how Gandhiji was often open to feedback (including being open to inputs from Mahadev Desai – his assistant) and would be comfortable acknowledging publicly if he was wrong in a debate.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): I think the one piece that also struck me about Gandhiji was how he got a pulse of what was going on? I got a sense that he had his feedback mechanism in place to understand what was going on.

Dr. Ramachandra Guha (RG): I get, this is again something he had a feedback which many CEOs and Political leaders don't, and it came from many people, it came from the fact that he was open to people writing him talking him and also his great secretary Mahadev Desai who was an extraordinary figure, who was his moral conscience in many ways so, I don't know his own travels across the lands so certainly he had sources of information emanating from people who were not blindly loyal to him or did not wanted to feed him just for what he wanted to hear that he very much had in India, in SA maybe a little less and he had a magazine so he wrote and people wrote back so you will get a sense and he often used to be disagreed and sometimes he printed that disagreement in the magazine and then responded to it saying you are right about this but not right about that so he had all that. He absolutely had all that.

DJ: How Gandhi thought about vulnerability? It was just who he was or trying to gain the trust of the people.

RG: I think he was constantly examining himself and exposing his fallacies and vulnerabilities to himself and to the world, he didn't suppressed anything, it was just part of his personality to expose his vulnerabilities to the world.

DJ: Because no other leader of that era or even otherwise comes close in terms of how much...

RG: in fact my very last sentence of the book kind of talks about this which are just maybe read out "Gandhi's heightened self-awareness and openness to self-criticism stand in striking contrast to arrogance of those in positions or power today, Gandhi was admitted to making a Himalayan blunder but contemporary activists as much as contemporary politicians and you can add contemporary CEOs to that are loath ever to admit to making a simple mistake. The poet Paul Valery

once remarked that in general the things that people hide from each other are of an emotional or physiological nature such as defects, manias, lusts, passions and superstitions. Among all the public figures of his time or ours, Gandhi was singular and that he exposed his defects, his manias, his lust, his passions and his superstitions to the whole world through his writings in periodicals, he himself edited and published. As an English Quaker who interacted with him over a period of 20 years pointed out Gandhiji had no private life as we westerners understand the expression. God knows what we would think of other celebrated figures whether in Politics or Business, Sports, Science or the Arts if we were so directly exposed to the intimacies to their lives and their thoughts. Beyond Satyagraha, interfaith harmony, environmental responsibility, the ending of the British empire and the delegitimising of untouchability the practice of and the largely successful quest for truth may in fact be Gandhi's most remarkable achievement."

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: As we move from an Industrial to a digital paradigm where more and more is happening outside the realm of our understanding at a rapid pace, where value is being created at the intersection of ecosystems, where your team members often know much more than you and are several years elder to you, I guess the notion of building trust before leading them becomes paramount. The criticality of vulnerability is arguably more relevant today than it ever was in the past.

Thank you for listening. Apologies for the audio being a little noisy. Dr. Guha and I had this conversation in the outdoors in the pleasant Bangalorean winter. But we couldn't put the construction worker at a neighbouring site or the birds on mute. Hope that didn't come in the way of the listening experience. For more podcast content curated by theme, please visit playtopotential.com and visit the Curated Playlists section. To know more about the Coaching and Transition Advisory work I do, please visit transitioninsight.com

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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