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Context to the nugget

Ashish speaks about how he is seeding some initiatives that could possibly prove to be pathways for him in a few years. He speaks about his interest in Air Quality, China and Healthcare and how some of these experiments might pave the path for his next innings.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): No, I couldn't agree more having sort of benefited from those 2:00 a.m. and 3:00 a.m. discussions in IITM and IMA. Just a few questions as we wrap up Ashish, I am mindful of time. First is you had a marker for 30 and marker for 45, as you think about your journey from hereon, are there any macro markers which you have in mind, which would be your sort of guide post as you think about choices?

Ashish Dhawan (AD): Yeah, so, I think of the things I have been thinking about Deepak is how do I... I think, in education I am still going to be very focused on it for the next few years till at least my... I am 51 now till at least 55, but do I have a sort of slightly wider portfolio of initiatives where I am going beyond education, so that's for me is maybe the next move. I have already started seeding that in some ways. I set up a foundation to focus on air quality, I have got a couple of initiatives been seeded, that are around talent development in this sector, I have set up the China India Foundation that looks at learning from China not looking at geopolitical issues which obviously are very controversial. So, I have floated a few of these new things really because I have multiple interests and what I have learnt from how I can drive impact in education, can I do it in a more leveraged way in a few other sectors is something that's of interest to me. And beyond that I don't know, I mean, could I write a book someday or do some of that possibly? I am also very focused on having fun in life, I mean, you only have one life so it's, I mean, it's not that I don't have fun right now, I do, I have a great time but maybe at some point in life just saying that I just want to just chill a little bit and not always feeling like I need to be a producer but also just enjoying being a pure consumer. So, I joke with my wife that I am going to buy a bar on the beach and that would be next life, serving drinks to people who are working really hard and need a break but yeah something different. And so, I don't know exactly what that is but yeah, and I do have many other interests in life that is unfulfilled around languages, around living in certain places so who knows.

DJ: Got it. And why China out of curiosity of the various education models out there?

AD: Sorry, I missed that Deepak?

DJ: No problem, why China, I heard you saying about learning from China education, there are multiple models out there, but I was curious how you picked China?

AD: Yeah, so I have been going to China for the last 25 years and I am no China expert, I don't speak the language, I only know a few words, but you know China is most proximate to India in that it's a very large country, similar population size, through the colonial era went downhill effectively in terms of share of world GDP and really has woken up faster than India at least on the economic front and really powered through to the becoming a middle-income country and squarely on its way to becoming a high-income country. So, I think, on the economic development side, I can't think of a better role model than China because you know what happened in the U.S. happened much earlier and in Europe even earlier. And so, it's not in living memory, you know, it's... when you go talk to someone in the U.S. or Europe about development, I mean, they look at their context and even what they have grown up with and they can't relate to the Indian context. So, I think, what's interesting about China is not just the scale and the speed but I think also the fact that it has happened the last 20-30 years, so it's in living memory. And you can actually go see, you can talk to people and I think India like if you look at like vocational education, would we be better off learning from China or learning from the U.S.? I think from China to be honest because they have done it at scale and they have done it recently and they have done it leveraging technology tools which existed now and didn't exist 30 years ago. Or if you look at the way China has gone about developing a science and technology policy and how they pursued that, I think, India can learn something from that. You know, the U.S. did it after the Vannevar Bush plan in World War II and of course, they created a great military industrial scientific complex, but I think the Chinese one is staring us in the face and it's being done more recently or even in development areas like public health. When we talk about Ayushman Bharat 500 million people, the Chinese actually rolled out universal healthcare like over a decade ago. And so, we can learn about how they empaneled hospitals and how they ensured that service delivery happened and how they quality assured it, stuff like that. So, I just think it's the scale, the speed and the fact that it's proximate, it's just happened, it's important to unpack it and not miss out. It's also I feel because Indians don't go there that often and don't speak the language, that knowledge doesn't come to them as easy. I mean, there would be a report here or there, but it's superficial whereas the knowledge from the West is coming to you in various forms and you often interact with people from there. An Indian who works at IBM who tells you what's happening there doesn't happen, people will know more people at IBM than they will at Baidu for instance. So, I think, in that sense they enrolled for an intermediary in a sense to unpack that knowledge and to get scholars to visit and not only do itself but create a leveraged ecosystem to make that happen, sort of, catalyse that movement.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: One of my earlier guests Herminia Ibarra, a leading thinker in the space of transition, says that you need to construct experiments and act your way into a new way of thinking than think your way into a new way of acting. It's interesting to see Ashish planting his seeds in a few different places driven by his curiosity in addition to the work he is doing in education. I see too many people taking a plunge too far in an unrelated realm taking them to a funny place. The issue is that a lot of these people might have solved for financial milestones in their life. So, there is no commercial pressure on them to get this transition right but what they don't realize often is that if you don't solve it thoughtfully, it does come in the way of how you feel about yourself, your overall happiness, your relationships and other domains of life.

End of nugget transcription

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Ashish Dhawan - Nuggets

- 65.00 Ashish Dhawan - The Full Conversation
- 65.01 Ashish Dhawan - Having career markers at 30 and 45
- 65.02 Ashish Dhawan - Taking the entrepreneurial plunge
- 65.03 Ashish Dhawan - What it takes to be a good PE Investor
- 65.04 Ashish Dhawan - From PE to Philanthropy
- 65.05 Ashish Dhawan - Potential pathways post ChrysCapital
- 65.06 Ashish Dhawan - Unanticipated challenges in driving Social Impact
- 65.07 Ashish Dhawan - Metrics to measure progress
- 65.08 Ashish Dhawan - Educating ourselves for the future
- 65.09 Ashish Dhawan - Planting seeds for the future
- 65.10 Ashish Dhawan - Leading a richer life

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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