



The banner features the 'play to potential' logo on the left. To its right are contact details: a WhatsApp icon with '+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 Deepak Jayaraman, with the text 'Podcast Host' and 'Deepak Jayaraman' below it. At the bottom left, 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

Vinay speaks about the many layers of Vajpayee and how he had several contradictions within. He goes on to speak about great leaders and how we have to study them in a non-linear fashion for us to make sense of them.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): The other phrase that you use which I found appealing was not only was Vajpayee capable of being heard in multiple registers, he was capable of containing within himself multitudes.

Vinay Sitapati (VS): Yes.

DJ: I wanted to sort of explore that.

VS: Well, Deepak because I have studied Narasimha Rao for the previous book, in the previous Play to Potential that I was on, I realised that when you look at grand figures and I think Vajpayee was a grand figure, you see lot of contradictions within, a lot of them. So, Narasimha Rao for example was a visionary. He was also petty and corrupt and rather than have a linear view of understanding them as either or the answer is, they have a bit of both. So, Vajpayee was a careerist, he was an opportunist and he was ruthless to those within the party who he didn't agree with, ruthless, whether it was ML Sondhi, Balraj Madhok, Subramaniam Swamy, Nanaji Deshmukh, Govindacharya, list of people whose careers have been destroyed by Vajpayee within the party itself. On the other hand, Vajpayee was in some sense a liberal. He had extraordinarily good parliamentary etiquette, he had friends across the political aisle, his own critics said that he is half a congressman, there's a grain of truth to that in the sense that he cultivated these relationships. I talk about in the book in some detail, he had an unorthodox relationship, and he lived with this woman, a fascinating figure Rajkumari Kaul, who was an intellectual liberalising influence on him and her husband for 30 to 40 years. So, he was a complex figure. So, what I try to do in this book is to reduce this view of like the right man in the wrong party, which is what he was called like a liberal in the wrong party saying that he was as complicit or as opportunist as the rest of them, but he also had these moments of extraordinary greatness and as Prime Minister, he definitely had a grand view of India. He didn't have a petty view of India and I just have reconciled myself after studying Narasimha Rao that when you look at these kind of grand figures you have to be comfortable with their many contradictions, their pettiness as well as their large-heartedness. And the two of them coexist in figures such as this.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Something similar comes up in the way we think about our identities as well and sometimes that comes in the way of new possibilities. We end up attaching narrow labels to ourselves and those constraints the choice set. Something similar came up in my conversation with James Clear (JC), the author of Atomic Habits.

JC: *"I think identity is a huge factor of life but also particularly tied to our habits. So, let's think about this from a big picture level first. So, you have identities that can build you up, for example, like I am a type of person who reads a lot or I am a type of person who finishes workouts or I am a type of person who finishes what I start and then you also have identities that hold you back. So, something like I am terrible with directions or I am bad at remembering people's names or I have a sweet tooth or I am bad at math and we are all a collection of identities like there are multiple things that are a part of you like you might say I am a dad, I am a brother and a neighbour and a volunteer, and a teacher or whatever and it's not just labels that are part of your identity like dad and teacher and friend and neighbour, it's also those internal beliefs, that narrative that you assign to yourself and the more that you let one of those beliefs take over your entire identity or occupy too large of a portion the more that you are fragile and brittle in that way because if you lose that one thing then it feels like you lose your whole self"*

DJ: Being comfortable with the complexities of who we are and not reducing ourselves to a few adjectives might help us see ourselves in greater resolution and get to a meaningful place especially when we are in phases of transition.

If you like to dig in here, you might like the Nuggets on Identity across speakers that you can find in the Curated Playlists Section at playtopotential.com.

End of nugget transcription

Nugget from James Clear that is referenced: [Keeping the identity small](#).

RELATED PLAYLISTS YOU MIGHT LIKE

Self-awareness: Insights around what it takes to build a better understanding of self. This includes perspectives around how we can deepen our picture of ourselves through a combination of inner work, mindfulness practices and by gathering meaningful feedback from the world around us. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Identity: Identity refers to the reputation, characteristics etc. of a person that makes the individual or the people around him/her think about them in a certain way. To put simply, how do we think of ourselves and what to the others think of us. Identity is a key element that we need to wrestle with during pivotal transitions. Herminia Ibarra shares her insights on how we should treat Identity as a Work in Progress that gets influenced by the journey we go through and the choices we make. Ram Guha speaks about the multiple identities of Gandhiji. Atul Kasbekar speaks about how he saw his identity evolve from being a photographer to a producer. All this and more in this playlist. 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.

Vinay Sitapati - Nuggets

- 66.00 Vinay Sitapati - The Full Conversation
- 66.01 Vinay Sitapati - The uniqueness of the Advani-Vajpayee relationship
- 66.02 Vinay Sitapati - Managing transitions when power flips
- 66.03 Vinay Sitapati - What binds the RSS together
- 66.04 Vinay Sitapati - RSS and McKinsey
- 66.05 Vinay Sitapati - Managing diversity and handling disagreements
- 66.06 Vinay Sitapati - Getting comfortable with contradictions
- 66.07 Vinay Sitapati - The dynamics of Jugalbandi
- 66.08 Vinay Sitapati - Making sense of complexity
- 66.09 Vinay Sitapati - Managing hierarchy and merit

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.

Podcast Transcript [66.06 Vinay Sitapati - Getting comfortable with contradictions](#)

Also available on Apple Podcasts | Google Podcasts | Spotify

www.playtopotential.com

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.