



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 the handle '@PlayToPotential', and a globe icon with the website '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 his name '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 how RSS balanced the notion of hierarchy (that is so prevalent in the Indian context across various organizations) with the need to be meritorious to create a culture that brought the best of both worlds in the way it shaped the culture.

## Transcription

\*\*\*\*\*

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Lovely Vinay, this has been a wonderful conversation. Just wrapping up if we just step away from the book and synthesise when you sort of look at it from a distance. What can the corporate world learn from the Jugalbandi, from your research around the RSS, from these two leaders? What are some of let's say the key things that stand out for you in terms of what the corporate world can do to absorb from this journey?

Vinay Sitapati (VS): I think teamwork, teamwork and teamwork and especially take teamwork seriously because you are operating in an Indian problem. Alcoholics Anonymous famously says that admitting you have a problem is half the solution. So, if you are operating in India admit that this is a sensitive issue, and admit for example that you have to balance hierarchy with merit. You can't be 100 percent meritorious in India, there will be a rebellion. If you are hierarchical you can't create value, you have to do it. I will give you and let me end with just one way in which the RSS does it, which is that as you know, India has a huge sense of hierarchy. So, RSS has it too it's called Sangh Aayu, translated as RSS, the Sangh Age. It's based on the age in which you have joined the RSS. So, someone joins the RSS early has spent 40 years in the RSS.

DJ: It's the tenure in the organisation or it's...

VS: Yeah, it's but the tenure is an informal thing. So, it just means the number of years spent in the organisation. Aayu is age so the number of years you have spent. Now, if I have spent 40 years and you have spent 20 years my Sangh Aayu is more than yours. So, you have to respect me, you should call me sir, you should say pranaam, there is that hierarchy. On the other hand, the operational responsibilities in the RSS have nothing to do with Sangh Aayu. And that's very important because somebody may join the RSS earlier, but maybe more incompetent, somebody may join the RSS much later but maybe competent much earlier. And so, they and this is and so you have a lot of... Narendra Modi for example is Prime Minister of India, but if he meets somebody who has joined the RSS earlier than him, he will pay superficial respect, it's superficial but it's nonetheless respect. And I think this is a great mix of you maintain some superficial forms of hierarchy to keep the Indian ego happy, but you don't let that interfere with operational creation of value.

DJ: That's... it's outstanding and if I reflect it back to McKinsey the fact that you connected RSS with McKinsey we have this notion called obligation to dissent and the point that would be made to us was when it comes to the process of client delivery, you know, somebody who's been in the firm for 20 years, who is a Director and let's say if you are one year an Associate you defer to the Partner for managing the process because he or she understands what the client wants, manages the process. But when it comes to problem solving you could go head-to-head; the hierarchy was flat. If you got into a room and you are saying how we do crack this problem about profitability, then you could disagree, you could say whatever you want and the Partner or Director would create that space for that conversation. So, to your point about Sangh Aayu and balancing this hierarchy and meritocracy is a tricky one indeed.

VS: You have to balance the two. Anybody who comes to India and says that I want a flat organisation doesn't know what she or he is talking about. At the same time if you create a hierarchical organisation why are you coming to India, you are doing what everyone has been doing here for a thousand years.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Thank you for reading. For more, please visit [playtopotential.com](http://playtopotential.com).

## End of nugget transcription

\*\*\*\*\*

### RELATED PLAYLISTS YOU MIGHT LIKE

**Culture:** Culture eats Strategy for breakfast but how does one build it. Leaders across domains (Academics, Armed Forces, Silicon Valley, Bollywood, Venture Investing) talk about the notion of culture and how they go about building it in their organizations. 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.

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.