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Context to the nugget

Venerable Tenzin Priyadarshi makes the link between pursuing self-awareness and building non-transactional relationships. He also speaks about the need for all of us to have virtuous friends (we may not go to the movies with them but they might provide perspectives that might open up new vistas).

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Another theme I wanted to understand from you Venerable is this notion of building self-awareness. How do you think about the notion of self-awareness and how do we as human beings widen our self-awareness and reduce our blind spots? What are some of the things that you would like to share with us in that context?

Tenzin Priyadarshi (TP): I think first thing is to recognize that self-awareness is not a religious enterprise. It's a fundamentally, as I have mentioned in the book as well that all humans are contemplatives by nature. You don't need to have a religious or a spiritual orientation to be that to do that. And so, when we speak of self-awareness, it's a simple desire to better understand our own selves, to better understand our own mental disposition, behavioural dispositions and starting with that. And then, you build this this idea of self-awareness in a manner that deeply informs you about your own biases, about your own emotional landscapes, about your own chains and fetters that are not allowing you to grow. Then next level this self-awareness informs you about relational awareness meaning how do you relate to one another, because we are social creatures but there are ways of unhealthy relationships and then there are ways of healthy relationships. And if we don't explore this sense of self-awareness, then we are tied into this narrative of just being consumers. We never look beyond transactional relationships. We may label it as loving relationship and caring relationship but what is actually driving it is simple sense of transactions. What can this person do for me? I am willing to do this for this person but what can this person give in return? And so, this idea that can we ever think beyond that, because if we cannot think beyond that then we are not fulfilling the aspect of human evolution. How do you even continue having transactional relationship with nature at large by destroying the ecosystem, because unless and until we understand the beauty of non-transactional relationships, which is rooted in this expansive idea of self-awareness, we are trapped, we are curbing our own growth, it's like a self-sabotage. So, I don't see a choice, you see, either you pursue self-awareness or your self-sabotage. There's nothing in the middle.

DJ: And how does, how does, I guess, you could talk for hours and days about how we do it but for somebody who is trying to pursue self-awareness, one of the pieces I am beginning to become aware of is that there are two parts to it. One is about reflecting and understanding yourself better

and the other is also there's an element of gathering feedback from the world around you and opening up blind spots. How do you think about widening the self-awareness? What are some of...

TP: That's a great question. I mean first thing is yes feedback mechanism is useful but seek feedback from people whom you trust, don't see seek feedback from people that are simply flattering in nature or people are just sort of giving you blind compliments in some ways. That's not feedback, that's just flattery. So, having a group of trusted individuals around you and there's a whole notion of spiritual friendship that I refer to in the book with this idea of virtuous friends, meaning that these may not necessarily be people that you want to watch a movie with or seek to do entertaining things but these are individuals that you might want to do a nature walk with or have a conversation with. So, having those circles of friends is important. The second thing is that when I say that you have to take inventory of already what's there in the mind's landscape meaning your emotional dispositions, your behavioural dispositions and so on, recognizing them is just the beginning of things. You recognize them and then you have to understand which one of these are actually conducive to my sense of well-being. Because what often times happens is if we deeply believe that anger is what empowers me and therefore it is good for my well-being, we never let go off anger, in fact, we find every opportunity we get to manifest the sense of rage, to manifest the sense of anger. So, there is this deep kind of inquiry that goes as to is it truly conducive to my sense of well-being and well-being of people around me? If not, how do I begin reducing it or substituting it with some other framework, with some other value, some other emotional state that I believe would be much more useful. And then you start embarking on little experiments to do that. And little experiments are helpful; as I said that when we used to run programs for business schools right after the financial meltdown, nobody in the audience would raise their hand and say I am not a kind human being. Everybody believes they are the kindest people on the planet, right? But when you start to sort of go into this mode of inquiry, when was the last time you enacted kindness towards whom? What's the frequency with which you manifest kindness? So, those are sort of practical experiments by which we can start moving in those particular kinds of directions. Bias is a big thing today. How we perceive the other? And there is a lot of cultural conditioning, religious conditioning that goes around it. But even for a moment to say, what if I was in their shoes? What if my religion was different? What if my cast was different? What if my economic status, financial status was different? So, these are the things that you fundamentally sort of bring in to your sphere of awareness to start moving things around, you never become comfortable, you never become complacent.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Talking about self-awareness, I had an opportunity to speak to Tasha Eurich (TE), one of the leading thinkers and researchers in the area of Self-Awareness.

TE: *"the reason I call it them meta skill and this is really important is that particularly in the work place our self-awareness to going to set that upper limit for our success. In other words, you know think about the best communicator you know or the best leader you know or the person who is just the most effective on a long term basis they are only as successful as they are self-aware because if we are not able to see our self clearly we can't come from a place values based behaviour we can't question our assumptions, we can't identify how we are impacting others and change our approach if we need to so I really see it is kind of the foundational skill not just to be successful at work but really to be someone lives meaningful, successful and drawable life."*

DJ: She speaks about two types of self-awareness –internal self-awareness (which is about reflection, mindfulness and other things we do on our own, the other is external self-awareness which she says is often orthogonal to what we gather through internal self-awareness"

Podcast Transcript [68.07 Tenzin Priyadarshi - Pursuing self-awareness](#)

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Do tune into my conversation with Tasha Eurich or look up the Curated Playlist on Self-awareness if this is of interest. You could go to playtopotential.com and find these resources.

End of nugget transcription

Nugget from Tasha Eurich that is referenced: [Self-awareness: Meta-skill of 21st century](#).

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](#).

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Tenzin Priyadarshi - Nuggets

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- 68.03 Tenzin Priyadarshi - Shaping one's journey
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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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