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Context to the nugget

Ramesh speaks about how he ended up getting involved with Education. He speaks about how his meeting with Shaheen Mistri galvanized his wife Charuta and him to involve themselves with Akanksha Foundation, Teach for India and Peepul. He urges us to pick a topic that we are passionate about and stick with it for a long period of time to make a dent.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And moving on Ramesh, we have also interacted on a couple of occasions outside of the McKinsey context, right? You are involved with Akanksha Foundation and Teach for India. So, talk to us a little bit about, you know, all of us have finite time. How do you think about your portfolio of time, pie chart of time, and how have you thought about allocating it to even pursuing impact through the McKinsey platform outside the platform, how have you thought about choices over the last few years?

Ramesh Srinivasan (RS): Yeah, I think early in my McKinsey career and probably even going back to when I was at IIT Madras, I used to spend a few hours a week with an organization that was teaching kids in Tharamani. I always felt that I got a lot from society, Deepak. I went to Kendriya Vidyalaya, Central School. I paid five rupees a month for my education, I got largely a free education from IIT and IIM through the merit-cum-means scholarship because, you know, my father passed away when I was 12-years-old. So, our family income was low enough as we qualified as long as I had good enough grades for the merit-cum-means scholarship. And that was the ultimate gift that I got from society, the government, the system at large, and I felt I had an obligation to pay it back or pay it forward as they say. My first few years at McKinsey were, you know, I was busy learning and being and learning how to be a successful professional. But as I got close to getting elected partner, that's when I was introduced to Shaheen Mistri, the founder of Akanksha. Both Charuta and I met her and it was truly a transformational experience. Charuta of course was a marketing consultant after IIM-A but she decided to switch to education full-time; it was the experience with Akanksha truly transformed her and that's what got us to move to the U.S. And I decided to continue my involvement with Akanksha. I spend a few hours a week with Akanksha whether it's on strategy, coaching people, fundraising etc. But the few hours adds up, over 20 years, I have stayed true to that and about 10 years ago, I got involved with Teach for India when Shaheen decided to launch Teach for India. We did a McKinsey project and then off late, like I said, it's evolved from a hobby to a professional priority. I also now know a little bit about education in India. So, recently I said yes to help an organization called Peepul, which does some amazing work in Madhya Pradesh and Delhi. So, I have been more comfortable adding to my portfolio. So, my advice to people would be pick themes that you are passionate about, talk to your family members, your spouse partner in particular, because if you are going to weekend time etc. doing it, then they need to be excited

about it as well. And then stay consistent for a long period of time; you can't have impact, in life you can't have impact unless you are dedicated and you are focused, but for sure in the non-profit world, it takes time to solve, educational equity in India is a 50-year problem. So, take the time and then once you have built some expertise and networks, you can choose to add within that theme that then allows you to have more impact with even less time that you could spend. That's how I think about my own time allocation, Deepak.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Something similar came up in my conversation with Ashish Dhawan, the Force behind Ashoka University and somebody who has spent several years in the space of education. He speaks about the complexity of the Production Function in the Social Impact space and urges us to go deep over a period of time to make a credible dent.

Do tune into my conversation with Ashish Dhawan if this interests you. You might also find the Playlist – Social Impact of interest. You will get a sense of how different people have moved to picking causes they are passionate about. You could just type www.playtopotential.com/tags/social-impact

End of nugget transcription

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Social Impact: Leaders across domains talk about how they have thought about Social Impact and where the seeds of giving were sown. They discuss their approach to philanthropy and the underlying principles they have used to get to what they are doing now. You can access the playlist [here](#).

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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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