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## Context to the nugget conversation

Pradeep speaks about the parallels between how a kingdom expands and the dynamic between the Corporate Office and the various branches. He speaks about the criticality of having a connect with the various corners of the business.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And moving themes Pradeep, you also talk about, fascinatingly enough, the decline of the Mughal Empire and connect it to the role of the corporate office in an organization, you know, once again, connect the dots for us, how do you see the connect between the two and the role of the corporate office.

Pradeep Chakravarthy (PC): Right. So when you look at the life of the last great Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb, his entire life he spent in the battleground. And if you see the empire at that point of time, it is almost a little larger than what India is today. So today, we should actually be acknowledging Aurangzeb as somebody who was probably one of the earlier kings to unite India geographically the way we note it, but you know what a controversial character he is. Within about 20 years after he died, that huge empire collapsed to what is smaller than even Old Delhi as today. And all his successors after that were not able to, in fact, there were so many of them, some of them I have not even mentioned in the book, but their names, otherwise, it looked just like a big laundry list of names, but one thing that comes across is, Aurangzeb himself, and I think that goes back to the Mughal tradition that we talked about, never looked at succession planning. And the consistent theme that you can see in the successors of Aurangzeb, Bahadur Shah, both of them, Akbar II, all of them, they were never kings who had a closer connect with the army, and they were also kings who never went and traveled to the different parts of their kingdom and developed a personal relationship with each of their revenue generators which were really the farmers, and the place was filled by people like Shivaji and others, the Ahoms and others who did that very well. So the big lesson for the corporate office in that way is, the wealth for the organization comes from the plants and the factories. and the number of times people from the corporate office can actually go to the plants and factories, the better it is. And in the decisions that take place, there is definitely going to be a lot of conflict between what the plant wants and what the location wants and what the corporate office wants, but the more companies are able to create a system where the plants have a greater say in the local systems, it is more likely that the organization will succeed for a longer time. And you have found this Deepak, there are other examples that I have not given in the book, the Cholas, the Chalukyas, the Vijayanagara kings, in all these examples, you find the death of an empire has been because kings have consistently stopped traveling, they have stopped going to their different locations, looking at their key revenue generators who are the farmers, building personal

connections with them, checking on what they need and fulfilling those needs. Instead, they have been sitting in their corporate offices, having a good life and in that, they have become weak, they have not built a relationship or they have not earned the respect of the army, and that has cost them their kingdom in the long term.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This piece reminds me of an insight from Captain Raghu Raman (RR) who speaks about how in the army, intent is communicated up and down the chain. And this can become really really challenging as the radius of an empire expands.

RR: *"If you see the fundamentals of leadership in combat, they have certain fundamentals for a leader, and one of the fundamentals is that a leader should be upfront. The reason why leaders should be upfront is basically because then they can spot those fleeting opportunities in the fog of war. They can actually see... the chain of information coming to him is not a distorted and a long chain; it is instantaneous, on the spot. That is why you have what is called field commanders. So, when you say a major and above is a field commander, it means in the field, he can take certain decisions, whether they are promotions, demotions, changing of command, handing over charge — you think someone is damn good in logistics, but he is slotted in the wrong place; on the spot you can make that change and sort of give your directions. It doesn't have to go through a committee and a board and all of that stuff. Now, that is a trait which, I think, we need to encourage a lot more incorporates. Some companies do it. They have this line of control... like Tesco, for instance, some of its most senior management, for two days, they turn into tellers, they stand behind the counter and do the tellers' job and they get some great insights and ideas on how to improve performance.*

*The second is the entire enterprise must always physically know the leader's location. That's again very important, because when we are trying to create an organization, we are essentially creating a shared reality. The shared reality has to pivot around either a thought or a leader. Now, if it has to pivot around the leader, then the leader's location is important, because otherwise you don't know where the centre of gravity is. So, the physical location of a leader at any given point of time must be known by the subordinates. Similarly, the leader must have his advisors always physically close to him. So, if I have to take a decision, I need to know whether I will have sufficient artillery support for that or will have sufficient logistic support for that. For me to be able to take that decision, I cannot say, 'OK, now my advisor will give me this advice after two days'. Then, that decision cannot be made. So, these are some of the basic principles using which the forces make sure that the commanders have a very good understanding of what is happening on ground.*

*There are also, for example, certain portfolios. For instance, in the armoured corps, and especially in mechanized warfare, there are certain officers who are called recce platoon commanders. Now, recce platoon commander is somebody who is responsible for going out into the no man's land or the areas where you are going to advance and actually carry out a reconnaissance. He may be the junior-most officer but when he comes back and gives his report, that report is listened to by the senior-most of army commanders, because they know that it's not about the seniority of this individual, it's about the fact that he has the feel of the ground. He is the man from the streets. Again, sometimes, I see that incorporates. People are dismissive of ground reality. And why? Because they are senior."*

DJ: Thank you for listening.

## End of nugget transcription

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Nugget from Captain Raghu Raman that is referenced: [Transmitting intent down the chain](#).

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## About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock the 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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