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Context to the nugget conversation

Raghu speaks about the distinction between Archetypes and Stereotypes when it comes to relating to some of the historical characters like the Pandavas. He goes on to talk about the defining characteristics of each of the Pandavas and how each one of us might end up having some elements of each of these in us.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): I think just getting into the book, Raghu, you talk about the five Pandava archetypes and you say that each archetype is a different type of power that we can unleash, each one of us. You also talk about the distinction between an archetype and a stereotype...

Raghu Ananthanarayanan (RA): That's right.

DJ: ...which I found really illuminating. So, can you talk about the five archetypes for the purpose of listeners, just paint a picture of what those are and also make the distinction between the archetypes and the stereotypes.

RA: Stereotypes and the archetypes. You were watching the television series Mahabharata? If I am not mistaken, Dara Singh comes as Bheema?

DJ: You might be right, correct.

RA: Yeah, I think so.

DJ: Correct, I am trying to...

RA: That's a stereotype, okay? That Bheema is this big guy and he's got this...

DJ: No, Dara Singh, actually comes as Hanuman in Ramayana.

RA: In Ramayana, okay, that's also a stereotype.

DJ: Bheema was someone else, I think.

RA: Yeah, but Bheema will be one of these big guys yaar, it can't be anybody else, right? Now, that is a stereotype and the archetype has nothing to do with this external form. The archetype are the essential characteristics of any figure. Now, if you take Bheema the essential characteristics are love for adventure, passion, he loves Draupadi the most of all the brothers. So, these kind of essential

characteristics are the archetypes. Now, when you boil something like this down to the archetype then Bheema can be inside you, Bheema can be inside me, I don't have to have rippling muscles to be Bheema. When I awaken this part of me which has passion and adventure, Bheema inhabits me. When I invoke or evoke the part of me that loves order, that loves stability and uses all my energies to establish that I am a Yudhishtira. When I invoke compassion and service in me, I am a Nakula. And when I invoke love of knowledge and curiosity, I am a Sahadeva. And when I can confront paradoxes of life, the dharma sankatas of life, the dilemmas of life and ask deep existential questions, I am an Arjuna. So, the moment you understand them as archetypes, they are in all of us and the book suggests... it's very clear in the book itself, that it ought to be read like this, the introductory things in the book starts where there are questions between Vyasa and Brahma, why should I write this book? So, he says, write it so people can reflect and he also says write the book, replete with the rasas of life because people cannot understand the truth from the Upanishads and all these things. But if you write in a way that is evocative of the rasas of living, they will understand, So, the Mahabharata is... one of the most important psychologists in India, Girindrasekhar Bose has called the Mahabharata the most complete compendium of case studies. So, any human situation, you will find a story which reflects the human situation, there will be characters there who exemplify different types of behaviours. So, the whole book is situations where there are different types of behaviour: dharmic behaviour, behaviour that is not dharmic and what happens.

DJ: And what I find fascinating as well is each person is shown in several shades of grey...

RA: Of course.

DJ: ...and not as a...

RA: Yeah, no monoliths.

DJ: And no right and no wrong.

RA: Yeah, no right no wrong, that's right.

DJ: And every person under different circumstances...

RA: Can evoke a dharmic or an adharmic response. Like talking about archetype, the Bheema and the Duryodhana are the same archetype and it's set beautifully in the Mahabharata, they both study with the same teacher, Balarama, both are gadadhari and they are both powerful people. And the way Bheema brings alive these capabilities and the way Duryodhana brings them alive are very different.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: As we think about our journeys, I find that is useful to ask the question – “what are the kinds of leaders that are being celebrated in the organization?” That question often throws light on the kinds of leaders that flourish and what it takes for someone like you and where you might need to flex to progress. A deeper reflection could be whether this is the right organization for you if there is too much dissonance between what it takes and who you are or who you want to become? Thank you for listening.

End of nugget transcription

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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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