

Podcast Transcript [93.07 Raghu Ananthanarayanan - Karna and Krishna - the conversation that never happened](#)

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Context to the nugget conversation

Raghu makes an interesting observation. He says that while Bhagwad Gita was a discussion between Krishna and Arjuna on the various dilemmas the latter was facing, it could have well been a conversation between Krishna and Karna. He says that Karna was so consumed by his hurt that he never even saw the dilemma and that was a missed opportunity. He connects this to several people and communities that might be going through a similar phenomenon.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): One of the things in the book which really caught my attention was you say that actually Bhagavad Gita might very well have been a conversation between Karna and Krishna, and the fact that it didn't happen was a lost opportunity. Karna of course did not even see that as an opportunity and eventually it ended up being a conversation between Arjuna and Krishna.

Raghu Ananthanarayanan (RA): That's right.

DJ: Could you expand on that how just the implication of that insight in daily life, you know, if you want to sort of...

RA: Yeah, sure. See, there's one very, very exciting thing in the Tamil Bharatha Kotthu, where there is a conversation between Sanjaya and Dhritarashtara, which is a retelling of the whole Mahabharata. And it's very, very interesting because the whole dialogue goes like this. Dhritarashtara says, hey, tell me the story again so that I can understand where I screwed up. So, Sanjaya goes through the whole story and he goes step by step, he says aha, that is where I lost the war. He goes through this thing of his son having been envious and he comes and talks to Dhritarashtara from that envy. He says I lost the war then and like that he goes through step by step each step where if the Kaurava side had responded differently there would have been no war. Now, if you look at the character of Karna, he is a Pandava but abandoned and he holds deep, deep wounds of orphanhood, of honour and things like this. And there are many stories that tell you how he is actually a greater warrior than Arjuna in many ways; he is much more capable. But there is this deep anger and angst and hurt in him apart from his other greatness. And if you look at many situations you will see that people with tremendous capability but with a deep wound have used all their capability in vengeful vengefulness, or in some way to keep compensating for the hurt never healing the hurt. Now, if Karna who is very, you know, he's very alive today. Every person with a grouse about us and them is a Karna, every person who feels deprived or denied or discriminated against is a Karna. And these are people with lot of ability, lot of capability whom society has said because you are not of certain pedigree your beauty and your capability will not be honoured. And

almost every crisis today you can trace it back to this kind of a violation of human beings. So, if I can have a conversation with this hurt psyche and help this psyche heal and say I will move from using my power for retribution using my power for some vengefulness to looking at how to build a beautiful world, it would change to change everything. That's what they tried in South Africa, truth and reconciliation, that's what Gandhiji tried of saying how can I assert myself; how can I ask for independence without hating the oppressor. Because once you hate the oppressor, you internalise the oppressor and you then become extremely oppressive yourself. You can see that in history. So, this conversation is waiting to be had and if enough people who are suffering from the reality of... all colonised people in the world are waiting for this dialogue. And then they become the oppressors or many of the people in the so-called West who have misused their power, you go back, they will have a story of vengefulness, of hate. So, if you can have a conversation with a Krishna where this hate is dissolved, the world will be a different place.

DJ: And building on that Raghu who then plays the role of Krishna to facilitate these conversations?

RA: Krishna is not a human being Deepak. Krishna is this divine intelligence, the consciousness within.

DJ: Raghu, if we bring this to our current situation and context, the Karna and Krishna discussion, do you see that happening, has it been had in different situations that you observed?

RA: Yes, yes. I think it's been had. For example, this truth and reconciliation thing that was tried out in South Africa was clearly an attempt to enable people who have been violated to have a conversation with their violators in a larger context not of retribution but of some kind of a healing process. I think this has qualities of what I am talking about. The way Gandhiji spoke about swaraj about swatantrata was I think another step in this direction, where he was clearly not coming from a hate of the oppressor but he took Tilak's statement, swaraj is my birth right to a very beautiful level. So, I don't have to ask for the independence from you, I claim my independence but this claiming of independence if it's with anger and hate, it's not independence.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I want to pause here and play a small clip from Ramachandra Guha who made a similar point at the podcast about what Swaraj meant for Gandhiji.

RG: "for Gandhi political independence meant nothing at all unless it was accompanied by religious harmony, caste and gender equality and the development of self-respect in every Indian, other patriot had used the Hindi word Swaraj to signify national independence. Gandhi made Indians aware of its true or original meaning Swa-Raj or self-Rule. So that is Gandhi in his own words and that is also as I told you a little while ago, I don't believe in saying this is the most important thing the only cause just a one route to success"

DJ: Let's get back to Raghu now.

RA: So, there is a deep healing of wounds here and a listening to a voice which helps you dissolve this anger, dissolves vengefulness and so on. Martin Luther King has talked about it. There are people today working in the Israel-Palestine context who are speaking about similar things where Israelis and Palestinians are talking about how we get beyond mutuality of hurt and violence of this

kind and look at each other as human beings. So, it's not as though there are no indications of this, but I think it has to be emphasised, it has to have a very, very strong presence.

DJ: And Krishna at some level is not a person, but it's a concept but who...

RA: No, more than a concept; it's not just a concept. See, when I dissolve my sense of self, in the yoga tradition this is very, very clear and partly this is what is discussed in the Bhagavad Gita also. When the sense of self is dissolved completely, then the mind becomes silent. In that silence there is the voice of pure intelligence of consciousness that can be heard. That voice is the voice of Krishna; that is Krishna. Now, it is portrayed in a human form for the dramatic thing and to build up that whole context and so on, and also if you look at the Indian context, all the gods grow with you. So, Krishna initially will be shown as this little guy who loves butter so the child can relate to this but you are also told that these are the kalyana gunas, these are all the most beautiful qualities of this child. Then he becomes an adolescent, and then he becomes a young person. Finally, you are told that Krishna is the deep indigo colour of the sky when there is no moon. So, you are having a conversation with that whatever you want to call it. Krishna, so you call it Krishna. You are just referring to this colour, to dark matter.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I love the way Raghu connects the conversation that never happened between Karna and Krishna and to the human condition today with several communities around the world. This is such a profound point about our Self Awareness as we go through our respective lives. How aware are we about the various elements and the dilemmas we face.

No easy answers but I guess, the first step is in each one of recognizing that there is a dilemma out there and having a conversation with our own Krishna's inside us as Raghu so appropriately corrects me in the conversation.

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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