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Context to the nugget conversation

Raghu spells out the distinction between Shakti (internal forces) and Balam (external forces). He expands on each and discusses them. He speaks about three types of Balam – Asana Balam (Position, Status, Resources), Yoga Balam (Political capability, Friends, Enemies), Kala Balam (Timing, Market readiness). He expands on the three types of Shakti – Icha shakti (conviction, intent), Gnana shakti (intelligence, competencies), Kriya shakti (taking action). He speaks about the criticality of aligning Shakti and Balam as we go through life.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): The other distinction I wanted to pick up from the book Raghu was the distinction you make between shakti and balam, you say external and internal strength.

Raghu Ananthanarayanan (RA): That's right.

DJ: Can you expand on that for us?

RA: See, there's quite a bit that's been talked about this, intrinsic motivators, extrinsic motivators and things like that so that's... it's there in current discourse. See in, I think, it comes in the Mahabharata only and I don't remember which text it comes in, it talks clearly about shakti and balam. There are many balams that are talked about but essentially it talks about three forms of balam and balam actually has to do with my... it's a competency issue. So, these three kinds of balams: one is called asana balam so, what is the position, what is the status I am in, what is the resources given to me by society or by the organisation, that is asana balam. The second is yoga balam. How good am I at politics, who are my friends, who are my enemies, how am I creating this. So, Yudhishtira when he has gone away those 13 years is also creating this balam, he is talking to the right people and saying, will you fight for me or not? And then there is kala balam. So, there's another conversation again in the Mahabharata where Draupadi and Bheema come and say why are you here, you are a coward, you don't have shakti so you are not fighting. So, he says it's not a question of shakti, it's a question of timing. You can't fight too early. I might have an internal conviction. So, shakti is our internal things. And the three critical shaktis that have been talked about over and over again is ichha shakti which is conviction and really, I will do this, deep intent. Jnana shakti, just ichha shakti will just make you jump up and down, you have to have jnana which is intelligence, competencies, and... and kriya shakti. So, these three are internal shaktis, if these match with balam, this is also the being and doing, then it's all aligned and there is tremendous power. And you know it's there in Sun Tzu's Art of War, it's there in several things saying that knowing how to wait for the right time is a tremendously important thing. Right time also means that my balam has

come together, not just the shakti, I might have a strong intention and wish and I have the capabilities at one level to do something, but if the external doesn't respond, the balam is lost. Look at some of the greatest people whom we celebrate today, Kafka, was not known when in his life his time hadn't come. You have so many artists now, van Gogh, he was not celebrated at his time, but he has been celebrated later because in that context suddenly this whole thing makes sense. He had the shakti, but the external combination didn't work. There are a lot of products, I mean, Microsoft wasn't the best, Tandem, there were Osborne, there were other people at that time who had done very good things, but they didn't have this combination of the balam outside. They had one or the other shakti, they were actually better products if I understand it right; they didn't make it.

DJ: I was just reflecting on your point about Van Gogh. Again, a thought experiment, given what we know about how to lead life from the Mahabharata, should he have approached life differently in a sense to get the timing right?

RA: He couldn't have, given who he was his, I mean, he did the best he could do. See the balam aspect is not just internally decided. The balam is all external. See, the asana balam is not, I don't create my asana balam, there is a seat available, I go and sit in that seat or some context is available when somebody says, okay, take on leadership, that is asana balam. Kala balam is the external context timing is right. And yoga balam is also other people who say, yeah, you are making sense, I will be friends with you and so on; these are all external factors. Shaktis are all internal factors. I cannot dictate the external factors but I can be intelligent and know when the external factors are right.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Thank you for listening. For more please visit playtopotential.com.

End of nugget transcription

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- 93.13 Raghu Ananthanarayanan - Journey as an action researcher

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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Podcast Transcript [93.12 Raghu Ananthanarayanan - Balam and Shakti - External and Internal forces](#)

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