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Context to the nugget conversation

Manjari speaks about how she embraced her femininity as a Police Officer rather than trying to develop a cold exterior to fit into a world filled with men in the IPS.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): As a woman of... IPS officer or for that matter as a woman you actually say that you must always preserve the core of your femininity and you say that it is a rare gift that should not be circumscribed by ephemeral circumstances. Can you say more about what you have in mind here?

Manjari Jaruhar (MJ): Yes, I think, for... women sometimes become very... in the Police Service, they tend to copy men in a big way because that is the model before them. For example, when I joined the service, there was no role model. Kiran Bedi was in Delhi and I say, I admit that because Kiran Bedi was there that's why I was able to join the police, otherwise there wouldn't have been any Police Service for me. My father would not have known or I wouldn't have gone. Even I wouldn't have known that women can go into the police so... but her image is always very different from my image. And people have always told me how are you so feminine and how do you do this, but I have not had a problem. I am in uniform, the rest of the time I am in saris, I don't wear anything else, I am mostly in saris. So, that is one symbol, that is that your clothes but clothes of course do not only mean that you are feminine because you are wearing a sari. But what I mean by femininity is that the core value of a woman is to be sympathetic, to take the family along, she is the strength, I believe, in the family, of course, with the support of the husband, but she is the person who has to handle her in-laws. She is the person who has to handle her parents, maybe also her siblings etc. So, that core value of love, affection, emotion all that she needn't give up; she can live with that. And even in the corporate sector, you may become a top honcho corporate executive, but being a woman is your core and you should maintain that femininity and that femininity you should even bring to your table when you are discussing important things, issues, how it effects everybody in the board room or every rank of the people you are working with. And I look at my sisters, they are both working in the corporate sector and in the corporate sector they always discuss that being feminine and being now that what is it that inclusion and diversity has become a big issue. They want to have more women and they bring a lot of insights and I think that we need to preserve that. And I would, the message I want to give to women is that enjoy all your roles, all your roles as a mother or wife as a part of the family it is good to enjoy, maintain humility, maintain relationships with people, don't cut off yourself, they will also understand that you are busy at a particular point of time but just because you are in the police or you are a high-ranking executive, you don't have to cut off people.

DJ: The related point you make ma'am is you say that there are some decisive moments where if you don't stand up for yourself you risk losing not only the respect of others but also your own self-respect. You actually say that in the context of, I think, one of your superiors.

MJ: Yes, yes, yes.

DJ: Can you say more about once again maybe illustrate this with the example or just provide a little bit of context around standing up in key moments?

MJ: Yes, sometimes, women have come to me in tears and saying that, look, this is the way somebody is treating me. I will tell them that why are you teared up first? Stop these tears and go back to that person and say that you will not tolerate this. Nowadays, you know, ever since this sexual harassment at workplace has come, this has become a very big issue. There are two kinds of women. There are one kind of women who will tolerate whatever is being pushed at them, any kind of sexual harassment and they will not open up and they will tear up and they will carry their frustration. They will not even tell anybody at home because it will be like ostracization. But there is that other group of people, if the boss gives her a chit for not doing well and her performance is not good, they will file a complaint against him. So, this is what I don't tolerate and I don't condone this behaviour either. I said that if you have been badly treated sure enough stand up for yourself and you must stand up. Now, this particular case if it had happened in... the case you are talking about, this, if it happened during this time, it would have been definitely treated as a sexual harassment case. But in those days these laws were not there, these decisions were not there. This man would not do anything overtly, but the entire department knew that he was a corrupt person and he had this habit of going to everybody's room, using their STD phones, quietly using everybody's car, using other kind of perks and then what he irritated me with was that asking for my note, which I had written about a particular murder case in which I had found some of the family members to be accused, a woman had been murdered. And the bail was coming up and he wanted to see my supervision note, because these notes go to the court to find out whether this man is really guilty or not, whether he should be given bail. So, I was not responding to him, not giving him the file, he can... he had read the file, but I was told he wants to xerox the file and give it to the accused. So, I was not responding to him and then he came to my room which is unheard of in those days to go to a subordinate's room. So, when I tell him to get out of my office, that time I never thought that I was this thing, I was in a rage, I was in a real rage, I wouldn't advise anybody to be in a situation like that but if something like this happens then the rage also becomes justified and you must hit back and say that he did not do anything physically but he was making these, he was just calling me to his room for that file and he wanted that. And there was no physical behaviour against me, but that itself annoyed me because of my own value system when I don't want things to be done in the wrong way in the police department. So, then what was strange was that I am still trying to find my ways in Bihar Police. The entire department supported me so much so that the IG transferred me immediately from under him, he was not my reporting officer anymore and one senior DIG said that you should put everything on record. So, he helped me draft that letter and he put we put everything on record and we in case he does anything in future he did not dare. And years later, you know, he again came to me and asked me for some help for getting his son a promotion or something wherever I was working; it was too funny. But a woman has to stand for herself and if anything overt is happening to her, she must immediately rebel and must not accept it.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Very often Women try to start trying to belong to the unit they are in. And that can often lead to a feeling of dissonance where the woman feels forced to do things that she ideally doesn't want to. Rama Bijapurkar (RB), a Board Member, Author and an expert on the Indian consumer, speaks about how she has focused on performing rather than belonging in her journey.

RB: *"Perform don't belong, if your entirely focus on belonging then you are never going to fully belong and you never going to fully perform, so I think if you focus on performance then it doesn't really matter, I am not saying be obnoxious or anything but you know what I mean? I mean, where do you focus your efforts do you focus your performance or do you focus on belonging? By belong I mean belonging to the group let's say if it's the management team or the board team or whatever it is, so belonging what means that I would come in earlier I have the coffees if I didn't feel like it, the network the network before the network after or do you want to write a note to everybody two days earlier that says because we may not have the time at the agenda I want to frame my thoughts on this matter and I think this is what you should do, and belongings means you need the opportunity when you open your mouth if they have decided not to do and if they have decided that they are not going to discuss the point at that point in time then you let it be or you are also vulnerable to people saying hey, you know do we really need to do this right now? But perform is really saying let me figure out, I am here because I will add value, let me, made me little harder to add the value but I would rather spend my time there then spend my time trying to part of the gang maybe because I will never be part of the gang if you like the gang that's great part of it but that's where the real effort is, should you kill yourself doing a lot of stuff? I think that's really important."*

DJ: I guess, each woman has to find their style. But like Manjari says, I notice that it makes sense to lean into the femininity, being authentic and focusing on performing rather than rejecting it in the spirit of belonging into the environment. If want to tune in further into the concept of Women Leadership, you might find the conversation with Sally Helgesen relevant. You can find this in the Guests section of playtopotential.com. You might also find the playlist on Women Leadership insightful. You can find this in the Curated Playlists section at playtopotential.com.

Thank you for listening.

End of nugget transcription

Nugget from Rama Bijapurkar that is referenced: [Women and Leadership](#).

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Manjari Jaruhar - Nuggets

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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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