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## Context to the nugget

Vishy talks about how he thought about committing to a career in Chess. He specifically talks about how he didn't stop his education despite his meteoric rise in the Chess world. He spoke about why he still pursued his undergraduate degree in Commerce on the sides despite his successes on the Chess board on a Global stage. He also talks about the criticality of building social and emotional skills from education and the criticality of open-ness to learning as we navigate the careers of the future.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): I am curious about how people, pick their career or pick their sport? I would love for you will talk a little bit about, how you got into the chess? And specifically the inflection point where you made a commitment to chess as a profession? And what were the trade off at that time?

Viswanathan Anand (VA): It was a nice add, it was for AMD actually and the Idea was, you may not even have considered us, you probably just heard Intel, but it's worth finding out what's right for you and they tried to make that point with cricket and Chess, that you might think that you like playing cricket, but your true calling might lies somewhere else, so it's worth thinking about that choice, I actually found Chess quite quickly in life I was six years old, and my mother taught me how to play, so I was lucky because typically you learn Chess from someone, in my case someone at home, she was a good chess player in the sense she used to play quite a lot at home, with her father and brothers and she knew enough to teach me but in chess as in everything else, you get better where practicing and she hadn't, never any time to go to a chess club and play chess, so especially once she got married and she had kids and she never had time to pursue on chess but having said that of a long time we could discuss, what I had done?, and things like that so it was nice and she was able to follow a little bit of what I did? I didn't think about this question in an illogical way, when you think about the choices like this you think of a pen and paper and listening options and writing the pros on one side and writing the cons and if you don't do it literally in the way I have described then, you at least are thinking of someone who have got a mental process of what's the argument for, what's the argument against? I can't recall having that thought about chess, I was quite lucky in life that I had a lot of the crucial if you like inflection points where you would hesitate I was buoyed by the big success at the chess board, so when I finished my 12<sup>th</sup> Standard or rather when I finished my 10<sup>th</sup> standard I became national champion and that's nice, I mean it points you at least that the and it suggest you that you have some future in this career and things like that and it makes just easier to take those decisions, I would say someone who gets into sports as a career usually or should be motivated by love, in which case it's very difficult to have a very rational talk even with yourself, I mean it tends to be a heart versus head, in the couple of decades before me this

conversation was tended to be between your parents being the head and you being the heart and you have heard in a lot of cases of people saying this was my passion but they wanted to me to be Doctor, Engineer, that was the usual referring in those day, so I was very lucky, after the 10<sup>th</sup> standard I became national champion, after the 12<sup>th</sup> standard very soon afterwards I became world junior champion and a grand master and I think those models was clinched it. In the sense that once I became a grand master, I mean a grand master is quite a nice title to have, you get invitations to go tournaments which means you tend to get good financial conditions, and I knew that the risk I was running was very low, I was very that the critical moments is happened, now I went to college and I did my B.com there, I did my gig B.com as a sort of stop gap, I thought it will give me options, in the unlikely event but already it escalate to me that I was going to be a Chess player but I just felt well do me do my B.com, I case I want to switch, in case if I feel like I have to change then it gives me options, but when I finished my university I was already in the top 10 and so my decision was made for me so I always say that I got into the chess, it's not that you chose chess, you eventually have a very strong reason not to choose chess, and I never found that reason.

**DJ: When somebody approaches you today about, let's say the career in sport or career in chess what's a typical advice you provide on how they should think about it as against traditional path that you have suggested?**

VA: Well the world is changing so much that I don't have an easy answer, I told them not to foreclose their options too early, so especially seven year old and eight year old and you think you really love chess, well you should be loving it in four years so don't foreclose options, first of I believe that going through the educational process is very healthy for you as a person as well, I mean you can be socially challenged, which is not ideal in our times so it's worth going to school having classmates, learning a little bit about let's call it emotional skills, I always advice don't foreclose the options too early, because now a days, I am not even sure about your Engineer, Doctor stream is that safe, what is safe in these days and todays concept what counts us a safe job? Which job are you sure that you will never be fired and you will have a stable salary all in your life, the world is also changing, even from the time I made my decision is very hard to extrapolate why I leave from that? I mean these are heavily clichéd answers, you have to stay in the learning process, you have to learn new things but it's also true, the important thing is adaptability and even chess what it gave me was travelling, it made me met well-travelled people, people who speak a lot of languages, and the thing is these kinds of skills give you options, you might be able to work in many countries, so I know lots of players in Europe who could live because they could speak four or five languages, they could live anywhere, and that expands the job options, I feel that now days it's very hard to say what constitutes the safe career and what doesn't, and even in a career I think that people have it made, the way it works now a days, is that very small sleeve get to do very well, some people get to do OK, and some people struggle, so I think you just have to be ready you have to have a broad range of skills, and I think you should not have a kind of resistance to learnings, and saying this is not my subject, this is doesn't interesting, even within chess, it is easy to get into this mentality, we would able to say that this area of chess doesn't excite me, I will stay focused on this stuff that I like doing but they might true get into this later as well. I believe that you have to be less dogmatic.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Couple of things struck me in this nugget. First is the notion of testing something out long enough before you make a commitment in a direction. He talks about the distinction between liking something initially and liking it after 4 years. Sometimes, I find people intellectually liking a certain path but when they walk the path, other elements start coming into play and it is not as fun as it seemed at the outset.

The second thing that struck me is the notion of having a Plan B till you get to a point where you are convinced that you're Option A is fool proof. Vishy spoke about the fact that he did complete his B.Com while he was rocketing up the chess circuit becoming a Grand Master and a World Junior Chess Champion. I guess there is no right answer here and it comes down to risk preferences. But I am a fan of pragmatism. One of my earlier guests Amish Tripathi (AT) spoke about how he transitioned from the world of Financial Services to becoming an author.

AT: *"It was a pragmatic decision, look I come from middle class family so I always joke "Bhai mere pass baap dada ka ashirvad hai jaaydat kuch nahi" so I have to be pragmatic and practical in my career decisions, I have responsibilities you know I am blessed with the child, I have a wife so I resigned only after second book when my royalty cheque became greater than my salary cheque"*

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## End of nugget transcription

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Nugget from Amish Tripathi that is referenced: [Transitioning from Financial Services to Writing](#).

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### Viswanathan Anand - Nuggets

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- 21.02 Viswanathan Anand - Early formative years
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- 21.04 Viswanathan Anand - What it takes to compete at the top
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### About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock 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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