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## Context to the nugget

Anu talks about the influence of values, freedom of choice and financial independence through her growing up years. She also talks about the criticality of role-modelling behaviours that set the right example for the boys (not just for the girls) that are growing up.

## Transcription

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**Deepak Jayaraman (DJ):** Talk to us a little bit about three four formative years experiences in you early years that still form a core part of who you are I would love your take on your journey and what do you think shaped a big portion of what shaped the Anu is today?

Anu Madgavkar (AM): That's a great question actually you are asking me to go back quite a long time but I think it's a good question because formative experiences are much more important I think than we sort of credit the to be. So, I think for me there were three elements that really stand out the first is my upbringing or the way my parents raised me shall we say was very anchored in a set of core values so one of the core values were Integrity there were others, there were hard work, there was humility but this acknowledgement that I need to live by my values and they are really important to the way I live actually came at a very young age my dad for example was a in the Indian administrative service he took the idea of integrity and honesty to such an extreme that I remember, newspapers that came to the house everyday there were not as many newspaper as there are today, there were couple. But the bills were paid by the government, the government would pay for the newspaper and my dad always believed that therefor they are government property and at the end of the month all the collected papers would be sent back so that the government could sell them and therefore for a school project if we needed to make newspaper cuttings we had to go out and buy a newspaper that we would cut and use for our own work so simple small things like that which just underscore that this is the way we are and this is what we believe and there are really no issues about adhering to those values so I think that was one important bedrock, the second principal again they instilled in me was to say that It doesn't matter what you do but you have to find what you want to do and then really work hard at doing it well, I think I grew up in a system in those days for most of us I think Engineering and Medicine were the only two really respected career choices and if you didn't do those then you were considered not so smart or not so academically superior and for me that was a particularly kind of important issue because, my elder brother who was five years ahead of me on this academic track and when he was 17 he took this joint entrance exam to get into IIT and it so happened that he was ranked number 1 in the country so I grew up with that and I had a host of cousins who all went through the IIT and that was the norm, so you have to do that but my parents actually said you don't have to do that, you can do whatever you want and I ended up doing a B.A degree which was which was practically like you are a social outcast if you do it but that's what they encouraged me to do and I think that was where do you refreshing

for me? Because through life this notion around, it doesn't really matter what other's think is the thing to do you have to really figure out what you want to do I think came at a very young age and then the third formative year experience, I am happy to say that with all this super idealistic upbringing I had there was also a voice of reason and then came from a very unexpected quarter, so after I graduated, I had a degree in economics and I was wondering what to do next? And I had gotten into the IIMs but I was also toying with this idea of maybe I should even go and do like a masters in economics or something completely different there was this slightly romantic idea of what else I would like to do and then there was this cousin of mine who was not particular influence in my life at that point but out of the blue he just said you are a girl and you should remember that it is very important for you to be financial independent because you don't know what your circumstances are going to be you should be able to earn your own living and live well and stand in your own field. So, whatever you do needs to be marketable and have value in an economic sense that was not the message I got from my parents at all because they were fundamentally believers that life works itself out just do what you like but I got this hard nose input from the cousin and I think that was pivotal actually because I did this I had to go to the IIM and then have conventional career and making money was part of that set of objective that I set out to do myself.

DJ: And back to the formative years it's interesting that economics is reappeared we will talk about that in a minute but that's the take away where clearly there were some little bird chirping away about economics which eventually got heard and may be just cutting to the current given your growth as a leader and the discussions around cultivating more women leaders any specific insights on the role of parenting in the context of shaping more women leaders you have already alluded to a couple of points around economic independence and making the choice but any other insights around specifically around the commentary around women leadership what do you see as a role of parenting and sort of ensuring that the early years are sort of spent in creating the right wiring for the future?

AM: So I am a parent myself so I react to this question less as an emerging women leader and thinking about how I should grow and evolved but more as in my role as a parent what are the things that I can do and I think that simply this notion of within the home the kind of dynamics within members of the household are really important because there are whole a lot of subliminal messages that get conveyed and kind of get bear it deep into the unconscious of not just the girl but also the boy who is growing up in that home so both aspects are very important I know a lot of people who take pride in raising the girls in a way that is feminist and that says that look I bought up my girl not to believe she is less than any man which is great and I do that as well but it's equally important to have that role modelling for your son so for the son to see parents not playing super gendered roles when I look at my own husband I know that his parents didn't play gender stereo type roles, both of them worked and as it happened his father was the one Gurmeet and interested in food and he ran the kitchen whereas my mother in law had no interest in doing that and she didn't do it and as a result I think there kids grew up just a lot more comfortable with different aspects and different roles that you play in life and not thinking about it in such a gendered way so I think these are really important and the more as parents we try and just be sensitive to that I think be better.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

Couple of things struck me here - One of the things that Anu talks about is similar to what came up in my conversation with Pramath Sinha, also an alumna of McKinsey. When I asked him about his take on how people should think about education, he made an interesting point. He spoke about the fact that the link between education and careers is getting more and more tenuous with time. So,

given that it is possibly less important to over-sweat the choice but more important to ensure that your child is building navigational principles and has a sense of how to choose. As we move to towards a world with non-linear paths and exploding options, the ability to process choice and staring the journey of self-discovery is arguably as important as the toolkit that we pick up by the time we finish our schooling. Second was the point Anu makes about considering a Masters in Economics as an educational choice but going to IIMA instead. In several cases, I find that there are interesting clues to what gives us energy and in a way explain some of our subsequent moves. If I take my personal example, one of the courses I used to love when I was at IIMA was Organizational Behaviour. But I refused to accept it at that stage. I felt, I ought to be doing more quant based courses and veered in that directions. But subsequently when I look at my journey from McKinsey to EgonZehnder to the Leadership Development and the Transitions work I do, I have slowly graduated towards much more of OB than any of the Quant courses I did when I was in campus.

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## End of nugget transcription

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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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