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## Context to the nugget conversation

Harsh speaks about how his personality was shaped in the early years. He speaks about diverse interests his family members had (ranging across Indian Classical Music, Sailing, Golf etc) that informed his thinking. He also speaks about values such as frugality, tolerance and consensus building one builds while growing up in a joint family construct.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): In this podcast, we talk about leadership transitions and people's journeys, but I find it helpful to start with people's early years. And one of the things I am curious about Harsh is how people get formed. You know, we talk about nature and nurture, but talk to us a little bit about how you are shaped by your early years.

Harsh Mariwala (HM): You are absolutely right, I think, those earlier years really shaped you and my childhood I was born in a joint family and I was actually, I was born in the family house, I was not born in a hospital in Bombay only but it was a family house, which comprised of my grandparents, my parents and three of my uncles and aunts and their children. And it was spread over three floors because it was a large family, but we had a one common kitchen. So, every day we would have, the dining table could not take more than 10-12 individuals. So, first the kids would sit...

DJ: Multiple batches?

HM: Twice, two only, first kids at about 7:30-8:00, and then the elders would come in at once we have finished that 8:30-9:00 and everybody dined together, it was great fun because it was just the family has such diverse interests that one was exposed to different hobbies, sports, music. Music was common actually; everybody was interested in Indian classical music. So, every day I would go on hearing Indian classical music and that's how I developed my liking for Indian classical music. And then in terms of sports, everybody had a different interest. One of my uncles used to sail a lot, one of them riding, my father played golf, one of my other uncles played golf. So, I tried everything, I tried riding, I tried sailing, and of course, I tried golf. And ultimately, I zeroed in on golf as my passion. But what I am trying to say is diverse interests and we went on doing new things, a lot of business getting discussed in the evenings because everybody was in business, so I was exposed, just sheer learning and hearing from the others was a big thing and I think that must have shaped my liking for business, and I was very clear from day one that I was not going to work for anybody else. I had to be my own boss. I didn't have any clue what I was going to do, but I have to be in business. And the other thing is when you are staying in a joint family, you will learn values of tolerance, of consensus, of leading a literally frugal lifestyle. When... we all had cars but why waste money in having two-three because you may be going to office... so, when you had to go to office, all my

uncles, two of my uncles as well as me would go at the same time and come back together. So, if it means that somebody was late in the morning, or somebody got delayed in the office one had to wait. But that's how it functioned and I couldn't have rebelled and said, no, I want to go on my own and things like that, though we could have afforded that. So, those early years have taught me a lot in terms of diverse interests, value of building relationships, consensus, tolerance and I think that shaped my future as I entered the business.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I guess, not a lot of us have the opportunity to grow up in a joint family context with the diversity of perspectives and interests that Harsh talks about. One of my earlier guests Vinita Bali (VB) said something interesting in this context. Something that some of us even in nuclear family contexts could bear in mind.

*VB: "I agree with your proposition of we are a product of our experiences right from childhood to otherwise I think the most significant part of thinking about since in multiple dimensions or not in a single dimension or thinking about things systemically I think comes from my exposure and my interest, I think it was my exposure which lead to my experience to a lot of things when one was growing up. In school I used to do sports, I used to do dramatics, I used to for a long time I was a student of Indian classical dance which I pursued in the evening outside of school, so I was interested in doing everything you might say and not that I thought about it but I was also the school selector, junior school captain and head girl and so on and so forth, and those roles in a strange way come with their own responsibility which seems like a lot when you are a school kid, So I think it was the combination of all of that and my exposure to the world of theatre to the world of classical music and dance, I think refined in many ways, my aesthetics or my thinking about things across a continuum rather than fragmenting that this is cool and this is extra curriculum in my life everything moved off from one to another, the school finished we stayed back and then we did dramatics and then played hockey and then so I think in its own way that was quite formative that was quite formative in terms of looking at issues from multiple dimensions in terms of a sensitivity and sensibility which things like the arts and when I talk about arts, I talk about visual arts, I talk about performing arts, I talk about theatre I think those things enabled you to touch something which the rational objective world of valuations and NPVs and IRRs doesn't allow you to, and I think both are important I don't want to undermine one versus the other but I think if we can create a greater sensitivity and sensibility and a respect for the bigger environment in which businesses operate I think it would change things a lot and I think it would help a lot, I think we have become too unidimensional in our thinking."*

DJ: I love the phrase Vinita uses. Seeing things as a continuum rather than discrete things. I feel that is a useful frame for all of us to stay relevant in this ever changing world but also expose our kids to different thoughts and experiences even if we don't have the benefit of a large joint family!

## End of nugget transcription

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Nugget from Vinita Bali that is referenced: [Early childhood wiring](#).

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## Harsh Mariwala - 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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