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Context to the nugget conversation

Manjari speaks about the challenges she experiences in her first marriage and how she had the courage to walk out of the relationship and rebuild her life and her career. She recounts the role of her parents and some of her friends in this phase of life.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And moving along in the book you also talk very candidly about the challenges in your first marriage and how you decided to separate and how that made you stronger as a woman. The one phrase that stood out for me was you say that this was the point in life where you took charge of your life. Can you say a little bit more about this phase of your life?

Manjari Jaruhar (MJ): Yes, a lot of people do ask me now. So, one fine morning my parents decided that we will be going to Delhi and though I knew that there is some talk of my marriage, they never told me that I was going, they were taking me to Delhi to fix my marriage. So, then I went there and when I arrived in Delhi very soon in the evening to cut the story short the in-laws came to see me and by evening my marriage was fixed. And next morning we returned to Delhi, returned to Patna and I started my education as if nothing had happened and I really did not even understand or comprehend and I look back now I never even asked my parents as to why are you fixing up my marriage, why is this being done, there was no question. I mean, it was accepted that this is the way I have been brought up and this is the way things will go. So, the marriage was fixed. Unfortunately, with everything being good about that family and everything being perfect according to the match they had selected for me, the marriage did not work out. Until today, I have not been able to understand what was it that was expected of me that I did not do in the in the relationship, because all the time I tried very hard to work it out and to return was not again my decision. My in-laws, of course, felt that I was not fit to stay in their family. They had their own set ways and mind and all which I think emanated from being, having a specially-disabled child in the family with which I think the whole chemistry of the family was very different, but I could not understand. These are my later understandings. And when I came back, my father again wanted me to stay in Patna and study and be a lecturer or he was again very, very protective. It was a big shock to the family, but then I decided for something, I don't know how my brain must have worked. I decided that enough is enough, now, I am going to do things my way and that flight I returned from Moscow and my parents came to take me from Delhi to Patna but next morning I went to Rau's Study Circle even without consulting my parents, they had still not arrived but I decided that I will go to Rau's Study Circle. Now, you ask me why did you think of Rau's Study Circle is those days that was the only study circle known in Delhi and I had heard about it. And in my family, we did have bureaucrats. So, I knew that these IAS and Civil Services and Foreign Service were very respected, respectful jobs in those days; people valued those jobs. And so, I said, okay, I will try my hand at this and I decided to go to

Mr. Rau's Study Circle. That's how my early life and my taking charge. And I think after that I did not really let my father so much interfere in my life. One important thing I have to mention to you is that one single thing which my father was a very futuristic and he understood was that when he took the decision that I should not go back. I took charge of my career and my life, but my father still took charge of my life and it was his decision. I was not prepared to break my marriage even then. Even though I took charge of my life, I felt that thik hai, thik ho jayega, it will become okay in the course of time, but my father put his foot down and he said nothing doing, now I am not sending you back, and in those days, it was a, might have been a very big news but my father wrote to every relative and said that I have brought her back and she is not going back. So, then the context was set.

DJ: It's quite rare, most people would hush it up when these things happened.

MJ: That is what I thought and for months I could not face my friends, I could not face my other colleagues etc. because I was always embarrassed. I said, what will everybody think it was such a glamorous wedding and I have come back, but I think my father gave a lot of strength to me at that time. At one point, he did not allow me to go to Delhi and study which I wanted and perhaps my life would have taken a very different path, but I am glad that I did not study domestic science because that would have left me in a worse state than what I would have been.

DJ: And if I may stay with that ma'am, I meet several friends who talk about their women colleagues who are in let's call it troubled or difficult marriages, where you know the woman has not been treated well. What is your advice to women on making it work versus calling it quits? Where is the line?

MJ: I think, the woman herself has to decide that line and in case she needs help she should not feel shy of taking help, whether she has to go to a counsellor, she has to go to a consultant or anybody in the family who can do mentoring. The first line should be to make the marriage work because it is important for women, I think, it gives a lot of support to them even for working women to have this thing, which is that is what society expects from them. But if for some reason the relationship sours and it is not good then again, they should try for a little while but not go on and on and on with the marriage, they should try and have a break. It is going to be tough, it is not going to be easy, but unlike me, if you are already a qualified person, suppose you are an engineer or an MBA or doctor or any professional then you don't have to worry about your bread and butter. Then you know you can have a clean break. And why only in a relationship you know I feel people, I have written in the book also that in life one should not carry frustration, despair, rancour, that pulls a person down, and in all relationships, I believe like this. Perhaps you have to forgive and forget and move on. It is the... very early in my convent education they taught... my teacher once asked us, is it easy to forgive or is it easier to forget? And I was still in class 5 or 6 but I have never forgotten, it is easy to forgive a person, but it is difficult to forget. But I now believe that it is better to forgive and forget and both you have to move on in life and you can't be always in a state of frustration and despair that this is what happened. And it is not only in terms of a spouse, I personally think that it can happen in terms of your other relationship, you may have a child with special disabilities, you may have to look after your parents at a very young age support them. So, life mei you have to accept what is happening with you and not always keep on fighting and carrying on that frustration, maybe it sounds difficult but that little bit of courage and determination you must have to move on; that is important for you.

DJ: And in this context, you actually referred to a conversation with your friend, Radha?

MJ: Yes.

DJ: And you say that she points out that you need to leave your past behind to move to a better future. Can you talk a little bit about that exchange and maybe the insight there?

MJ: So, Radha and Bharti and the three of us were studying in Delhi University together and Delhi University was so different in those days also from Patna and where I had grown up and sheltered. These two girls also came from two other cities, but more modern and other modern colleges also. One came from Calcutta; one came from Chennai. So, we bonded because we were not Delhi University, we were from outside Delhi University. So, we were mostly in saris, we would wear bindis, very traditional. So, we bonded and later and after a few months we would discuss so many things, I learned so many things, which as a protected person I would have never done.

DJ: So, this is at the NPA, right?

MJ: No, this is at the Delhi University, when I am going to Rau's Study Circle, and I am studying in Delhi University. So, then one day they asked me, they must have heard rumours because there were people from Patna also about me, I had never talked to them about my relationship and why I am at Delhi University, but they used to wonder why I am getting up at 6:00 o'clock and going to Rau's Study Circle, why am I studying so hard. Even in the evenings, I would be studying, studying... and they were taking university education as a breeze, I mean, you did classes, you also went for all kinds of other activities, enjoyed yourself, partied also, but I would not do all that because I was not brought up like that and I had too much of pressure. So, then I told them that this is what has happened. And then after a few weeks then Radha came up to me and says and even later on she kept saying that she asked me quite frequently, how is it that you did not carry any anger and angst against this family and in your life? And we have learned so much from you. That day even I discovered that I had learned things from them and you know to be outgoing and do things on my own, I started traveling alone, I started going on a bus, I have written in the book that how I hitched a ride with them; I would have never dared to do those things go in a bus etc. So, Radha did ask me and I think that was a determined effort; it was a very, very determined effort. I used to feel very frustrated at times, but I did not allow that to cloud my path on which I wanted, my path was very clear and at that time my path was not very sure whether I will get into the Civil Services because it is an unknown thing, but I was determined that now I am going to be on my own and earn my own living. So, that was a very, very big focus for me from the other side. My father was well enough to have looked after me all my life, I had made a settlement and all, I need not have worked, but I was not ready to accept that. If you ask me that why you felt like that, I think, I felt like that because I felt that the world around me was so different and I had not made any effort to understand anything in that world. I had only lived in the world of cooking and embroidery and managing my family. Being the eldest my mother would often go out leaving the keys of the house with me, and I was very good at managing the family. So, these were the things I was taught and I felt that okay. There is one more question you asked me in the beginning as to how did your childhood impact you. I said, my impact was very different but there are two or three things I learnt at childhood, which I should, I think, I should share because one should not really... I did not cut off I think from everything. In childhood, that sense of discipline that you have to do things like this, if I have to set the dining table, I have to set it like this. My clothes, if I have to dress, I should be impeccably dressed. I should iron my own clothes and go to school. So, later in life these things did matter, like my uniform is always impeccable, I will not wear a crushed uniform, I will not wear an unpolished shoe, and this transfers to everything in your life. If you are making notes, you are writing something in the file, you will not do it in a haphazard way because you have been brought up to be, brought up in a way where everything is very disciplined and you do it part by part. And the second thing was that my moral values staying with my grandparents and my father that was very strong. The value system in my household, like most of us the times when we were brought up, the value system was very there, was very much there. You cannot do anything wrong; you have to do something which is morally

correct and it is under a value system. So, these two things have also stood me in great stead later in my career and especially in my police career.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

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- 95.01 Manjari Jaruhar - Leaving the past behind
- 95.02 Manjari Jaruhar - Raising an independent girl child
- 95.03 Manjari Jaruhar - The art of investigation
- 95.04 Manjari Jaruhar - Dealing with grey
- 95.05 Manjari Jaruhar - Staying positive

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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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