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BUILDING TEAMS AND TEAM CULTURE

Hello everyone, today we are going to be looking at a new section, which is on building teams, like how do we go about and build a team, right? So I want you to take a look at this image, and I would like to begin with this quote, this wonderful quote from the book *The Little Prince*:

"If you want to build a ship, do not drum up the people to gather wood, divide the work, and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea."

Just take a minute, connect to the element of water, let us come back to our breath. What does this mean? How did you feel? What came to you as you are seeing this quote over there and as you heard the quote? And of course, if you actually look at the image, there is a ship as well, but it is somewhere towards the edge, right?

What first catches our attention, or at least my attention, in this, was the water, the endless sea, right? I am not going to explain what this is. I want you all to sit with it, but I will come back to this image, and so that gives you some time to really go, what does this actually mean?

So this is one of my favorite images. It is from one of my favorite places, which is the Chamundi Hills in Mysore, and this was on a beautiful foggy day. So the steps, it is almost like, I think, at least 45 minutes to an hour's trek up, depending, of course, on your speed. And as you look at this image, I want you to pay attention to what is written there. Why have I put up "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step"? What does this have to do with teams, right? And we are looking at sports teams.

I would also like you to just ponder for a second on how has your experience been in working with a team, for a project, right? And I want you to also go, how do I begin a project? What is

my style? What is my pattern? So do I get all excited? Do I get all pumped up? Do I bring the team immediately together? I say, okay, they are going to do this, this, this, this, this. Or I like to sit with it, I like to chew upon it, I bring the team together, and hear what they have to say. What do you do? What is your style?

And there is no right or wrong way, okay, but I want you to look at what has been working and think of one particular project, in particular, where your team was on fire. In one of the discussions I had with one of my colleagues, I was telling them about this team which had not qualified for a major event for a long time. You know, it was a few years they had not qualified. This was a team, it was a national team, and the whole aim was really to come together and qualify. And the team was on fire, like really on fire. There were differences, it was a new coach, but they came together because the vision, was we want to qualify. This is our legacy; we want to gain back what we have actually lost over the couple of years, and till the qualifiers, it was like a team on fire, okay.

Then, of course, it was a little bit of going down because one main, what you could say was the goal, was achieved, but then that needs to get redefined. So that is why the vision statement and the mission, what am I embarking upon, is so important. So that is why I thought this was a really nice image to actually put across because, you know, J. Krishnamurthy, he says, "The first step is the last step." I know it sounds like, what does that mean, right? But a lot of times, we see people sitting on the fence.

So taking that first step and how I take the first step also becomes very important. So like if you look at it, I am someone who used to climb this hillock. It is also a cultural and spiritual place. How does one begin? So, like if you just stand, you will notice, like there are the joggers, there are the sportspeople, there are people there for fitness. So, you know, how they go about.

Then there is this enthusiastic group which probably does not have much practice, but, like, you know, they are really charged up with energy. So boom, boom, bang, they start off, and then you will see that somewhere in the middle their energy is really dipping down because it is—you need to make a consistent plan. But then, you know, they regroup, you know, they probably got something to nourish themselves, and then you start off.

So it is very important to go, what am I embarking upon, right? Remember the mountain that we spoke about when we did the champion mindset? All the units are very interconnected. So what really is my vision, what is my dream goal? And how am I going to go about embarking? I am not going to jump from step 1 to step, let us say, 200—that is not going to happen. So how do I embark, and what do I do, which will ensure that I am going to accomplish what I have set my mind for, okay?

So keep this in mind, and now I am going to go back to this first slide.

So what do you think the author over here is saying? The vision. Sometimes, the nitty-gritties are very important, but also what is very vital is knowing why I am doing what I am doing, okay?

So now we are going to watch this video by Mr.Murali R.X., who is the high-performance cricket coach.

“Team, team gets together for a purpose. Now, first of all, we need to understand what is a team. Team is a group of individuals with different skill sets, with different motivation, with different aspiration, different purpose, different desire, and, all these individuals form a team.

Now, why is this team formed? So if you understand the reason why a team is formed.

So we need to set the purpose for the team. Winning team, losing team—all of them have the same goal, and that goal is to win the tournament. So what sets apart a winning team and a losing team? Because both of them have the same goal. So what sets them apart is human behavior. It is the behavior of the players. It is the behavior of individuals, and in different circumstances, how they manage, how they handle.

So how do you set, how do you develop good human behavior? It's about setting values. It's about setting culture. It's about setting ethics and morals. So these values help them. These values help them to build behavior, and this behavior helps them to produce the desired results.

So all in all, the team that sets apart—the winning team that sets apart from a losing team—is the culture that they develop, is the culture that they foster, which helps them to be a winning

side. So culture is very competitive. Creating a culture, in itself, is a very competitive tool, and the job of this culture is to get the best out of every individual.”

So that was a wonderful video, right? And he actually touches upon how the coach plays such an important role in setting the vision and embarking on the mission. So that is why I like to call it the vision and the mission.

So now, what really is team building? As a psychologist, people think, and people actually presume a lot of times that, okay, you go, you have a certain amount of time, you do, let us say, a team-building activity for, you know, one session or like two sessions, or maybe during the camp when the camp is in a particular place, stationed in a particular place. But, that is not all. So team building is not just something that happens in a jiffy. It is not just something that you do once, and then the team has bonded. No, just think about your team. Think even probably as of your family unit, right? Like, there is a way in which people come together, and we are talking of people over here.

So what I am trying to say is it is a dynamic process, and building a growth mindset environment becomes very, very vital. Now, what do I mean by a growth mindset? Do you recall I had spoken about the sandwich approach or the, you know, sandwich approach or the constructive criticism when we were doing the chunk on communication?

So let us say, I will give this example. Let us say a young player, comes into the team, and it is one of the major sporting events. Let us say something like the Asian Games, okay? And, of course, for someone who is—it is someone's first camp—what they are seeing, they want to experience it all. Now, you have a tournament, or you have your event the next day. What is vital is slowly coming out of that and coming back into your zone, right? And that is what the coach and the team and the country expect, right?

So now, what happens when an individual, for whatever reason, does not follow that? Then it becomes either the senior player's or the coach's role, To ensure that this player is going to be in his or her best element to perform the next team, right? So this is what I am talking of—it is extrinsic, which can distract.

Now, the second also becomes a very intrinsic factors. Especially when you look at players in their teens, early 20s. So I remember one of the coaches would say, “you know, Chaitanya, you have to talk to this guy. He is on his phone till late.” Like once the coach was saying, it was again a major sporting event, and he had a race the next day early, early morning, and he is not switched off. Now, what happens? So when I sat with him, thankfully, he still went on to perform. But the coach felt like had he rested well, he followed his routines—that is why routines are so important—he would have actually done much better, It is not just about the medal.

It is really about can I beat my best? This is what I tell athletes. When I had a session with him after that tournament, I said, “what happened? What were you doing?” He said, “oh, nothing, ma’am, you know, I was just on the phone.” And it is also that age where youngsters are probably on the phone. So I said, “Listen to whomever you are talking, right? That is fine. It is, you know, it is part of life. But you need to know, I have come here for a reason, right? If you were not capable, you would not be there, right? And also, there are so many waiting in line. So you need to do justice to why you are where you are”

So one of the things I said to him is, “you have to switch off, let us say, at least by 10 o’clock or at least, half an hour before you go in, you go in and go to bed because if you go on, like, even if you are lying down and going on checking the phone, what happens? Your brain is alert. Then, after you keep the phone as well, it is going to take you a while to really switch off because you need that rest to compete the next day.” Especially, let us say, if it is a sprinter or it is like a short-distance runner, or a swimmer, boom, boom, bang, or even any, even if it is a longer event, you have to be in your element. So rest is very, very vital.

So of course, there the coach was obviously angry, but then the point was, so now I cannot hold it under in a similar way. It is the coach's role to pull him up, and I said I understand where you are, but the point is what is it that you want? So, slowly moving them from, okay, come back to what is your goal and also fostering a growth mindset, which will instill a positive attitude.

So it is like if you just keep pulling up an athlete, be it as a psychologist and or being as a coach, does that give them the impetus to really grow? So it is a lot about grooming. I remember once Sourav Ganguly was talking about one of the younger players, and, he said, this was a little

of the younger, let us say, naughty player, so he was like, he told one of the guards, like, please watch out, and this player apparently, had gone out, and he had gone out partying, and then he comes back, and then Ganguly actually, speaks- okay, like, yeah, you groom them in slowly, right?

Because yes, this was wrong, and then how do we groom this individual, right? So what in psychology we say is, negative reinforcement. You take away something which is important. Like maybe one day you do not, they do not have the practice session, or in some way you show. So punishment would be, they just get shaken up. So recognizing what is the need and also knowing that, “okay, this player is young, he has made a mistake, how do we help him or her grow?” Because slowly what we want is to bring in each individual, like what the coach was also saying, into the group and perform as one unit. That really is the key.

So I will give you this example. It was one of the coaching camps, okay? So this was a camp, I think, if I am not wrong, for a month. We had been working, and there were practice matches, so they were divided into two groups. And of course, it is also towards the pretty end of the camp, they are being observed. We will know who goes into the main, future camps. It was one of the junior camps, future India teams.

So, there were two groups, And one group took a wrong decision. The captain.. because of the pitch, right? So in the beginning, we did not know why he chose to, let us say, bat, when it was a bowling wicket.

And then the other group did the opposite. Now both the groups had players who were very individually focused or, let us say it was more because I have to perform because I am being watched. But also what is being really watched is, is this individual contributing to the team? That is one of the vital criteria. After the match got over, it is always very good to see them in practice matches, also, along with the tournament. And then I was asking, I said, what happened? And he said, “I knew we should have bowled, but then, quite a few of the players said, okay, no, no, let us bat.” And that cost them. And then there was one of the younger players. And then, so there were two matches, right? Like then the other, when the second time around, the other team did not perform so well because I think they had kind of gone like, okay, we won this. So, you know, and then the second time, so, so there were a couple of things which were happening.

And I was also looking at it individually. So when I had the individual sessions, I said, what was happening? So one of the bowlers, a very young bowler, very smart, he got hit very badly, okay? And which also cost the team that he was playing for. I said, “what happened?” And he said, “oh, you know, ma’am, I was really trying out some things.”

So I said, “okay, you know, it was like, let us say, the first couple of overs. But when you got hit twice, right? Did you know that this is happening, this can cost? Or did you still want to experiment knowingly? Did you do it very consciously?” And he said, “yeah, you know, I felt this was an opportunity for me to really try some things.”

So I said, well, “one, you got hit pretty badly. Two, it cost your team, right?” Now this can become very vital. Like, when do you experiment? Maybe, if the team was doing very well, yes, that was your brilliant opportunity, right? And remember the captain that I was saying who took the wrong decision, I said, what happened? And then he said, “I just went in with what the group said.” But I said, “but you were made the captain, right? So when you knew that this is a bowling wicket, you know, not choosing, not making the right decision can cost the team as well.”

So you get to know a lot of nuances. And also what was very interesting was, this is a practice match, but you really understand what is what. And then, I also went down for some time and sat with the group, okay, I was sitting, and then you hear the banter, right? Like some of them are really very confident, which kind of like can pull down other players. And then some of them are like, “What is happening?” Some of them are like, “I need to score.” So it was really about looking at, yes, you need to score, but then at what cost? Or you need to do something—does it help the team? You cannot forget the team because this is a team game.

I remember another player, a very young cricket player, who had come in for an individual session. This was not with the camp as such. He was doing very well and would say, “I want to score so much. I am doing this, I am doing that.” At no time did I hear him mention the team, like, “I want the team to win, and this is for the team.” I said, “Listen, no matter how much you score, if you are not keeping the other players in mind, then you are not going to be seen as a team player. And that is going to be one of the vital, vital aspects because what we have been talking through is really coming together, is needed.”

Now, what we saw in the previous was, what is team building? Now, how do we build? One of the ways in which, especially, I think most psychologists, and I like to do, is to be part of the culture session or what we call the moment where the team, at the beginning of the camp, is coming together and really putting out- what we want our story to be. What is emerging for us as a group as we are coming together? How do we want to be seen and known? Do you want to be ruthless? Do you want to be a team that inspires? Is it winning at all costs? How are we coming together?

And what the image you see there is really the hero's journey, where it is a beautiful way to connect; The mythology section is where a person, an athlete, is embarking on his or her journey. So there are going to be trials, there are going to be challenges, there are going to be helpers, there is going to be a metamorphosis, a shift in you. You are going to perform, and you are going to complete the journey, and you are going to be transformed as a person. And this is what you hear a lot from youngsters, especially when they make it. They are like, "Oh my God, that camp, it opened me up." "Oh my God, you really like—the boy becomes a man, the girl becomes a woman." You come of age; you're really blooming.

It is really nice to have an anchor to hold. I like to use myths. We will also have a discussion in this unit about how do we build... How do we build the qualities that we want? It is not just cognitive—like everyone knows what, I mean, I am guessing, a lot of the aspects. But then, how do we integrate this into my system? How can I be the best version of myself, and how do I better myself? Some of the qualities in particular that we try to look at include belonging.

That identity which comes when one feels part of the team is extremely, extremely essential, right? Mastery in his or her skill and independence. I take ownership for what I am doing, for my growth. It is not just what my captain says, the leadership group says, or the court says.

And last but not the least, generosity; Can I help my fellow participant? I know my teammate is struggling. So how does this come together, right? And if you remember the camp example I was giving, this was a young group, so obviously they are thinking of themselves, but what we then start trying to groom in is all these qualities.

So now, you have the team, we have the culture session. So what is very important, you know, is understanding each person in the team. I have met some wonderful coaches, you know, where they say, like, yes, to know each and to give that quality time to each player is so essential. We look at the larger picture, but I think also what is very important is knowing those little nuances of the player, you know, of what will help a particular player, what clicks. So to really look at the player as a whole, you know, his or her personality, what motivates, and what are their social influences, where are they coming from?

I remember one of the coaches was telling me, like, this was a player who was coming from a very, very humble setting and, he just put at the buffet table, like, he, I think, just put one chapati or one dish, and then the coach was like, why? And then he said, I do not know what the rest are. So there you also grooming the person. You help the person understand, the athlete understand- what is actually good, especially when we are in a hotel, we also take care of what is the nutritious value and what can you also take in. And also, how do I integrate this player who is probably a little different, coming from a different place. So, I like to use this because when we say athlete, now an athlete, it is, if you take the field of the athlete or the system of the athlete, has so many components, you know, he has his parents, his family, the coaches, the teammates, the competitors, the spectators. So how and what is the connection of my athlete to each of this, I need to understand.

I remember, like, for example, you must be thinking, okay, why about competition? What does he think about competition? Where does he place himself with other competitors? You know, I remember one of the players was telling me that there was this time, and, they were doing, the team was really, really down. And he said, the captain came in and said, “we belong to this team, how can we lose?” And, you know, suddenly that just brought everyone together and going, “we are the ones who dictate, we have been dictating.” So encouraging and motivating the group when the chips were really down. You know, some of the competitors will go like, “oh, you know, this one is better than me, or, you know, the minute this one comes to bowl or this one is batting, I cannot.” So understanding that becomes very, very vital.

Spectators; I remember during COVID, very honestly, a journalist asked me, and I said, “oh, you know, but at least the matches are beginning and people will get influenced.” But trust me, I

think it was very, very obvious when we saw that, you know, there were not crowds, and especially for the senior players and people who thrive on crowd energy, right, it did affect, it did impact. So, what is my connection? I remember there was this jumper, okay, and he would get so charged up, so charged up, but then sometimes he would lose it totally, like, after a particular level when the team is going on echoing his name, he totally lost focus because his energy moved there. And also knowing, like, we have all known, like, what has happened a lot of times, let us say, especially in Australia, where, you know, we did have some differences, and the crowd weren't supporting.

How do we work with it? Because we are not going to probably always have a crowd which is cheering for us. And also, even with the crowd or spectators cheering, “what is my way of functioning? Does this impact me negatively? Does this get me more perturbed? Does this get me anxious? So then do I need to zone out, or can I thrive on the energy?” So really, an athlete, you look at them in totality, understanding them fully. And for that, I have always believed that your team may have, let us say, 15, 20 players, it is vital to know each and every one of them. And then you also bring them together as a team.

This is one of the famous coaches, Coach Wooden, in his success mantra. And it is so beautiful because, if you see, you know, going from the bottom, it starts with, you know, hard work. But then what you see next is friendship, loyalty, cooperation, enthusiasm. The next level is self-control, alertness, action, determination. Then you see fitness, skill, team spirit. As you go up the ladder, can you see, or up the platforms, then there is poise and confidence and, finally, to give your personal best. So success is not just about going on working, working, working- hard work. And especially as a tea, there are a lot of factors which come in together and which is very, very essential.

You know, like, sometimes, let us say, you know, in a league or in a particular camp, there are like two friends who are part of it. And then just how they thrive, how they encourage becomes, it is just beautiful to see. But also, new players coming in together and then how do they bond? How can a senior help a junior? What is, you know, because the team really has to come, the group of individuals have to come together. Not just while having fun, but also, like, we have been having discussions where we can have tough talks, we can have difficult talks where we

come together, we celebrate, we cry, we feel bad when someone is in, you know, in distress. So it becomes very, very vital to actually become one unit. And that does not mean, people have to stick together because that is what I always say, that you also need some time off. So, it is like, if people are sticking together all the time, that may also be difficult. People do need some breathing space, people do need some space for their own process.

So understanding what and who needs what kind of attention, and most important is also not over-cocooning or over-guiding because we want each one to grow. And it is a process. I like to give the example of a plant. You sow the seed and then you wait. And I think, like, we have seen this a lot with the leagues, we have seen this a lot with India teams.

It is, you know, it is not, they may not click in one season, you know, one tournament, but then how do we keep nourishing them and see them bloom. And I think that is what great coaches do, transformational coaches do, and leaders do, which will be one of the sections we will look at, okay. So I want to bring in this video next. I think it is a really nice one which talks about-coming together, and unity as such, okay.

“I can give an analogy for the team. Imagine you have a number of matchsticks, and a lot of matchsticks organized in a box, and the matchsticks are all in different directions. The heads of the matchsticks are all in different directions, and the task is to burn each head. So what happens when each of these matchsticks is in a different direction? The first thing that you need to do is organize all those matchsticks and arrange them in one order. Then, after arranging them in one order, you start firing the matchstick. So that becomes much easier.

So this is how I take this analogy into the team and say, how do we get our team together? How do we get everybody together? So it is a team, as I earlier said, that it is a group of individuals with different skill sets and different motivation levels. So the role of a coach is to, first of all, define the purpose. And once the purpose is established, then what happens is individual roles have to be defined.

So each one of them, each individual, has their own desires and roles, desires, and motivation levels. So how do you bring them together to align with one common purpose? So this is where a

leader or a coach plays a major role. So the leader defines, the coach defines the values and the cultures of the team, and he defines the role of each individual player. So this stage is called forming. I call this stage forming.”

To summarize, what would be some of the core components to build a successful team? As we have been talking, shared vision and a very clear purpose. If not, it can just fizzle away. Remember the image I showed you of the steps? I can get lost with every animal, every bird. What are we there for? What is our purpose? You have gone for a major tournament, yes, there is going to be so much you are going to meet. The icons you are going to meet. A lot of people. But what am I here for? At the end of the day, I cannot forget that. And as a team, we work together, collaborative action and being very clear about what my role is. I do not try to do everything, okay.

Accountability of each member, taking ownership for what I have done, and aiding the team. And I think this team identity is something which I cannot emphasize enough. Really being one unit is very, very key. When we are doing well, but most importantly, even when chips are down. Because that is when groups can come together or groups can really split. A positive team culture, as we were discussing.

Honest communication, which can really foster growth. And last but not least, a supportive environment and peer support. Very, very vital. And you see, this is how loosely formed groups then come together and bond.

Now I want to show this quote by one of the corporate leaders. And he describes leadership. So I am going to read this out for you: Leadership is the art of inspiring a group of people to align to a purpose and deliver at a level much more than the sum of parts. It is innate and inbuilt in all of us, though sometimes it takes a little nudge to bring it out. While there is a science to it, its soul is really in the softer aspects: passion with compassion, courage with empathy, and nurturing with discipline.

I think that is a beautiful line.

While the diversity of the profile of members of teams has increased, leading to much better team performances, it has also increased the challenges for the leader to integrate and align divergent ideologies, aspirations, and styles to a common vector.

I think that is a beautiful, beautiful quote. So if you are wondering why this is here, this is whom I call my little girl, when, you know, she was integrating. And it is teamwork. Really to start forming a bond, starting to show that this is a place where you can start trusting, start feeling safe, and what better way than play, right? I think this is something I will talk about again, the play instinct, and why it is so important, when we are coming together.

Building it with each individual player and the larger team. So I am going to stop this section finally on this note. Thank you.