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**DISCUSSION ON TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

So, today we are going to have a very interesting discussion with Priyanka on transformational leadership, ok? So, today we are going to be really understanding what are the qualities that we want to imbibe? And we are going to look at it. We thought you knew it would be very interesting to look at it, via our own legends, legends of the world, mythological just a little bit, and how stories and movies inspire us because that is something we also use and build in our therapy.

So, hi Priyanka, welcome. Thank you so much. I was going to say thank you.

So, what is in this space? What is in the space as we just open it up to a leader, a transformational leader? Maybe we could start off with one of our legends? Let us probably start with the Mahabharata. Like how and the reason we are also doing this is because, these are all energies, you know, in psychology we call them archetypal energies, which are inherent in each of us, right?

We all have the potential, and developing that is, you know, how we can use these characters, use these personas to instill what we want in life, yeah. So, let us start. So, Priyanka, what is coming to you? What would be, who would you want to start with? I think one of the things that is coming to me right now are some of the leaders who I have worked with? And the ones who have been extremely supportive, the ones who have nourished, and been emotionally available and wanted me to grow as a person, when I was under them. So, I am thinking of these things, and at the same time, I think since you have brought in some of the legends, I am also thinking

of their qualities, growing up watching some of these amazing folk tales and some of these amazing shows.

I mean, all those qualities are coming to mind. Right, yeah. I think that is beautiful. So I will bring in this example of this very young badminton player, okay? That will give the viewers the right to connect, to help them connect, and then we can tease it out further. So, this was a very young boy, and you were a young badminton player, I remember once he said I wanted to be like you. And he is like, “you are so calm, you are so composed”, and this was sometime, like, at the very beginning of my career, but like it was, I was still in my, and I actually told him I said, “you know, but I am not like this all the time, right?” And I felt that was important. Now as I am training, I am in my advanced training with Jungin, where we have been in the field for a while. I also look at what calmness means to you. What would it be?

So it is basically when there is something that we identify. It is basically something that is there in me; I want to grow. So that is what we say is, it is in the shadow. So shadow is just something in your unconscious. But it is not just necessarily the bad. It is also some things that are very good that we have not accepted. Absolutely. Yeah. And then this guy would wear this Khada, okay? He wore this Khada, and then he said, “Oh, you know, a certain player, a certain elite athlete wears this”. And there I actually asked him, and I said, “okay, what does this mean to you?” So is this one, like it could actually become one of his anchors. Is it something that gives you strength? So rather than dismissing, like, “oh, it is just very superficial”. And then also building, okay, what does this athlete actually have, and which is probably dormant in me, which I can grow... So I thought that was a good example.

It is amazing because what you are saying, every person has potential, and then you really have to tap into that particular potential. Some of them are hidden. And, the more you embrace your shadow. Which is beautiful.

You put it on. I think that was very, very beautiful. I always say it is like, even when we work with an athlete, it is like a young sapling. It is nurturing that. Right. And I think it is, as you put it, just so beautiful, Priyanka. I think we can hold this. And I was recently reading; I actually

happened to see a video also by Mr. Raghu Anand Narayan. So he actually builds a lot; he is an IIT Madras person himself. So he actually really builds in legends and uses it for leadership training. There is this one talk for the audience; it is called Mahabharata is a mirror. Please do actually look at it. We will also provide you with it in the reference link. How to use these energies, which are archetypal, again? When we mean archetype, it means that it is in this space; it is inherent. So he says, how to understand the quality of each. And there is this one book in particular he has written, which is, Arjuna a leader. So you let us look at Arjuna.

What have you grown up with? The legends of him. Yeah, yeah, I am only thinking of courage, strength, and warrior. Warrior spirit. Warrior spirit. Yeah. His sharpness, his focus, and his concentration to make sure he works for his brothers and his family. So I think those are the qualities that are actually emerging for me.

As you are talking, Priyanka, I remember I am going to keep tying it up. There was this beautiful image when he goes into the war, right? And Krishna, also being your inner God and inner guide as well. And how he displayed all the typical signs of stress— because he was like this is my people. And he asks the right questions, “what this war is about? Why am I actually participating in this war?” And that is where it actually becomes a dharma. It is like, what is my duty here to my brothers, my family, and my people? And it is the right war or right action. Right. And I think that is what it is with sports. We want to see. We want to see our icons. We want to see our players win in the right way. Yeah absolutely. So I think that is a really good point to start on.

I was also actually remembering one of these... the athlete I was talking of, she actually had a major head injury. And she missed one of the major tournaments as well. And who was extremely spiritual, okay? So it is, you also tap in. You tap in with those. And then I said okay, I did this exercise because it is just coming to me, I had not even thought about it. So, I am like this is your circle. So I actually started with that. So when you go out of it, you have gone out of your zone, or, like, your core. And I asked her who can give you or what can give you strength. And I think she said Krishna. So that is how I am, like, “okay, brilliant”. So then you also hold that energy of Krishna in this circle. And then I went with, “now if you are Arjuna, you are not

an XYZ athlete. How would you look at it?. What would be the advice?" And you know it was; we actually did it. It was online. The energy was so potent. And when she would get in that circle, that field held the higher energy. It is like a leader, your inner leader, your inner guide. Whatever the term it is that resonates with you. Holding that.

So yeah, I think what we are looking to build are qualities. And like you said, courage. But also the other end of courage was when he got stranded. That's when you pull up that inner God, your inner guide, because he also calls him Sakha. He actually calls you Krishna Sakha because it's your inner guide, a good friend. And I think that's what a leader's role is, you know, or even our role for that matter. We can be friendly. But we are not your friend, and I think, when a leadership group has to have those qualities, first in themselves.

I remember, I'm going to give another example on the opposite side/spectrum. This was when I was with; one of the spaces, and there was a camp going on, the national camp. It was a very young group of you female athletes. The coach, we don't know why, but his coaching style was quite, for lack of a better word, aggressive. It was very like the athletes were shaken. And I remember doing the mental toughness scale, Priyanka; all their scores were tipping low, all their scores. And it was just so sad. And I remember this was quite early in my career as well. So, when I was working, I said, "what's happening, guys?". And they said, "Ma'am, just come. Just come and watch us." I couldn't stay in that place for more than 15 minutes. They make a mistake, he would really lose his temper. He would, almost to the point of being abusive; the female assistant coach, was really scared. And this team went on to actually lose, one of the qualifiers. And I don't think it was physical, but they were just not in that space. So really, you know, I think he or she needs to work.

So, I think you're bringing such an important point, like how open our coaches are. Coaches are, I mean, when you're talking about leaders, they're also followers. Yeah, I mean, because that's an important quality to have—knowing when to lead, knowing when to follow, and knowing when to trust. For example, there are coaches...I mean, I've worked with some amazing coaches. They would trust their support staff so much. They knew, "Okay, you are the expert in

the field. You know better. So tell me, what am I supposed to do?" I think having that beautiful quality to listen and learn from an expert is an important quality of a leader.

Yeah, if I act like I know it all, then it becomes difficult. As we were talking about this coach who was very aggressive, I was also thinking of another coach. He knew he was aggressive. He was aware of it. That's the difference. And then he knew that it was having an impact on the players. So basically, he said, "I would want feedback from all my players." So, "I know they will not give it to me." But he said, "As a psychologist, you collect the feedback and tell me what is it that I need to change.

That was amazingly transformative because he really made the changes in terms of the feedback he received.

Exactly what you're saying because I think it's very vital, and that's the reflection. See, we're all going to have some things that work well but also some things in us which is probably pulling down another, probably pulling down the group you're working with, the team you're working with. And I think, as you're talking, I remember one of the hockey teams I worked with, and I'm taking the name also because it's a positive example. This coach was so inclusive. Like he would say, even when it's a GTMT expert, "I want all of us to be there." And I remember there was this one athlete in particular who had a little bit of action in her foot that was going wrong. But that was something I heard, and I built it when we were doing our imagery.

So how, as a team, when you're included, he's also saying, "You're important." Right. So, how the coach opens up to something will also have such an impact on every aspect. Right. So, that's beautiful. That's beautiful, Priyanka.

Shall we look at some of the leaders and some of the books, movies? Yeah, definitely. I want to start. Can I start? I want... I mean, I happened to... I chanced upon *Jodha Akbar*, the movie, recently. And it also got me thinking, I'm like, it's a Mughal emperor who marries a Rajput Hindu princess. But how they come together and really brought a change for the good in society. It also talks about how initially, of course, they had their issues, but that coming together and then going beyond religion to what is a good leader. She was influencing him but very subtly and

knowing, “how can I influence and what would be right?” And like you said, he is listening to—who I need to listen to. Right. Because I think that's one of the very essential qualities of a leader.

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, totally. I mean, I am thinking of some of the books I have read. I'm also thinking of some of the movies I have watched as well. Like, for example, there is a goal. For example, let's talk about *Lagaan*.

One of our favorites. Yeah. I love the movie too.

Like how the whole, as a team, there is a goal to achieve. Although that goal has come out of a lot of suffering, people are inspired to go out there and achieve something so that it benefits the whole society. And of course, they are taking risks. They don't know the sport. There is an attitude to learn. And eagerness. And how everybody comes in and does their role and responsibility, which is an essential quality for the team for that matter.

Yeah, I love the example you brought because I think it brings in team building. And I think Aamir Khan did a really wonderful job in that because what he's really portraying is the qualities of a leader. First of all, taking that risk, like you said, because we don't know if this is possible.

Yeah, and it's very uncertain. The price that you will pay can be extremely high.

But, it's also essential they had to take it. I mean, and I think we can tease out, like for hours together, but I think it's beautiful because it also involved conflict and how he worked with it and also knowing, okay, you know..., the English princess—princess—was that lady, even taking her help to learn. And I think that is a very essential quality, like you said, as to knowing what are my strengths and also knowing where do I need to get more support. Not being this, “Okay, you know what, I'm the coach.” Sometimes we get it, no?

Like, I remember reading once in the news that a particular player, a high-profile player, asked for a psychologist, and I don't know who it was, but he said, “You know, you can talk to me.” So it wasn't the coach; it was just someone in, I think, the admin, and I remember it became a big

issue because... and I felt so bad reading it. I'm like, here's an elite athlete, an Indian player, asking, and people don't understand. So I think it's essential to go, “This is it. I may know a little bit of physiotherapy, but that does not mean I become a physiotherapist.” So I don't go around telling athletes who are injured, just because I've had an injury or just because I know a little. I think that's very essential.

And I think, as psychologists, we also need to know that we are only psychologists. Like the way you are saying, we can't get into the coaching part of it and start training athletes and thinking we are better than coaches. That is not at all going to be helpful.

And that's where role clarity comes in, right? Your role—it's very, very important. I think, yeah, that's a brilliant movie to look at. And I was also recently watching some scenes on... what's that... cha... yeah, before *Chak de*, he's done this movie on the Phogat sisters, no? Which is it... *Dangal!* Ah, *Dangal!*

I was seeing Aamir Khan and how, again, the father becomes a coach. And I think that was also a very difficult role to instill, but because he had *kusti* in himself, and then, once they come to a stage, to then also hand them over. I feel like it's..., there's your science, but there's also the art. There's a subtlety which is needed. And also, these are young girls. So knowing whom to groom, how, becomes very, very essential.

Correct. And one thing that is common across even the movies that we are talking about is the fact that these people have a vision. The leaders have a vision, yeah, and they know how to move forward even when things are really not working in their favor. They know what to do to go out there and achieve their goals, which is an important quality in a transformational leader.

I remember this one particular coach. He knew whether the competition may or may not happen—it was very uncertain—but he still empowered the whole team to train and prepare.

Prepare! yes.

The mindset. Yeah. He really said, “What if we go?”

Yeah, exactly, and that preparation is important because if you're switched off and then you go, suddenly to jump in, it becomes difficult. So you'd rather be prepared. And, of course, then there's going to be a little disappointment if you don't, but the opposite is going to be quite dangerous, like not being prepared.

Absolutely. And there is no need to feel sad that we didn't work for it. That is something that he really instilled in the team, saying that, "we have to be motivated, we need to do it, even though the circumstances were very uncertain." Things look like the competition may not even happen, but he said, "What if it does?". We really have to work for it.

I think what you brought in reminds me of Abhinav Bindra's quote during the Olympics, which I spoke about in one of my sections. But I think it's very vital. He said, because you know, I just kept getting postponed, he said, "How you handle uncertainty is going to determine how you're going to perform in Tokyo." And that's really the key, you know? like just working with the entire changes, working with, like, the protocols, the bio bubble. I remember being in panels and, like, players saying—I remember one, it was a panel, and one of the badminton players said—he said, "You know, we would sync up our individual routines with other players and do it so that at least there's some sense of connect." And I thought that was a brilliant way where players came together in different ways and worked it through. No, I think that's... yeah, it's amazing.

Like you're saying, I think with transformational leaders, they're also people, irrespective of the circumstances, they literally empower and keep taking the team forward.

Yeah, exactly. I remember, one of the leagues, right, and again during COVID, it was uncertainty, but the coach was like, "You know, Chaitanya, they're all going to be so pumped up because energy is..." yeah. And also because they've been sitting with it, right? Like they're just going to see this spurt of action." And he was bang on. And also, we kept building that energy. We were also very, very... What you're saying is also, keeping your communication clear. Like I saw, because I worked across the cricketers, it wasn't just with one league. I do work with cricketers, and I saw that, the leagues who kept their athletes, at least in touch or at least with, keeping them like, "See, this is how much we know," were a lot more settled than those going, "We don't know. We don't know what's happening. Are we going? Are we not going? When's it happening?" It's a very difficult space.

I think, again, it brings it down to the process, right? What are you going to focus on? There are so many uncertainties. That happens even with the teams when they're performing. Like, you will hear the audience screaming, shouting—some of them are booing you. But what do you want to listen to? What are you going to focus on? Yeah, right. Yeah, it comes down to that. As a team, who are you taking feedback from?

So precisely, who are you taking feedback from? And also, how are you channeling your energy? Everyone cannot be a Usain Bolt who knows how to take the energy. And also, what do you do when you don't have the crowd? Like, I think one of the biggest challenges for, in the league stages, when IPL was happening without a crowd, that, you know too... it's just different, right? It's different. It's totally different.

Yeah, absolutely. Everybody is... but at the same time, even with social media, right, like there's so much—everybody wants to give you advice in terms of how to do it, what not to do, etc., etc. I think somewhere the boundaries have to be drawn by the players in terms of who they will take the feedback from again.

I remember I was working with one of the teams, and they'd gone through a pretty bad patch, and we were leading into one of the major tournaments. And, and it's still so heartbreaking because you open the paper, and it's just so negative. And then that's where the coach was like, now, and in the sessions, we're like, "We're building a new story. Yeah. What do we want?". I think it's so essential to understand what they're going through. Because, see, they're working for a camp; you're in a camp, your energy is focused. I think it's very important even as audiences, yes, we have our disappointment. But what are we feeding the players? We're doing really well in the Asian games, and, you know, it's, it's wonderful. I think it's also very essential to see that there's gone a lot of work, a lot of support, which has gone in, and, and also to support even when maybe things don't always go well. I think that's one of the essential qualities of a leader, right?

Yeah.

Yeah, absolutely. For example, how will you pump your players up? How are you going to motivate them and encourage them, especially to focus on the next match, in the next game?

Because you can't keep thinking about, "Okay, we've lost, we've lost." You can't go with that energy saying that, "You know what, we are going to lose again."

Yeah, you're right. I remember one of the teams, we had this thing of like, let's say, after the match, just catch up for it. And there was this rule that we won't talk about the match unless, a player wants to talk. And, the support staff team is just the same whether you win or you lose.

Yeah, that's good.

Yeah, yeah. And, what you're saying, I think it's, it's... I remember also really, as a group, sometimes talking about your best performance or, like, it's very essential to change that. No? when the chips are down. Because when the chips are going great, it's, it's fine. But I think a leader really comes in going, "Okay, how do I shift the focus of my group without just lecturing?" So, like maybe sharing or, or like some fun activities where like Priyanka introduces me or like... especially about something that you don't know, and we shift that energy, right? I think that's, that's very, very important.

Yeah. I also wonder, like, being a leader, they also need to process, have, this space there, you can also clear off, right?

Yeah. I think some of the things I have seen some of the leaders do is they know that, "My work timing is from this time to this time as a coach. Yeah. You know, after that, I also have other areas of my life." Like, for example, I have my interests, so we can... it's time for me. So I'm not going to be training around that time. I'm going to spend time with my family, my children. I have so many friends that I would like to meet up with. Because I think being a leader doesn't mean that you forget all the other areas which are essential, which will fuel that energy for you. I think being a leader also requires some of them to be very playful.

Yeah.

Yeah, yeah. Playful so that you bring in that play and creative energy, right?

Yeah. And it's also so much of a mirror, no? Because how you are is going to either help in a supportive growth mindset environment, or, if you're not, then that's also going to impact the team. So I think self-reflection and self-work become paramount for a leader, I think, you know.

Yeah, absolutely.

Yeah, yeah. Otherwise, leaders can actually struggle through the whole situation. They will not know—I mean, if they really struggle with interpersonal skills, they can get very defensive when somebody is voicing something out. I think some of the transformational leaders are those who have the empathy to listen to other stories. And at the same time, not treat them as victims.

Yeah. And, and I think you're right. And also, this is something which you build in, no? Like, it's, it's someone... I don't know if someone's born a leader, but, I definitely feel it's something which we can grow as individuals. And I think what we're discussing is also, if you can start looking as to what are the qualities you like in a particular person, a particular leader, a particular personality, or a legend, and, and rather than just mimicking it—like, sometimes we hear athletes say, "Oh, I want to be like X," look at, "Okay, how can I be like this?" And what about this person actually draws me, and how can I build these qualities?

So, I think that would be a good way to tie this up, this section, and, and to what are the leaders, what are the qualities, who are the personas, which are the movies, which are the books that you're drawn to? I think if you can start pondering on that and then look at it as to, okay, who am I, and what do I bring in which is aiding and which is not, right, you know?

I think my favorite is like, what do I want my story to really be? It's like *Lagaan*. I think if we can tie it up, it's like, I remember him saying, "I wanted male children because so that they can get India gold." And then when the kids, the young girls, are fighting, and then he says, "Oh, I was so wrong. they just have it in their blood, and how does it matter? we want, gold for India or performance for India, whether that's a male or female." I thought that was a brilliant, brilliant way to, and then how he goes about grooming.

I am thinking of this one person that I really worked under before I joined work. I used to think that leaders have to be very strict; they have to be very authoritarian, right? But then, when I worked with this one particular person, she was so empathetic, and I really got so much freedom, like there was so much trust, and she would give me responsibility, and I would help her out, and I did not feel like she was my leader per se. It was so easy. Then it changed me that- yeah, you can be a leader like this also.

Exactly, yeah, a beautiful quality that you saw. It's really about what she brought out in you.

And I felt so safe.

We know said we'd conclude, but I think another very essential quality is excellence.

Yeah, right. Like, I'm going to bring in my favorite, Rahul Dravid, who, you know, and I think it's also been my personal philosophy. I've been very influential, you know, for my family. Yes, have a vision, and to be your best and to whatever goals you have, but also, it's not just about becoming something; it's about really bettering yourself, focus on excellence, and results will follow, right? And that's something I tell youngsters who want to get into the field, and I've heard a lot of coaches say that. I remember this; there was this session for the parents, and the coaches were also there, and, the coach, in particular, the head coach, came and told me, "Chaitanya, can you tell them that, listen, every match, it's not about your kid winning, because sometimes we're working on something, and we're focusing on that process there because then they're going to excel in this area, so don't always look at it as, an outcome." And I really feel that was brilliant advice given.

This was great, so I hope you all enjoyed the discussion, and thank you. Priyanka, this was very insightful.

Thank you, ma'am.

Thank you.

Now we have a video by **Miss Ayan Merchant**, whose master thesis was on transformational leadership, and this is a very good way to bring this section to a conclusion.

"Leadership plays an important role in sports, influencing team dynamics, performance, and overall success. We watch or see a good team win with a coach or captain hailed as a hero. In recent years, transformational leadership has emerged as particularly influential in sports administration and coaching. Transformational leadership focuses on the impact it has on its followers; they gain trust, respect, and admiration from their followers. Similarly, they inspire and motivate their followers, or in this case, their athletes, to achieve their full potential while nurturing an environment of improvement and excellence.

Transformational leaders inspire a collective vision. A prime example of this is MS Dhoni and Gary Kirsten. When captaining and coaching the Indian cricket team for the 2011 World Cup, they created a shared vision of winning the World Cup and started a multi-year plan to unite the team towards a common goal. They cultivated the team unity and commitment required to achieve their goal.

Transformational leaders motivate their athletes. Coaches and team captains use their charisma, enthusiasm, and passion to inspire athletes to give their best efforts. Kapil Dev, as a captain, went beyond the external motivators like rewards and punishments but focused on internal motivation by making his team believe in their abilities and tasks. This resulted in higher levels of dedication and effort from athletes.

Transformational leaders develop resilience. This is very evident from the 1983 World Cup when India was losing against Zimbabwe. Kapil Dev viewed the setbacks as opportunities rather than overwhelming obstacles, and scored a record-breaking 175 not out. This resilience and ability to handle adversity and, more importantly, bounce back can be a game changer in difficult situations.

Transformational leaders empower athletes and focus on individual growth. Good coaches and team captains trust their players to make decisions on the field and encourage them to take ownership of their roles. One of the prime examples of this is Pep Guardiola, who recently led his team to a second treble. He empowered his players, which boosted their confidence and developed leadership skills amongst team members, which can be invaluable in high-pressure situations.

Coaches and teams who practice good leadership are committed to athletes' personal growth and development, and so they provide constructive feedback, set challenging goals, and help the athletes improve their skills on and off the field.

Transformational leaders always create a positive environment. A positive environment is vital in sports, and coaches and team captains play a crucial role in building strong bonds. They create an uplifting team culture based on trust and solidarity through their support and encouragement.

The ability to connect individually with each team member or athlete can mean the difference between winning and losing.

In sports, transformational leadership stands out as a powerful force for success. It can create an environment where individuals and teams can thrive. Their impact extends beyond the playing field, shaping athletes into well-rounded individuals capable of achieving greatness in sports and life."