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Um indiano pensando o Brasil

História de [Kiran Shetty](#)

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P/1 – I'm going to start our interview asking you a very simple question, which is your name, date of birth and where were you born?

R - Sure, ok. So, my name is Kiran Shetty, I was born on 06/06/1972, in a city called New Delhi in India.

P/1 - So, you were born in New Delhi...

R - Yes.

P/1 - So, can you tell us the name of your father and mother?

R - My dad's name is (-----?), and my mom's name is (-----?).

P/1 - And... They... Do you have brothers and sisters?

R - I have one sister. Her name is (-----?). And she lives in another city called Mumbai.

P/1 - So, can you tell us a little bit about your childhood, where were you born, how did you grow?

R - So, I got a very interesting story. I'm a South Indian, but my dad was a banker, so, every three years, in a government bank, you rotate jobs and cities. So, we had the privilege of moving from one city into another. So, I was born in North of India, in a city called Delhi, as I mentioned earlier, and I had a very good and normal life... As I went between cities, I learned a lot of languages and different cultures within the country, and I believe that helped me shape my personality and my values in those years, so... I had a very happy childhood, and I was exposed to the cultures, and vibrancy of different ethnicities within the country.

P/1 - Where did you live when you were a kid... What kind of places did you go?

R - So, I've been to many cities... I was born in Delhi, then we went to (-----?) which is up North. Then I went to (-----?), again in the North. Then to (-----?), I lived in (-----?) for four years. And I came back again to North, (-----?) and Delhi. And then I started my work again in Delhi, moved to Mumbai for a year. I lived in the UK for six months, I lived in the US for three months. And as I started working, and started my professional career, I also travelled very extensively, so I've been to almost every continent. The one continent that I'd not been to was South America. And it was like a dream that's come true. So now, I've had exposure to all the continents in the world.

P/1 - Just going back, did you have a religious education? What kind of...

R - Well, I went to an English middle school, so they teach in English, it's the normal curriculum. In India the main... in India they are largely educated in English, as the primary language. Then you have Hindi, which is our local language.

P/1 - Is your mother tongue, Hindi?

R - No. Everybody has a different mother tongue, depending on the state they come from. So I speak over seven languages, one international, that is English, and the others are all Indian languages. So, that's how the Indian education system works. I was educated in a English speaking school (-----?) and those are largely common schools.

P/1 - And the rest of your life... Did you have a life with a lot of family around, what kind of things did you family do, usually? Did you travel with your family? How was... Did you play cricket (laughs)?

R - Absolutely. You know, cricket is a religion in our country. But just before I get to cricket, we used to travel once a year. My dad was very particular about exposing us to our country and its culture. I didn't travel much internationally, until when I was about twenty. But within our country, every year, we would go to a different part, understand what was happening. And we went together as a family, and that was more important for us. Spending the quality time, because our dad was always busy with his work. Mom was always there for us, she was the housewife, and she sacrificed her career for us. We are a very closed-knit family. And we spent holidays together, weekends together, (-----). They say that the family that prays together stays together. So, we've been together.

P/1 - And are your family Hindu?

R - Yes. I'm a Hindu. But, I go to church, I go to mosque, I go to Sikh temple, and I go to any temple.

P/1 - Why?

R - You know, because I traveled so much within the country, I have empathy for every religion, I believe that God is one. However you look at it. Some people call him Jesus, some people call him Ganesha, some people call him Allah. So, you know. That's my perspective. So I go to a mosque (...), I go to a church during Christmas, that's how we are brought up in my family. And talking particularly, I'm sorry, about cricket. When there's a cricket match in the country, you don't find a single person on the road, and that's the best time to travel! (laughs) Cricket is a passion. Like soccer over here. But Indians also like Formula One, and we are great fans of Ayrton Senna. A lot of Indians love him. We felt very sad when he had his crash, we were very disappointed, he's a very well known personality back home.

P/1 - And going back to the Hindu, is your family from... what kind of... Brahma... What is the...

R - Yes. So, we are (-----), it's a (...) community. And we are from the Southern part of India, a city called (-----), which is a very small city in South (-----). So, we belong from there, but I never lived there. I go there once in three years, to meet our relatives who are from that part.

P/1 - And is it still very important in education in your family to be a (-----) or a (-----)? How did you deal with that and the difference, and what's going on in India...

R - I think... All that aspect has changed very dramatically in our country. I think, as the education system is improving in the country, and people are opening up their lives, and people are getting exposure to the outside world. And you have seen that the boundary between casta and religion is slowly diminishing. It doesn't matter to me if one is (-----) Muslim, Sikh. And I think largely, the younger population of the country is moving now in that direction. So, if you go to India today, you will see that they don't get it anymore, like it used to be, probably about ten years back, or fifteen years back. So, we are evolving and the beauty of our country is that we have a young population, or 60% of our population is in the age group of thirty-five years and below. The ability to grasp and change is there, and with exposure, global exposure, I believe that our country is moving in that direction of opening up the mind, as you would say.

P/1 - Going back to you, how did you choose your career? Did you study?...

R - Yes. You know, when I started my career... We come from a middle class family, and I wasn't seeing a lot of hardships... I was seeing a good life... We only had enough to sustain our day-to-day maintenance and get good quality education. So, there was always an ambition in my mind that I needed to provide better for my family as I moved forward in life. And that was a time when a lot of American companies started coming into India, and they started being well. But you had to make sure that you were very productive and (-----). So with that challenge, with that objective, in that point in time, about eighteen and a half years back, I started working in international companies. But as I started working there, my mind started opening up, and I felt that that was need for me also to work towards contributing to the society as I got better and better in my life financially, more secured. And, as I look at my life now, as I moved forward, I think that will be a very important aspect.

P/1 - From now on?

R - From now on... And this trip to Brazil, working with (-----). He is like a mentor. He shares a lot of insights, and we've been discussing a lot of insights, together. You know, it really encourages one to follow that part. And, just one example of... The fact that I moved in that direction is the fact that I'm here, leaving my family for two weeks. I think, it's been a great experience and I want to continue moving in that direction. Well, I would compromise on my career, I give the best. But I created shared value, by using my knowledge, into problems that are there in communities and learning from them as well. So that I can take the best practices back home, and try to implement some of the great work that people are doing all across the globe.

P/1 - So, let's go back a little bit to your career. Where did you study?

R - I completed my graduation in Commerce and I started working. And parallelly I did my extraordinary management program from a business school in India, Indian School of Business. It's a business school that partners with (-----) and (?) school of business. So, I did my management program from there.

P/1 - And when did you start working with Western Union?

R - I started my career in 1993, but into Western Union in 2002. Before Western Union, I worked with GE, and of course, Bank of America, so, two of the best companies in the world. I stuck on to Western Union for the last ten years because it is a beautiful company. We are in Fortune's for hundred companies, we operate in two hundred countries, and our wish is to serve the underserved. And, you know, I believe that we do great contribution to the society. Think about it. We serve costumers that leave their family back home, to own a better living for them outside their country. Then don't see them, for probably, years and years together. You know? Why are they doing this? It's selfless. It's just for think a better future for them. And we are the connect between that costumer and that family. Because they send money to us, and we make sure that the money (-----). So, that product, that passion, just engross me so much. And, more recently, you know, our new CEO, Mr. ? has come with a new concept, which is beautiful, which is shared value concept. And that means that, as we are making heavy news from our business, that is an important responsibility of the corporation to develop communities from making their own money. And we need to partner with the communities in bringing products and services that (-----) to then in designing them to improve and upscale the life. And to me, Ashoka is a program... this program, is a great example of a shared value concept. Think about it. We have executives in the company that are well travelled, that hand big revenue businesses, and Ashoka as an NGO has partnerships across the globe and understands the various social problems, and supports these NGOs. They are trying to bring the company and the NGOs together, bringing the skills of the company to the NGO and bringing the knowledge of the NGO about communities to the company. I think this is a great opportunity and benefits (?). And for me

personally it creates a different level of feeling for my company, you know, it makes me feel proud that our company cares and allows me to spend two weeks away from my work and pays for it. I don't think many companies would dare to do that. And it makes me more proud. I would do anything to make my company's vision and mission more successful as I move forward, so it just takes my commitment level to the next level.

P/1 - Tell me, how did you listen first time about the program and how did you get attracted by it?

R - So, we have a very dynamic lady in our company, called Luella. She is the head of Western Union foundation. She is instrumental, in working with Ashoka to develop this partnership. And I'm really fond of her, because I like the work that she does. And she highlighted this to us about two years back, then the announcement formally in the company, that anybody who was interested, to enroll for this, to get enrolled. And, I enrolled. I was selected, and here I am, as part of this project.

R - So, before coming, what were you thinking you going to do?

P/1 - Well, you know, that's the beauty of this project. There are two ladies, Tiffany and Kelly that run this program. They run it so professionally. (...) talked to me in the minute my nomination was confirmed. . . And, the idea that I was to understand my profile, understand what I want to achieve in life, what are the learning opportunities that I'm looking for. And then, (...) she had a call with all, understanding what their needs are and probably trying to see if they would be keen to look at a person like me to support them, so there's a perfect effort in matching their needs. Once that match happens, they make step. Was for me to be on a call with . . . or in the team. Talking about my experiences, what are their experiences, areas where I can add value on, what I can learn from them. . . So we had these deliberations at least for four or five times, before coming. And that was a lot of (...) a lot of sharing. They (...) in providing that to me. And I was very clear, that this were the two or three things that I have to change when I'm here, I have to work on, when I'm here. Two weeks, just fly like this. You don't realize. But (...) work that Ashoka has created has us make those two weeks very effective and great experience. For me, these two weeks will always been like an event, that will be really (...) many things in my life. And I'm grateful to many people for that. My corporation first at all, Ashoka, (...), so many of them. And my family as well, because they let me go for two weeks.

P/1 - And tell me, what did really change in you with this experience? What kind of things were you not expecting, and you learned, was totally new?

R - Well, you know, I think. . . Because of the rigor of this program, you expect a lot of things.

P/1 - So, what were you going. . . what were you suppose to do at the beginning?

R - You know, from my perspective, I was expecting to be in a different environment. I was wanting to see if I can adapt to a culturally different place. Language, I didn't know, I didn't know Portuguese. I wasn't sure if I would be able to communicate. And then, I'm not expert on social problems. I run a business, and we've been very successful in what we do. Will I be able to add value? So these were the questions that were crossing my mind. And these are the challenges that I think I had to work when I was here. And I think it was the same for all in the team, because they wanted me to be successful, so then they could get value from me, and make sure that I also learned from them, like, they would pick up something from me. And I think. . . that synchronization was perfect. And I (...) call that symmetry now. It worked, it worked beautifully. I think we've been able to achieve almost all of the objectives that we set out to, implementation happens as we moved forward. Great learnings for me. . . I personally believe that . . . even after the past eighteen years in my professional career, I'm happy to see that I'm able to do that, I'm able to respect people for their ideas. You know, and create a healthy debate. All these things have been very encouraging for me, they really make me much (more) stronger as a leader. But I think beyond all this, my mind has opened up for them, as I was telling you earlier, I'm very keen that I now started contributing to the society. And I have found that, probably through all those programs of how relentless pursuit can make things happen, and it's not been easy for them. It's the perseverance in that direction. All that will have a lasting impact on me and make me a better human being. Make me a better business man, and make me a better contributor to all the stakeholders in life. I'm very confident of that.

P/1 - How these new things that you learned, do you think when you go back to India, what is it going to change, you first as a person. Are you going to change something in your daily life?

R - Absolutely. I think, you know, when you work with an NGO, you realize the challenges that are there and that are real in life and how blessed most of us are, and, at many times, we forget that. And I think it's responsibility of each one of us to make sure that we try to enlighten lives. Besides running our homes, and stuff, it's our responsibility that we have to work in the communities. And I think that, that emotion has become stronger. So, when I get back, I definitely will share my experience with my team members. And I try to work towards certain causes. More aggressively now, and in a more structured way. That can probably create an impact, in my community, in my work area, and with my customers. So, those would be the things that would definitely change. And now I'm more focused, rather than just being an ambition, it will get into an execution plan as I move forward. (...)

P/1 - Do you have in mind what kind of causes will move you to do something?

R - Yeah, you know, we're talking about it, and we've been having all these discussions, because with my limited time I'm trying to pick up as much as I can. In India, the biggest problem is education. And, I believe, that if education is taken care of, mind opens up, and it helps you to develop everything around you. So, I would find and work in that domain and try to create a lasting impact. Starting with our customers, you know, because our customers are typically the blue-collar workers. So, how I can help their children have sustained education in our pockets. It's something that I work towards as I head back home. My mind is focused and getting clear in that direction. So, there's enlightenment, if you would, in that.

P/1 - What are the main diversities, can you see around this experiences you had from Indian to American culture, and from Indian to Brazilian culture? Another environment of work?

R - I think boundaries are physically defined. And, what I've learned is that a lot of reinforcement on human being happens with the environment that they operate in. As the boundaries are evaporating now I believe the world is slowly progressing towards becoming more accepting and more similar in the operations. It was a challenge early to kind of adjust and align, but as the years are passing by, probably (...) develop the skills existing to our culture and (...) so that boundaries are slowly, to my mind, diminishing. Talking specifically about Brazil, I think we are very, very similar in our cultures, between India and Brazil, you guys are very hospitable, so are Indians. For us, in India they say (...). It's like "a guest is a guard". And I have felt the same when I've been here, two weeks have just flown, you know, they're just gone! I didn't even know and tomorrow I'm leaving! I've got those mixed emotions as I leave, because on one side, I'm going back to meet my daughter, she's five years old, after two weeks, and on the other side I'll miss (...) they have created a lasting impression in my mind, and the other teams (...). It's very mixed emotions, but what I take, for sure, are two things: one, that I'm more committed to make a difference to the world and two, I've made friends for life; those are the emotions that I'm taking forward as I go back.

P/1 - How could you think this program could grow? Do you have any ideas?

R - This is, I think, one of the most pioneering programs that I've come across in my life in the last eighteen years. Think about it. I was talking about the global boundaries. This is a program that breaks global boundaries. It leverages experiences of executives from countries across the world. They have different problems. They bring it together with NGOs that have different problems. Right? And the problems of those NGOs and those communities are very similar to the other countries. And they marry the two together. You couldn't ask for something better to break the boundaries within the countries. And, as you do that, your leaders are becoming more passionate, are becoming more aligned to the realities of the world and the customers. And that makes them more empathetic to ensure that they create value. On the other side, they ensure that they add value because they are expressing what they do. They know they are feeling well, but there are other aspects of the management, other things around it. This exchange of ideas and (...) is so powerful that it will transform the world. And I think this should get bigger and bigger and the companies that are supporting such causes will have greater voice and very successful products. And Western Union is going to be one of them, because I see them as very passionate about it. They (...) shared value concept, and I think I'm very proud of my company for letting me do this, and I think it has changed my outlook in many ways.