



Startup Speakeasy

Honest conversations. Real stories

S01 | EP04 | The BharatPe story: From idea to impact



Musical intro

Karan Marwah:

Hello and welcome to the Startup Speakeasy by KPMG in India. Honest conversations with founders of India's emerging giants. My name is Karan Marwah, and I'm here today with the founder and COO of BharatPe, Shashvat Nakrani. Shashvat, good to see you, and welcome to the Startup Speakeasy.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Same here. Generally, it's formal conversations with big four people. Good to be in an informal setting.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah, we stay away from that for this one at least. So, I love to begin with your journey. I think you are someone who's obviously founded BharatPe and built it up to where it is today. But I don't think a lot of people know you, the real you, the person behind this. So maybe we can start with just your personal journey. I know you went to IIT. You grew up in Gujarat, but if you could just talk to me about growing up, and what were you like, what were your motivations?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah, like, to begin with, the journey has not been that long. I was 2015 entry batch of IIT Delhi student. Right, so, like if I talk about my early days in childhood, I was more of a studious kind of person. Anybody can figure out, you know, going into IIT, generally people are like that. I grew up in a business family in and around, like business folks being, Gujarati, like, there's more weight to the, you know how much money you are earning than what's your education and stuff like that. So, I've always been motivated by people who have built businesses from scratch, built a name for themselves, who also built employment in this society. There was a lot of respect where, in my hometown where I am coming from for people like me. So that was definitely a motivation but never thought like I'll start this early in my life. So then up to 12th, I was in Gujarat, my studies and then got admissions into IIT Delhi in 2015. Okay so that's the first time I came to a metro city coming from a tier 2 city. To me it was a bit overwhelming, at the beginning.

Karan Marwah:

I can imagine.

Shashvat Nakrani:

So, took a few months to settle down, since then it's been like a lot of time in Delhi and it has grown over me so I quite like it here now.

Karan Marwah:

Given a choice, would you prefer to move back to a quieter city?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah, so that's, my ideal life, like you know, later in life.

Karan Marwah:

You're far too young for that right now.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah. Right now, I prefer this kind of a setup. Definitely there's an idea in mind to have a, to live a more peaceful, quiet life away from all the hustle bustles. So that's definitely there. And preferably in Gujarat. Like the culture, and people that is there. And I keep visiting there, once in a few months.

Karan Marwah:

Family is still there?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah, family is still there. And so IIT Delhi was again, started a bit shaky, but then it was really fun.

Karan Marwah:

And what were you doing at IIT? Was that with a textile engineering?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah. So, it's very weird. It's the only IIT with that branch and I got admission into that because I wanted to be in a metro campus.

Karan Marwah:

Okay.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Like IIT Delhi or IIT Bombay. That was the deciding factor. And I was always sure that I will not go into placements and stuff but like start something of my own later on in life and therefore like wanted to have some exposure to like tier 1 cities.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Things you can do outside of college. Outside of your campus. And like we visited, me and my parents visited, IIT Delhi, IIT Bombay, Kanpur, Kharagpur. But I was stuck with either IIT Delhi or Bombay.

Karan Marwah:

Okay.

Shashvat Nakrani:

And that's where I got the admission and came here. And as far as possible away from home. And to get them freedom. And yeah, that was the idea. So, textile engineering was the branch, you know when I was going through all the curriculum, it was the lightest one. I thought this will give me more time to, you know, explore stuff.

Karan Marwah:

What were you doing other than going to IIT?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Like you know when you are into these coaching and IIT studies, you like study 12 hours a day and like you don't get enough time to you know explore other aspects of life.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah.

Shashvat Nakrani:

I think I just wanted to grow up in that sense. To see what the world is, how the, you know corporate businesses are set up, things you can do. Meet a lot of people, build some network, you know.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah.

Shashvat Nakrani:

How these people hang out, you know to cafes and stuff like that. So that was the idea. And yeah that went pretty well. So took this curriculum. So IIT is very fun if you are living in hostels. I would say.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah, I believe so.

Shashvat Nakrani:

There are people coming from home, but like, you know, it's the hostel. Life is completely different. Like you've got all these glimpses in some of the movies, but it's actually true. Like it's crazy fun. And generally, I think what happens is because these people, when they're studying for entry into IIT, they don't get to do a lot of fun stuff. Right. And then they come to college and they just, you know, yeah, they just the hell breaks loose, you know? Holi celebrations, all the festive celebrations. Oh yeah. All the hostels will get together. You know, splash water all over the balconies and all over the rooms. You know, people, lock your rooms while you are sleeping and then you are just figuring out how to get out. People close the electricity from outside at midnight and stuff like a lot of pranks, Hardcore pranks. things like that, immature stuff. But I think it's needed in everyone's growing up, right?

Karan Marwah:

That's part of growing up.

Shashvat Nakrani:

As I said, these people were generally led a boring life before that, so I think yes, that's pretty, they have earned it, you know, to have this fun. So, it thinks that's the most memorable part of IIT, not the curriculum, not the lecture halls.

Karan Marwah:

Some of the friendships you make, I guess.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah, that was a long way right. You know IIT Delhi, Bombay people are all over the world, you know. Someone you were having fun with is, you know, doing very well in life and you were friends with them. So, I think that's the best part like you are living among the best brains of the country. I think that makes great bonds for life.

Karan Marwah:

Lasting bonds. So, 3 years at IIT?

Shashvat Nakrani:

So yeah 3 years. So, third year is you know my fun ended and we were doing all this discussions about you know what to do, around UPI and stuff like that. And that's where you know we started BharatPe within the campus itself.

Karan Marwah:

Oh, is it?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah. Within the hostel rooms. I have some of the pics as well. Not sure if we can, you know, share that, but like, it's it was a highly informal just, you know, having three beds in a room and people sitting there and, you know, doing stuff on, like, white canvas, you.

Karan Marwah:

So, who were those people? Of course, you were there.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah, me and Bhavik, who is also a family friend from my hometown.

Karan Marwah:

Okay.

Shashvat Nakrani:

But he's like, lot older than me. He's eight years older than me, so kind of like a big brother. But other folks were my batchmates. Some of them were also excited to, like, start up and being a part of, you know, startup, I think IIT Delhi has a great culture of entrepreneurship.

Karan Marwah:

To say that what is the startup fuel. Is it the chai and samosas or something else?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah. I mean, all the unicorn founders, right? The folks, you know, who have done well, I think a lot of them are from IIT Delhi.

Karan Marwah:

We've had a few on our previous episodes also, in fact, and similar stories about business plans getting made in, you know, hostel rooms, over conversations.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah, I'm sure, so that's definitely a discussion among people who are inclined towards entrepreneurship or startups, you know what's next, you know, how can we be the next unicorn founder from the campus and stuff like that. So, there's definitely ambition among a certain percentage of the people.

Karan Marwah:

But what was your motivator when you thought of this and how did you come up with this idea?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yes, so as I said, from childhood, which was my ideal life. I always wanted to build something from scratch and have that kind of an impact and respect in society. I think that's what motivated me. But why I started in my college days is because we were brainstorming on this idea, and the more and more we thought about it, it became very clear that it had to start now. Otherwise, someone else will start it and it's just not going to be relevant after some time. So, I think timing was perfect for that time. Like today, you can't even think of starting a new UPI company without pasting a QR code. But that's become a completely scaled-up game. So, I think we had that conviction deep down that this is the time to start it and we took that plunge.

Karan Marwah:

But how did it come to you? What was the inspiration behind zoning in on digital payments and QR?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah, so not a lot of people know it. So, me and Bhavik, we actually started a different startup called BookMyHaircut. It sounds really stupid.

Karan Marwah:

Oh okay. Yeah. It's not something I can use.

Shashvat Nakrani:

So yeah. Basically, it was like a barber coming to your home on demand. Like kind of Uber for barbers, like you book your haircut and someone in and around you will come to you, matching the supply and demand. It sounds stupid to us now, but we had conviction. We were trying to build payment solutions or trying to find payment solutions from the market like how do we accept payments from customers and we realized that you can't get a payment gateway which is cheaper than 2% of the GMV and that's a huge cost. Our margins itself were 5%.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah, you can't give away 2%.

Shashvat Nakrani:

So, we tried to dig deeper into that and then we came across UPI. It's free. It's something that the government is pushing as well and part of the whole idea of democratizing the digital public infrastructure.

Karan Marwah:

Perfect timing again, as you said.

Shashvat Nakrani:

So, we built that UPI collection solution for that startup. And while building that, because UPI if you explore, just google the stuff, it's not very difficult to figure out. So basically, we did that for that startup and then when we started thinking more, this sounded like a much bigger opportunity than what we were doing. So that's when it took a few days to realize that we should get away with that business that needs a lot of money and is difficult to build supply and demand both together. Kind of like solving an Uber kind of problem which needs billions of dollars. So, let's drop that and work on this which seems like something not a lot of people in the market were aware of. While there were a lot of people doing transactions among friends, like P2P transactions, we didn't see a single UPI accepting merchant.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah, it was still early days.

Shashvat Nakrani:

So that's where we saw the gap. There are companies, big companies, deep-pocketed companies, who are building solutions for consumers on UPI. There is definitely a gap in the market, where you can go in the acceptance side of the transaction and still be a part of the transaction, because UPI is inter-operable.

Karan Marwah:

Right

Shashvat Nakrani:

So, you don't need to really have a consumer app to start accepting. And that's the opportunity we saw that you onboard a merchant and all the transactions he can accept from all the apps in the world go through you. So, you get access to that kind of data and insight and basically you just need to crack the merchant side of the piece and you become part of the transaction. That's where the idea was that we'll keep building products which are focused on just solving for merchants.

Karan Marwah:

So, do you remember who was the first merchant you signed up?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Since we were in and around IIT Delhi, so the first merchant was a small café in IIT Delhi, called Masala Twist. I think it's still there.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah, its still there.

Shashvat Nakrani:

So even before we built our QR, we wanted to test how good UPI acceptance was. So we went to all these merchants, and then we stood there, the whole day, to see how many transactions were coming, how many people were coming.

Karan Marwah:

You actually did that?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah. And we educated people on how to use this and then, a few days down the line, we realized that if a small shop in this area has this potential, think about all the shops in India, crores of merchants, and it's a huge problem to solve.

Karan Marwah:

So, this was right out while you were at IIT. At what point did you decide that this is what you want to do, and you're done with IIT?

Shashvat Nakrani:

So basically, not done with IIT. IIT Delhi interestingly gives you the opportunity to drop out for two years, do something of your own.

Karan Marwah:

Oh, I didn't know that.

Shashvat Nakrani:

It's called entrepreneurship leave or something. And then you can come back and get your degree. So, you have plus two years to complete your degree. So, we didn't take a big risk in that sense. But it took some convincing for the parents.

Karan Marwah:

How did they take it?

Shashvat Nakrani:

My parents were pretty okay because I come from a business family. They understand that you're trying out something. Worst case, you'll lose a year or something. They were okay with me losing that year.

Karan Marwah:

They were okay with you losing that year. That's a big thing with Indian parents, right? Beta pehle padhai karo.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah, so I think in Gujarat it's a bit different. They focus more on doing something on your own than on education and degree.

Karan Marwah:

It has tremendous value, I think. Gujarat has a very deep entrepreneurship DNA.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Gujarat has a very deep entrepreneurship DNA.

Karan Marwah:

Oh yes.

Shashvat Nakrani:

and very old. So coming back to this, it was the third year of our college, and we had this conviction, and we went ahead and built this QR code. We started visiting all these markets in NCR. There's no market in Delhi NCR where we didn't go on foot, starting from Rohini, GK, Defense Colony, Gurgaon's Super Mart, Lakshmi Nagar, East Delhi.

Karan Marwah:

It wouldn't have been easy to convince people on the other side. What was in it for them to sign up?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah, so that's the thing, right? This UPI QR code, nobody was there in the market to promote this. People had their own QR codes. So people had like 2-3 different QR codes, and 2-3 different settlement cycles for all the big apps that consumers were using. We went there pitching them as an all-in-one QR code. All these apps, all these logos are there on the QR code, it will work with all QR codes, it is free of cost. So I think the proposition was like nobody, very small portion of people said no to it. There's nothing to lose for them, and really a lot of convenience factor.

Karan Marwah:

So convenience was the lever for them.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah, and of course the zero MDR thing. We quickly realized with all these visits to different markets and merchants, that this is not something where you can charge money. Merchants in India are not wired to pay money.

Karan Marwah:

Paying their own money for receiving money.

Shashvat Nakrani:

They're like, "Cash bhi toh hai mere pass. Cash me thodi kharcha lagta hai.

Karan Marwah:

Credit card bhi toh kehta hai 2% aap dedo extra charge."

Shashvat Nakrani:

And this is a debit transaction. So nobody really wanted to give money. We quickly realized the model should be something else. Whether it's a subscription model or credit based on this transaction data. These kinds of ideas were there in the mind but we definitely knew that MDR is something that we don't want to go in the market with because it will not help in scaling. So zero MDR and all-in-one was the biggest pitch. Merchants had never seen that before. To them, who don't understand the technicalities of UPI and stuff, it came as magic. Ke dusri app se iss app mai ho jata hai. You know we just want to have this QR code and 100 plus apps are accepted. All these things they never heard of. So it was pretty easy convincing and that went very deep into our own conviction into the business.

Karan Marwah:

I think it's also important to get that validation early on.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah, I think I'll just advise the audience for the podcast as well, whenever someone starts up, the first thing to do is to get to the customer and figure out what they really want and whether what you are thinking is really what is needed in the market.

Karan Marwah:

Fail fast if you are going to fail.

Shashvat Nakrani:

A lot of people go to investors and startup founders for advice on whether they should do this or not. I think it's much more important to get some early customers and get that product-market fit. You know what will scale. So within a few months, we had this really deep conviction that this is something that's going to be big. We started talking to a few seed investors. Some of them were very interested. So we thought, if we are going the whole fundraising road, it may not be right to like, you know, you can always come back. So that's when we thought of like at the end of third year, let's not go for the fourth-year classes.

Karan Marwah:

Its a logical break that timing.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah.

Karan Marwah:

So you literally drop out, in a manner of speaking.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah, because you have plus two years to like come back, close all your credits and all your course. It's up to you whether you want to take a break or. Yeah. So it was so that's how it was done.

Karan Marwah:

That's a fantastic journey. Was there a higher purpose to this? When I was starting to write for the podcast about, you know, something I heard just last week from Clayton Christensen. You know, he talks about the prosperity paradox, where he says that, you know, the multiple things that are required to create prosperity at scale for nations. This is about nation building and a couple of concepts that stuck in my mind were, you know, addressing the, you know, what's called non-consumption. So you're not competing with anyone else. You actually going and creating your own market for yourself. So banking the unbanked for example. And then he also talks about what are market changing innovations, which again goes back to the same thing that you creating your own market. Was that ever in your mind that, you know, I'm doing this because, you know, there's a larger purpose to this.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah, sure. So I think in the beginning, the only idea was to, you know, build a business, make something big out of it. Right? And I always do that.

Karan Marwah:

So aapne kabhi socha tha, itna, I mean, was that always the plan that it would be at this scale?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah. When we started meeting the merchants, we realized, you know, it's something much bigger than what we were thinking.

Karan Marwah:

And what do you are at today?

Shashvat Nakrani:

You know, we have millions of merchants. 1.5 crore merchants on boarded with us. So it is pretty big. And I think there's still room to grow in terms of like getting them more engaged, getting different products sold to them. So there's a lot of getting deep, is something that we're thinking of going forward. But yeah, definitely there was conviction that it will be big. And I deeply believed like, you know, business leaders have their contribution in making societies better and making the countries better at some point, generating employment. And that's the kind of spirit that, you know, I also seen growing up in Gujarat, you know, and then basically that was the idea, right? But later on, as we started building business. Right. And we earned a point, like, you know, you need more than, you know, money as your motivation.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah.

Shashvat Nakrani:

So I think and while you know and true for even employees, right. Not everyone, is really motivated by money. That you need a higher purpose.

Karan Marwah:

I mean, in fact, the prevalent thinking is that, very few people are actually motivated by the, you know, the salary or the compensation. That's just hygiene.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah.

Karan Marwah:

It's everything else that they do at their, you know, workplace that's more important

Shashvat Nakrani:

that's the thing about top talent. Right. They will get the job very easily. So they're not really there to like, you know, survive and have a good food. Yeah. So they really want to have that excitement in life. Be part of a bigger purpose, mission. And I think that's the kind of people that take the company forward as well. Yeah. So in terms of attracting a lot of good talent as well as like, you know, get a lot of work done at the company, this was definitely a part of a bigger mission, to like, you know, what kind of a change we are bringing to people's lives. Specially when we started facilitating loans through our platform. Right, so that's life changing for a merchant, who wasn't basically a part of a formal credit economy earlier.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah.

Shashvat Nakrani:

So based on these QR transactions, it became very convenient plus they got access to credit through this.

Karan Marwah:

Did you ever think this was going to be? You know, obviously it was a risk that you were taking. Right. But, you know, with no credit history and no way to sort of rate them on their ability to repay this at that point, when you started out as.

Shashvat Nakrani:

So started as a pilot only. Right. We were not really sure how big it will be. But it turns out, you know, there's a higher problem of, you know, how do you underwrite or how do you measure his affordability of repayment, Yeah, yeah. And that's the aspect was our advantage. You know how many transactions are happening. How many customers are.

Karan Marwah:

You had the data sitting on the back.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah. So it turns out it's more to do with affordability than the intent itself. And of course, you have this basic guardrails that any unsecured lending, would do. And we were anyway doing through partners. So it's like, you know, partners conviction on our, basically transactional data as well. Yeah. So lot of learning and you know lot of different pilots and even today like there's a lot of pilots happening in the pipeline. But there's a evolved basically understanding of how a merchant behaves in terms of credit repayment as well as you know, intent. So it's a process of evolution but its been like 3 and a half years almost since we did first pilot with the lending. So its very. It's an evolved version right now.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah. Well, it's interesting, and I have to, for one question, to stay true to what you just spoke about. You one is sustaining innovation, right? And, you know, I know you put you know, a number of other products that you've just launched. And we'll talk about a few of them hopefully. But how do you sustain innovation at scale? Right. Because what are you doing now from where you were? You know, you said 1.5 crore merchants already, and that is, you know, the potential is still out there. Well, what is the DNA that you created in the organization. Is there a DNA that you can create? What's the secret sauce to keep innovation going? Because that's the risk that someone else will catch up. And, you know, possibly do the same thing that you're doing. How do you keep innovating and keep that engine going?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah, So I think it's very important in specially, markets like fintech. Right. So, I think there has to be a very strong DNA of any organization. And naturally it builds up like there is no conscious efforts of like building a culture or DNA but naturally by the way of how we're operating, how we're approaching a problem. It grows up in the company. So, from day one, like we had this approach and I think that that's how we, came up with the name of the company as well, Resilient innovations. Right. So you have to be resilient. I think that's what we always wanted to have that culture in the company. And I think that is, you know, what BharatPe is all about. So, you know, any kind of problems you always go into solution mode. And, and you rightly said any innovation, any new product launch has a time frame, where you can move things, after that it becomes commoditized, and then you move onto next things. I think that's where, you know, our payment industry at least digital payment landscape in India has been evolving very fast.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah. So the digital payments in I think our case in, a lot of fintechs, it's basically you can evolve a lot on, you know, your payment products. So it started with QR codes, then then the whole sandbox phenomena came into picture.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Which Nobody could thought of from beginning. So I think its very inherent, you know different experiments, and pilots you keep doing with your customer. It has a lot to do with how close your are with your customer. Right. And we have this strong DNA of you know, understanding, behaving like a customer in the company while making any decisions. We have this whole on the wall of the office we have all the pictures of our real merchants and their stories.

Karan Marwah:

Okay.

Shashvat Nakrani:

You know how we helped them in their life, and you know they got some credit, or they got some extra transaction, they got extra customers. And that really I think builds that kind of a culture in people to like keep them in mind while making a decision.

Karan Marwah:

Customer first.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah. So I think that's very important and always every 6 months there has to be a new product coming in. You go deeper and deeper into a customer and that's how I think. You have to sustain a customer rather than you have to sustain a product. You know.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah, lot easier said than done.

Karan Marwah:

Any stories that, you know, stand out or. You know, I'm sure you have lots of them. But you know, where someone's reached out and said, look, you've really changed my life.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah, like actually,

Karan Marwah:

I am sure it happens all the time.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah. It happens all the time. Because as I said we've like facilitated almost like 15,000 thousand crores worth of loans. And average loan size is one lakh rupees. So a lot of a lot of people who have benefited from it. And that's the biggest life changing thing for them because they never thought like they'll be part of formal economy, right.

Shashvat Nakrani:

And they don't.

Karan Marwah:

Did you ever think you were going to do this?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Not at the beginning. Not at the beginning. Like it is, turned out to be really well. And I think it like we are just a six year old company. that it has evolved very fast. Like, you know, we always catching up to, you know what, where our business is going. So that's a constant journey and hopefully it will continue.

Karan Marwah:

I'm sure it will. And which leads me to the second question I had. I think now you started out I think when we just started this conversation, you said you were, you know, you started or at one end of the transaction ecosystem, it was the vendor or the merchant. And now it's kind of come full circle hasn't it with the consumer app. Right?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah. So it's it's been like a long time since we've been building for merchants. And still I think that is the core of the company. Now, the idea is how do you basically launch consumer products to help the merchant ecosystem itself?

Karan Marwah:

Yeah. You cater to that personal financial needs is that?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah. So you enable customers to like transact more at BharatPe merchant, right. How do you give a better experience at a BharatPe QR code or point of sale for a customer who is using your product. So I think it all directionally will come down to how its benefitting to merchant ecosystem. But yeah we are definitely are going into the consumer play. We recently launched our UPI app. So try it out. Give any feedback. The product is stabilizing right now. But as soon as its ready, then we are going to scale it up.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah. But And what's next? You know, again, I know this is possibly one, one area that you're expanding into, but anything else that you know that okay, the where I'm coming from is, you know, you achieved a lot in six years and at your age. And to keep yourself motivated, you know, to keep going at this, you know what? What is it that motivates you now? And what are you working towards? You know, and for the future?

Shashvat Nakrani:

You know, first of all, it's not me. It's the company who has done very well. A lot of people and a lot of contributions who have taken it forward. or, you know, but in terms of me, like what motivates is the you know new things which keep coming into the whole digital payments ecosystem. Right. UPI has become so big, but its like 99% of it, is debit transactions.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah.

Shashvat Nakrani:

I am personally very bullish on credit on UPI proposition. I think its you know structurally going to change you know how we transact and basically bring a lot of people under the credit as well.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah.

Shashvat Nakrani:

So credit card penetration is like very very low in our country right. POS penetration is extremely low like you are having like 50 Lakh maybe POS machines, in entire universe while QR codes might be 5 crore QR codes. So basically you are saying that you know you can accept credit at 5 crore point of sales than a 50 Lakh machines. So its really expanding the acceptance universe and I think gradually its going to expand the issuing side as well where you have the people having all these credit lines to like start transacting at UPI. Yeah. So I think that's one of the biggest thing I think behaviorally is going to change in the country itself.

Karan Marwah:

But what's the personal motivator for you. What keeps you going?

Shashvat Nakrani:

You know, these are the kind of new things which get launched and with the NPCI and other bodies basically proactively working on it, it's its lot of excitement to keep working with them to come up with new product, new ideas. Basically, any new thing that you can do, any start up can do, they want to do it at the central level, so that everybody has access to it, and it's a level playing field. And I think that's really.

Karan Marwah:

It goes back to. But I think what we are chatting about the regulator.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah.

Karan Marwah:

So that's the responsibility to create that level playing field.

Shashvat Nakrani:

I think that's very important for a country like ours right where you really want to democratize or commoditize in fact these kind of products, to like bring you know to make people's life better. So that's I think. That's something that really motivates.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah. On the personal stuff I've heard you're a movie buff? Is that right?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah, yeah, I watch a lot of content.

Karan Marwah:

What are you watching right now?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Right now, I'm watching the Penguin. It's a tv show. it's from the Batman universe. It's really good. Like, But I watch, like, different kind of languages, you know, South Indian, Korean, you know, all kinds, I don't care. Like I watch subtitles.

Karan Marwah:

Is that what you do after long day at work?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Oh, yeah, I do, I do,

Karan Marwah:

How do you unwind after a long day?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah, I do watch on weekdays as well. But weekends is also. I watch a lot of. And, Yeah, definitely an area of passion.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah. Any other passions that you'd like to share?

Shashvat Nakrani:

I think I, I want to have some time to pursue different passions, you know, but, right now, I think it will take some more time for me to get, you know, some time out for these things. But otherwise, I regularly go to gym. So that's something, you know, I don't miss. Even on a busy day or regular, like, 1.5 hours is kept out and I think that's where. Yeah, I think that's, stress buster as well.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah. Shashvat, what do you think about, starting up now? I think a lot of, there's a lot of conversation, right, that there's no better time to start up now. And I think when you started up, of course, you know, six or so years ago, you know, the world was different, I think, and coming from, you know, the business background possibly helped, but I think this whole fear of failure there. And even, you know, stepping out of college, formal education to do this, I think the, the receptivity to that is a little better than it was in 2015, at least. But what could be your your advice to someone who's starting up now?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah. So basically, like, I would not advise to start right after college or from college. Yeah. Although, I mean, I'd say that all. because you, you are really thrown into a, a whole sea of, you know, things which you don't even know about.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Its always good to have an ideal, idea of basics things. How things work right. I didn't know whether salary gets credited before you start working or after you start working. Is it first or is it the month end. So all this basic things like. Because I had other people to guide me right. Investors and stuff. Not everyone will have those privilege so I would advise to like get the basic understanding, maybe work at a start-up, intern at a start up and see what the whole buzz is about. How people are approaching solving problems. And if that's clicking then, then think of something.

Karan Marwah:

Right

Shashvat Nakrani:

And when you think about, you know, starting up, the problem has to be big enough, first of all. And your solution should really solve it, not just in your head, but, you know, it really has to solve for a customer.

Karan Marwah:

I mean, it's not easy to get that.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah, so, I mean, don't start up before these basic two things you figure out. I think that's what I would say because people I talk to, a lot of people, people come to me, people get excited with a lot of ideas and then they, you know, think the whole future, in the mind. But the real, you know, reality hits when you go to customer and sell it.

Karan Marwah: Yeah.

That's the validation.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah, it's very important to go and try to sell what you are building and then, you know, you really get that conviction deep down. Yeah. And then think of, you know, doing something with and it's not investor, it's not you who needs to be convinced, it's the customer, you know. So that's a basic thing. But that's, you know, 90% of people miss out on this.

Karan Marwah:

And would you say the ecosystem is better today than it was?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah. Much better. Like there's a lot of investors in the country who want to. But the right founders, the overall, I think Indian market is something like the entire world is looking up to, like, you know, it's preferred over, you know, China, Japan, which are traditional investing markets. So I think there's a lot of money getting directed into Indian startups and it will only grow from here.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah.

Shashvat Nakrani:

That's what I believe. And the ecosystem is evolving. There are, you know, for angel investing, there are platforms, there are syndicates, you know, so you get access to a lot of capital. And then definitely there are advisors, there are people who have gone through these kinds of things. There are founders you can bring as angel investors, a lot of founders are investing, I am investing. So yeah, definitely much more evolved than what it was.

Karan Marwah:

Do you invest?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah, I invest in a lot of startups.

Karan Marwah:

And what are the filters you use when you...

Shashvat Nakrani:

Yeah, I look at the person's, basically founding team's, you know, hunger. Are they passionate enough for the problem they are solving? That's one. And second is, the problem has to be like big enough, you know, large enough.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah.

Shashvat Nakrani:

So because you'll never succeed if your TAM is not, you know, big enough. So like you, you will succeed but you will never, like, grow. Yeah. Scale it up. Otherwise, I think the larger idea is to back the next, you know, generation of founders, which I think every founder will have a part of his mind that, you know, how I want to be empowered, you know, how I want to be part of our ecosystem. Like we invest like ten lakh, fifteen lakhs kind of like small checks but like the more basically the idea is to like help them, you know, brainstorm into now

Karan Marwah:

that goes a long way at that point and, someone's.

Shashvat Nakrani:

And I think more than money, people are looking forward to like real brainstorming and advice on how you want to shape the move forward. And as a founder also you get to have a small place in different sectors and industry. You get to see what's happening in different industries if you keep investing. So I think that's also a motivation like beyond your own industry you get to see how it's evolving otherwise.

Karan Marwah:

Possibly my last question, what have been your role models or influencers?

Shashvat Nakrani:

So for me personally, like, there are people, like I'll not take names, but like in Gujarat you have a lot of businessmen who come from a background where they didn't have money to eat or live properly, you know, forget about a better life, but just, live.

Karan Marwah:

Just survival.

Shashvat Nakrani:

And then they have done, you know, the smallest of the tasks in their life, smallest of the work in their life, to like clean houses, and stuff like that.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah. The dignity of labor.

Shashvat Nakrani:

And I think they've grown up to be a billionaire as well in their life and I think that's very, very impactful as well as motivating.

Karan Marwah:

And humbling too. Right? I think if you don't lose that, if you've gone through that journey and orientation,

Shashvat Nakrani:

you really value what you have.

Karan Marwah:

Exactly.

Shashvat Nakrani:

And you try to make good in the society with the privilege that you got. Right? So I think that's something that you can't really get from other places where, you know, someone who has built it from scratch and really like value what you. I think I want to value, you know, whatever I've got in life. So I want to have that kind of a life.

Karan Marwah:

And if there was one extravagance you would allow yourself, what would that be?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Sports cars.

Karan Marwah:

Do you drive one right now?

Shashvat Nakrani:

Not right now.

Karan Marwah:

Yeah, excellent. Shashvat, thank you so much for coming here and spending time with us and sharing your thoughts.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Oh, my pleasure.

Karan Marwah:

Good candid conversation. And I really appreciate the candor and the, you know, the insights you've given us that hopefully people listening will also do that. I wish you all the best. Wish BharatPe all the best.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Thank you.

Karan Marwah:

And look forward to seeing you again.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Same here.

Karan Marwah:

Thank you.

Shashvat Nakrani:

Thank you.

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