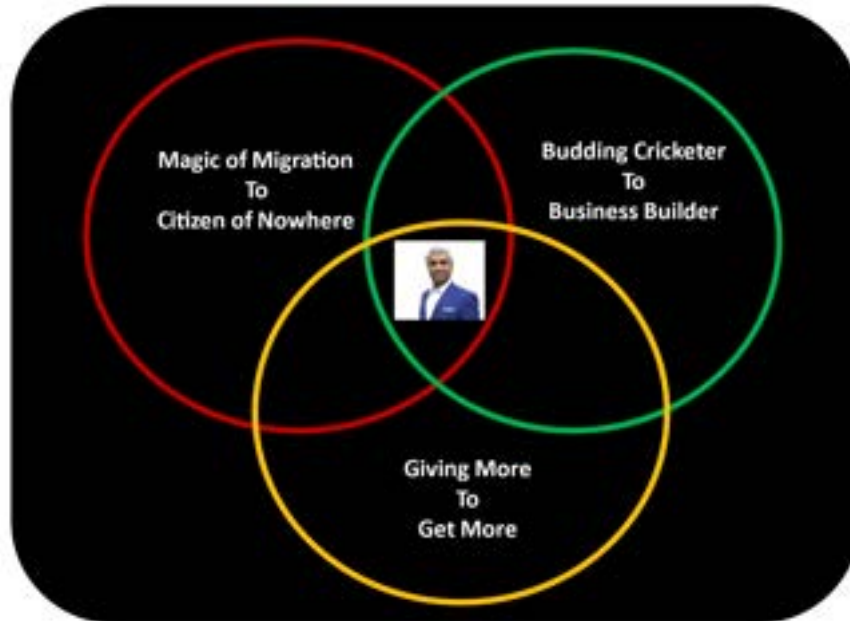


# Sukhendu Pal

Three stories describe me well



**Story 1:** Magic of Migration To Citizen of Nowhere

**Story 2:** Budding Cricketer To Business Builder

**Story 3:** Giving More To Get More

## **Magic of Migration To Citizen of Nowhere**

I was born in a large family in Calcutta, near the airport and in my childhood, I saw aircraft's flying in and out of the airport, every day. Obviously, as a teenager, I wanted to be a pilot, to fly and experience how others live across the globe.

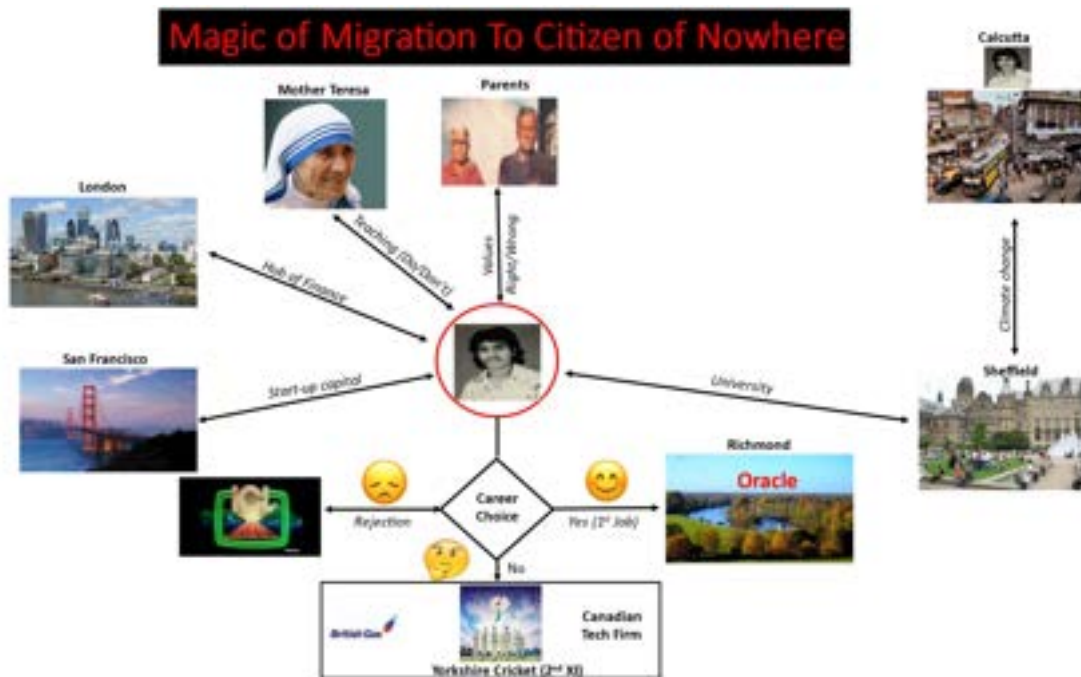
But, as I was dreaming to be a pilot, my parents had other ideas! They decided to send me to Sheffield in Yorkshire. Just imagine the challenge of climate change that I faced then – moving from a place where average temperature is in mid-30s and sunny to a cold/snowy and hilly Sheffield!

This is all because my eldest brother moved to Sheffield University in 1960s and became the youngest professor there. I was young when I left India, and I guess my parents thought I would be safer in Sheffield with my eldest brother than on my own somewhere in the US. I didn't come to this country as an immigrant like Rishi Sunak, Suell Braveman and Priti Patel - maybe that's why I don't hate immigrants.

I became a migrant at a tender age of 15 but a migrant by choice. Remember that when people from other countries come here, they're call immigrants. Whereas, when people from here go and live and work in other countries (as I did when I lived in Singapore, Sydney, Hong Kong, San Francisco, NY and Boston) they're called ex-pat. Never understood what the differences are – perhaps, ex-pats are lazy and immigrants are hard working? Or is it the Elitism?

I played cricket on the pavements of Calcutta – which was full of dangers as we had to fetch balls from the street when buses and trams were running. I did well at university, and after

graduating I started my PhD in “distributed databases” – an up and coming subject then. In the final year of my undergraduate course, like most students I went for a day long interview at ICL – then one of the biggest technology outfits in this country at that time competing with IBM - but they turned me down, which was very disappointing. But I was cheered up when Yorkshire Cricket Club offered me an opportunity to play for Yorkshire 2<sup>nd</sup> XI. Soon after starting my PhD, I had three job offers: a US technology start-up setting up their business in Europe, British Gas and a Canadian technology company based in Ottawa. Tough decisions had to be made considering the choices were: To be a professional cricketer or a career in the technology industry.



But, I was particularly impressed by the two founders of a US technology start-up. They interviewed me in a pub call “The Orange Tree” in Richmond, Surrey, and after the interview they asked me to join them. I dropped out of my PhD and joined Oracle in March 1985. My mum wasn’t happy at all – this is because, all my brothers and sisters are academics, who teach or taught at universities, just like my Dad. They all have PhDs – and I dropped out from it. So, I became the “Black Sheep of the Family”. This decision also meant – I had to abandon two of my dream jobs: a pilot and a professional cricketer.



“

You can find meaning, purpose, fulfilment and happiness in your life even when you realise you might need to let go of an earlier dream or two.

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Since then I've worked and lived in few other places: San Francisco, NY, Boston, Singapore, Sydney and HK as well as keeping my root firmly in London. Living and working abroad reminded me of who I really am.

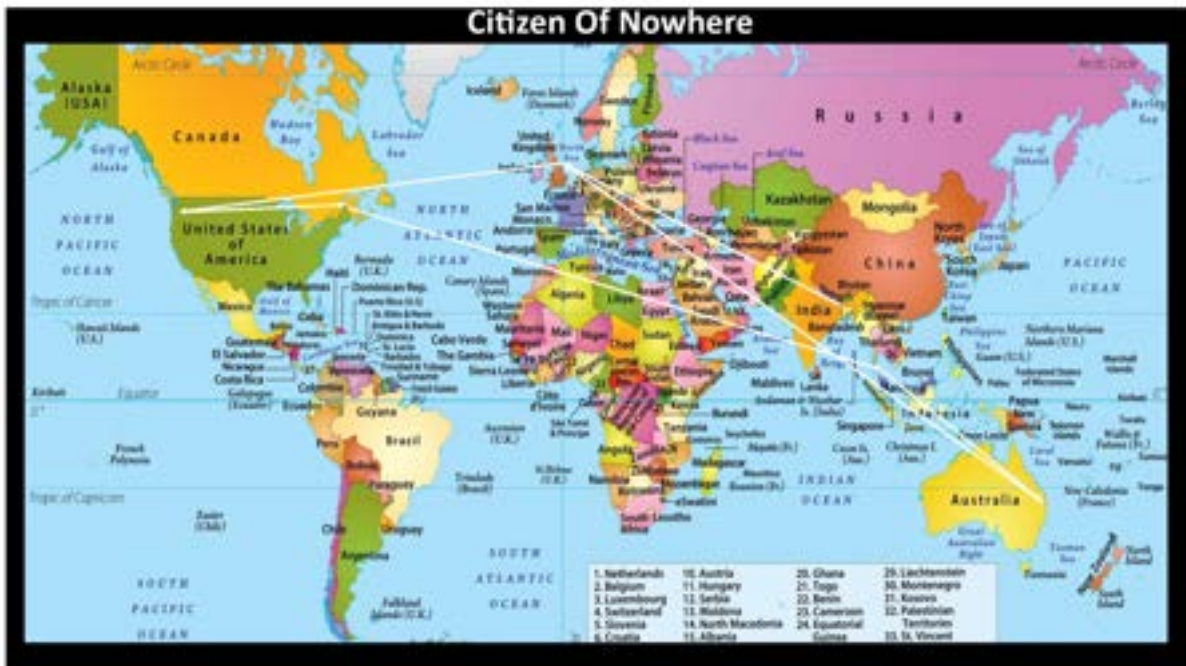
When I came to this country as a young boy Brexit wasn't born, and the country was not visibly as divided as it is now. Today, there is a resentment towards immigrants, even immigrant students who keep this country's educational institution alive and working. Just imagine, how many universities will survive without the foreign student fees and enormous amount of money they spend.

So, what is magical about migration? Or, more specifically, who benefits from immigrants?

The simple answer is: the natives. People who are immigrants by choice are brainy people. For example, two-fifths of America's Nobel prize-winners in science since 2000 have been immigrants. These are facts not liked by people who live in the fake world of insularism.

Not to mention 7 out of 10 most valuable companies of the world are either run by immigrants or founded by immigrants. Silicon Valley could not function without engineers from India. London's financial sector would be lost without number-crunchers from India, Sri Lanka and China. Immigrants or their children founded 45% of America's Fortune 500 companies, including Apple, Google, Uber, Tesla and Levi Strauss.

My family has always had a global outlook with five of my nieces and a nephew, living in the US, Australia, UAE and UK. Our family is what you would call 'global', or as the ex- Prime Minister Theresa May said, "Citizens of nowhere".



I just wonder where this country would be without these “Citizens of nowhere” working in the NHS, universities, school, etc.

### Budding Cricketer To Business Builder

I started my career as an explorer, not knowing where my exploration would lead. When I left university, I didn’t set out to be a General Manager, Managing Director, Senior Vice President, CEO or Chairman. I was one of the youngest members of a large family, following a very successful brother who was a world-renowned scientist. I had the belief that the only way to get noticed was to be good at what I did. I was very lucky to find myself at Oracle when it was a start-up, and my career took off from there. I was surrounded by many amazingly talented people, and without realising I learned fast. I grew as the company grew at a phenomenal rate, and within a short period, I became the youngest General Manager/Vice President. I was excited by the work I did. I founded Oracle in the Financial Services Industry, co-founded Consulting Practice and solution delivery. After a decade, I left Oracle when these businesses were generating multi-billion-dollar revenue that I built with my colleagues from ground up. Many of my ex-colleagues and friends also left Oracle at the same time – and they went to work for other software/technology companies where they achieved phenomenal success. I didn’t – this is because I didn’t want to be a one-trick pony and went to the banking industry instead to test my scalability! In other words, I wanted to see if the skills I developed in a high-growth technology industry are portable across other industries.

I was the only General Manager in Oracle Europe who wasn’t white – may be that prompted then Oracle UK’s management to part company with me and installed a new General Manager who was pale, stale and male. I was headhunted to work for the biggest bank in the world then, where I was the youngest Senior Vice President in the executive management team in charge of the Emerging markets, a hugely visible role responsible for tens of thousands of people and billions of dollars of business, working for John Reed, Sandy Weill (Co-CEO of Citi), and alongside Jamie Dimon, who looked after Investment banking, and Ajay Banga (who was in charge of consumer banking) now president of the World Bank. After few years of joining the Citi, I grew the revenue of the Emerging Markets to \$12.714bn whilst the entire Oracle’s revenue was \$10.23bn then. The lesson I learnt then was it’s not your colour but competency that matters most.



I've been very lucky in my life. I worked with some of the amazing and pioneering people of the last 4 decades. First, in Oracle where I was surrounded by a group of highly talented people, many of them went on to build multi-billion-dollar companies later. Larry created a true talent factory in Oracle – no other leaders over the last 3 decades (and that include Jobs, Gates, Bezos, Jack Welch of GE and the rest) managed to create future leaders like Larry did. He's the unsung business leader of the last 40 years.

Just to give you few examples:

Mother Teresa: **Straight-talker**; asked us to evaluate risk and rewards

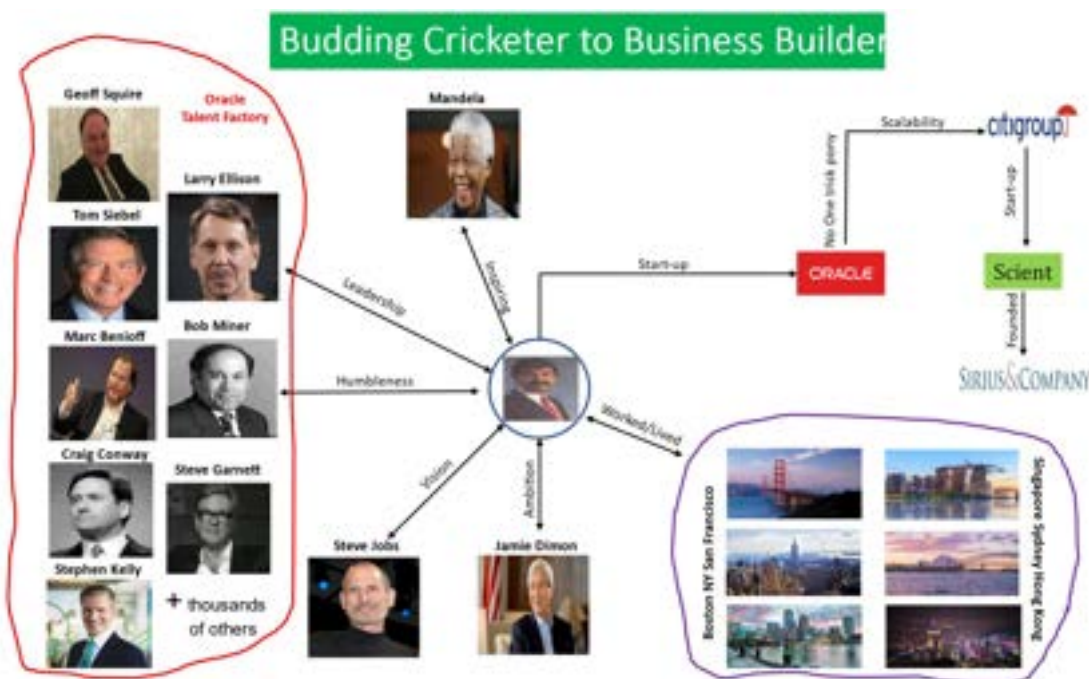
Bob Miner: Depositing a cheque at Bank of San Francisco – **no vanity**

Steve Jobs: At a BBQ in Larry's house. **Visionary**.

Nelson Mandela: The **humblest person** I ever met. He told me that a True leader: Talk less; Listen more; Do more; I still look at leadership through those lenses.

Jamie Dimon: Most **ambitious person** I came across.

David Bowie: In the Bules Alleys, Washington – true **innovators** have 360° views of the world.



The key lessons I learnt from holding senior roles are always treat people with respect, remain honest, open, humble and genuine.

### Giving More To Get More

Looking back, I realised that core values that drive our behaviour begins at home, seeing how our parents act. I saw many times my mum gave her own food to beggars to feed their hungry children. I also saw my dad teach 12-18 year olds from Calcutta's slum for free in his spare time – bearing in mind that he also privately taught two economists, one of whom later won the Nobel Prize. Seeing how my parents acted taught me the importance of giving back and helping those less fortunate. Giving back is in my DNA. It provides me with emotional reward, and the payback is far higher than any payment from my for-profit work. My suggestion to you will be to find something that gives you similar level of emotional reward.

Life never follows a linear path, and mine is no exception: In May 2019 I was diagnosed with cancer and faced the possibility that my life would end sooner than I had thought. But living with cancer has given me important insight into my life. It was really a binary situation that I faced - a victim of cancer or a survivor of cancer. Beating cancer is a battle of mind. It was

one of the toughest situations I have faced so far. So, what have I learnt? Never give up. The most important thing in illness is never to lose heart – I discovered that hope is grief's best music. There is life after cancer. Always remember that your present situation is not your destination - your best is yet to come.

Throughout my career, I have a clear idea of how my drive and determination have generated success and revenue for companies where I worked; I also know I've had a substantial impact in every organisation where I worked. But as I've faced this disease, it's been interesting to see how unimportant that impact is to me now. I've concluded that the criteria by which we should all assess our lives isn't the revenue/profit/market-share we helped to generate, but the individual people whose lives we've touched and bettered.

Now is the time to share my insights and experience. I decided to move out from my day-to-day role of running a company 5 years ago. Since then I decided to mentor, and I've gained huge fulfilment from sharing my insights with eager and emerging executives. I've experienced situations many others have not, and I can draw on those experiences to help others. For example, I, along with a handful of my friends (Steve Garnett and Stephen Kelly) and ex-colleagues, organise business clinics for London based start-ups, funded by the Mayor of London. I also mentor a few start-up founders, who are from underprivileged/disadvantaged backgrounds and female founders and executives. This work gives me purpose and passion. I decide where I want to earn money and where I want to give money. For me, it isn't about making money or seeking visibility, but about impact and usefulness. I learned that some things in life don't have much purpose and some things really do. I enjoy helping out smart, underrated, driven people achieve their dreams.

I saw real guilt in the eyes of my Dad and eldest brother when they spoke about them producing students, who went on to win Nobel Prize and running companies like Vodafone and Alphabet/Google. These taught me that cutting deals and climbing corporate ladders don't yield the deep rewards that come from growing/mentoring people.

As you lead your life, often questions will be thrown at you which are complicated, but remember the answers are always simple – listen to your heart.

What shaped me was I had two amazing parents – my father was a teacher, and my mother was a natural visionary leader. They were complementary – they embedded core values in me as I grew up, which drives me even today. They taught me that building a better me is the first step to me building a better company. Building a better you is the first step to you building a better company/nation/country.

**Giving** - We make a living by what we get. I realised that we make a life by what we give

In this last 30 minutes I shared my life journey with you – success, disappointment, life ending illness and joy. We all grow older – one day, you'll reach a stage in your life when your hair will be as grey as mine and hopefully, you'll be wiser than me! Then it'll be a time to look back and assess the life that you led. I would like to end this blog with 5 things.....

1. Don't just dream, **do** it.
2. Don't just hear, **listen**.
3. Don't just talk, **act**.
4. Don't just take, **give**.
5. Don't just tell, **share**.

Thank You.