

CHAPTER 12

FRIENDS

Dad had an interesting definition of friends that I want to set out before I start the chapter. He said friends are not just the friends we talk about, as our human one-to-one relationships; they can be individuals, communities, even countries. That is true when you think about it. There are friends of particular groups: charities, political parties, associations, and schools. As a business, we have friends as well.

Countries talk about being shoulder-to-shoulder, such as the United States and the United Kingdom. Those two countries are friends. So, friends may be human being-to-human being, or organisation-to-organisation, but wherever relationships develop, they can create success.

There are friendships created with community associations and political associations. In particular, there are friends of political parties,

who make a huge difference to the success of those political parties in the United Kingdom. I am quite happy to say that I am a friend of the Conservative Party, and my dad was a Conservative who believed in the free market.

Friends can be described as the driving force, and a friend in need is a friend indeed. The driving force is friendship, which can carry you forward. You need to know who your friends are. Dad said there are lots of people who want to be friends with you. ‘Please,’ he said, ‘accommodate them, support them and help them, whether they are communities, charities, companies or individuals that want to be friends with you. But you have got to choose who you want to be friends with. The people that you want to be friends with are those you can learn from, and those who will support and challenge rather than continuously agree with you.’

That always stayed in my mind. Dad highlighted the importance of being a friend to everybody; doing the best you can, helping everyone unconditionally, without expectations. But if someone asks you who your friends are, you need to be careful in choosing those friends.

I am 50 this year and, to be perfectly honest, I did not appreciate this when I was younger. I was friends with everybody. But now, on reflection, I look back and I have met so many people. In my first 20 years in Sri Lanka, I met some great friends and some friends that my parents did not approve of. Over the years, this has been a great learning curve for me. There are some friendships that have blossomed into huge, true friendships over the past 30 years, as well as friends that today I would define more as companions.

True friends are those that stand by you in your darkest hours. They are not just there for the fun and laughter, but also they are there for the support and challenge. Now, understanding the laws of nature, I see that you actually attract those in your frequency and if you are on the right frequency, you attract the right friends. If you are not attracting the right friends in life, you only need to believe that the frequency is different and move on. With increasing awareness, you will move up the ladder of your frequency and you can see things better. ‘The higher you go,’ Dad used to say, ‘it is less crowded and you can see things better because the air is fresh and the view is clear.’

Coming back to the UK, this wonderful nation is for me and my family – my mum and dad, Tharshiny and the girls, a best friend. Since coming here, we have made some great friends. This country gave us everything. When I came here as a student 30 years ago, this country gave me asylum seeker and then refugee status. For that I am incredibly grateful, and so if somebody asks me who my best friend is, I say the United Kingdom. It is not just me that is grateful, but my entire generation and my entire family. In the last 30 years, since Tharshiny and I met here as two Sri Lankan refugees, this country has given us everything. The Pankaj family is definitely a friend of the United Kingdom.

Our girls have heard what we have been through and what this country has given us. It will not stop with our generation; it is absolutely channelling down. My girls take this country as their home and their patriotic values mean they will do everything for this country and in the national interest. I always want to emphasise that Dad himself said he was a friend of the United Kingdom. Dad studied with the British

before independence in 1948. He remembered independence and had his own views on whether Sri Lanka should have had independence or not, but he had so much respect for the British, as did my mum.

Going back to friendship as the driving force, Dad always said that power is essential for success in any form. Plans are important, but without sufficient power, plans cannot be put into action. I am not talking about power in the context of political power. ‘Power can be defined as organised and intelligently directed knowledge,’ Hill said. Power refers to organised effort, sufficient to enable an individual to transmit desire.

Hill wrote that organised effort is produced through the coordination of effort of two or more people, so that is where the friendship comes in, when those people work towards a definite end in a spirit of harmony. It is not just friendship between one human being and another, but can be at different levels, as I have set out before. Hill believed that Power is required for the accumulation of success and necessary for the retention of that success after it has been accumulated.

Let us consider how power can be acquired if power is organised knowledge. Let us examine sources of knowledge. Dad talked about infinite intelligence and how this source of knowledge might be attracted through the procedure described by the creative imagination, which is a concept that Hill talked about. So, you have creative imagination in a small percentage of people who are able to do that. But most of the population works on this accumulated experience, or our environmental experience. The accumulated experience of

humans may be found in any society – in the field of science and in practically every other walk of life; humans are gathering, classifying and organising new facts daily.

Dad talked about knowledge being acquired from any of these sources. It may be converted into power by organising it into definite plans and moving those plans forward through action. Action is absolutely essential; with no action, everything is a complete waste of time, he said.

Examination of these ideas is incredibly important. These are ideas that came from Hill, but which Dad often shared. Dad talked about the right friendship group – both human friendships and organisation to organisation friendship groups.

Dad came to the UK in 1994, Mum in 1992, and I in 1990. I met Tharshiny in 1996 and we will have been married 25 years in 2021. For the first two years, while we were engaged, we did not live together and then in 1998, under the Tamil tradition, we formally married. For me, the marriage began the day I met her and said I was going to be her partner forever. So that is going to be 25 years next year.

Life carried on, and in 2000, Mum and Dad were living their own life and Tharshiny was in the second year of doing her degree. I was the main breadwinner and Mum and Dad had their house and we had ours. We had a fantastic time and those wonderful evenings and dinners cannot be forgotten.

We were living hand to mouth, we spent what we earned. So, I needed to get an extra income while I was studying for my MBA. I was so grateful that my company, Prudential Financial Inc, sponsored me,

because I would not have had the money to do an MBA, just as I didn't have the money to do my undergraduate degree in 1990.

I came to the United Kingdom with £100 because that was all that my father could afford to give me at the time. As a refugee working for my pound in this country, I could not have paid to do an MBA. So, we needed extra money and I told Tharshiny I would go and get a Saturday job. I have never, in my 30 years of living in this country, taken any money from the government. I came as a student and took refugee status because the situation in Sri Lanka made it impossible for me to go back. My parents were pensioners when they came here and were looked after incredibly well by this country, particularly my mother who benefited a great deal from the wonderful NHS when she had heart problems. Dad, on the other hand, never went to hospital in his life until he left us in 2006.

I said to Tharshiny that we needed extra money; our credit card bills were stacking up. I saw an advert that said, 'Tutors needed.' I remember that day, early 2000 I believe, when Tharshiny was cooking and I decided I wanted to apply to teach accounting. I was a qualified accountant doing my MBA. She told me to go for it. The rest is history. I studied and I taught. I took all the books I could think of with me in the back of the car and I went to a place in Hendon and I taught. That was in 2000, and that first £20 I earned was spent on much-needed shopping the next day. And now, here we are, and our Regent Group business is on a journey to become a UK university very soon.

My parents valued their friendships enormously and my mum, in particular, had some great friends. One of her oldest friends was Miss Appleby, who she met when she was a young girl in Sri Lanka. Miss

Appleby was a missionary helping Sri Lanka to build and she stayed even after independence. There were so many British people who stayed in Sri Lanka to rebuild the country; Mum had some fantastic friends, as did we all.

Turning to my wife, Tharshiny, she is the most wonderful woman I have ever met, and my father was incredibly supportive of our relationship. Without Tharshiny, I would not be here. She has been with me through various things in my life and, while we are talking about friends, Tharshiny is my best friend. Obviously, my mum and dad and my girls are also my best friends. But today, with my dad not here, if I look back at the driving force, there is only one lady, and that is Tharshiny Pankaj.

Friendship is absolutely essential, whether it is with your wife or, for Regent Group, with our partners. We have some fantastic university partners, the University of Bolton in particular, and Professor George Holmes, who is taking us on this wonderful journey to university status.

Gaining power through this friendship group may be defined as a coordination of knowledge and effort in a spirit of harmony between two or more people for the attainment of a definite purpose. Hill wrote about these ideas as *Power of the Mastermind*, but Dad used the word friendship instead of mastermind. Dad said that when you have people around you who are equally passionate about what you want to achieve, they stimulate your ideas. Those people may not give you the answers, because they can only give opinions, but by talking with them you will formulate new ideas to take your own action. There is a fine line between advice, opinion and your own action; that is your own wisdom, or sixth sense.

Our definite purpose now is the creation of a UK university and with UK and US degree awarding powers. As individuals we do not have great power to achieve such a purpose, we need friendship groups.

Let us understand, these friendship groups are intangible, you cannot see them. You might have conversations, but you do not see them. These friendship groups can give you economic success or success in your human potential development. ‘There is obvious economic advantage if a person surrounds himself with advice, counsel and the cooperation of a group of human beings who are willing to lend themselves wholeheartedly to his endeavour,’ Hill said.

And Dad used to say that these forms of cooperation and alliance are at the heart of every great success story in history. Understanding this great trick will determine our success and fulfilment in life. But there is also another piece that is equally important. Economics without a balanced life has no value because you will not be happy.

Dad said no two minds ever come together without creating a third invisible force or intangible force that may be linked with a third mind. He also said that if two people get together, they can create more. This is an idea from Hill. I think Tharshiny and I are a typical example of this. We are incredibly different people – she is disciplined and can do pretty much anything she wants if she puts her mind to it. I am pretty much the opposite; I do not think I am disciplined, but I am beginning to learn. Whatever she says she wants to achieve, Tharshiny just does it. You only need look at where she was 20 years ago and look at her now, she is an athlete – she is an absolutely phenomenal figure who is able to achieve whatever she wants to achieve. She just has to decide what she wants to achieve; I am trying to learn from her.

Keep in mind the fact that there are only two elements in the universe – energy and matter. It is a well-known fact that matter can be broken down into millions of different molecules, atoms, or electrons. There are units of matter that may be isolated. Likewise, there are elements of energy too. The human mind is a form of energy, that is the bit I did not always understand.

Dad talked about how, if the minds of two people are coordinated in the spirit of harmony, a form of energy in each of their minds forms an affinity that constitutes a huge friendship. That is the definition of friendship – the harmony that you bring in. I think the friendship of families is something even greater. Dad said that if that harmony is there, you are friends – as an individual, as a family, as a company, as a country, or as a community. Your friends are your group. If your partner is one of your friends, then you are in harmony.

These friendship principles, or rather the economic feature of them, were first observed by the great thinkers in the 18th and 19th centuries. Hill wrote about them, and so did others. Hill said that nature's building blocks are available to humans, but there is energy involved in thinking. Our brain may be compared to an electric battery, he said.

We absorb energy, which then provides power, a driving force. It is a well-known fact that a group of electric batteries will provide more energy than a single battery. It is also a well-known fact that an individual battery will provide energy in proportion to the number and capacity of the cells it contains. The brain functions in a similar fashion. He said this accounts for the fact that some brains are more

efficient than others and leads to the significant statement that a group of brains coordinated in a spirit of harmony will provide more thought energy than a single brain. The group of electric batteries provides more energy than a single battery.

Through this metaphor of Hill's, it becomes immediately obvious that friendship groups are powerful. These mental powers are difficult to understand but, once you do understand, it can bring you great success. My dad had huge admiration for Mahatma Gandhi, as have I, and I have already mentioned him on numerous occasions. Many people think of Gandhi as an eccentric who wore basic clothing and made trouble for the British government. Our beloved Winston Churchill called him a half-naked fakir. Our prime minister Boris Johnson wrote about this in his book *The Churchill Factor*. In reality, Gandhi was not eccentric, but he was the most powerful man who ever challenged the British Empire.

So, where is the power? He had the power within his friendship group. Gandhi accomplished something unbelievable because he had the spirit of harmony for a limitless task. If you doubt that something is achievable, try to use one or two more people to cooperate in the spirit of harmony. Gandhi did it with 200 million people; that is the power of friendship.

Every man or woman who manages a business knows how difficult it is to get your team to work together in a spirit even remotely resembling harmony. 'The list of chief sources from which power may be attained is headed by intelligence,' Hill wrote. Another source of knowledge and accumulation of power is religion, and this book is

not a course on religion, I like to emphasise this wholeheartedly. No fundamental religion was described in the ideas that Dad passed on. This book is concerned with instructing the reader on how to transmute the definite purpose of the desire for success into success. That is what we are talking about, just as Hill was talking about the same themes, and others have done since. Dad said, ‘Read, think, reflect and then internalise, but especially read. Soon the entire subject will unfold, and you will see it in perspective.’

Success is shy and illusive, and the process of wooing success can be compared, and is not greatly different, from that used in wooing a woman that you love, Hill said. Power, to be successfully used in the pursuit of success, must be mixed with faith, desire and persistence, and it must be applied through a plan that must be set into action.

He wrote that every man or woman who has accumulated great success has recognised the existence of this stream of light that consists of one’s thinking process and the positive emotions of thoughts from the side of the stream that carries one to success and to that goal. ‘The negative emotions on the other side of the stream carry one down to the area where none of us wants to end up,’ he said.

Anyone can wish for success and most people do. If only a few more had a definite plan with a burning desire for success, for that is the only dependable means of achieving success, there would be more success, Hill wrote.

Dad, thank you for really explaining to me what friendship is, and for sharing these teachings. I have lots of companions, but when we talk of friends, the word has a specific meaning. I now understand that

if I am in the right frequency, I will attract the right people, just as a magnet can only attract metal and cannot attract rubbers. I like to be friends with everyone; I have lots of wonderful companions, and many true friends who offer support, challenge and that unconditional love.

Dad always said good friends are hard to come by, but when you have them, preserve them and respect them. There are examples in my past 30 years, when there have been ups and downs, where I have really relied and drawn on good friendships. Humans go through different phases, especially when starting life from scratch in a new country, when attractions change, and true friendships are built.

I now know in my own mind what the definition of friendship is. Dad, I can tell you, was my good buddy. He is not here, but I am enjoying time when we are not together, and particularly I am enjoying a Black Label that Dad and I used to have. He also left me with an exceptionally good friend indeed, and that is my lovely wife Tharshiny Pankaj.