

Transcript of Podcast featuring Nazia Tasleem

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Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Hi, I'm Vish Gopalakrishnan, and this is the Manageable Podcast where we have in-depth conversations with students, faculty, staff and alumni to give you a comprehensive picture into the life at University at Buffalo's School of Management.

In today's episode, we speak with Nazia Tasleem, a student in UB's full-time MBA program from Madhya Pradesh, India.

In our conversation, we talk about her passion for consulting, past work experience, and how the UB full-time MBA program is an ideal fit for experienced professionals looking to further their education.

Nazia, welcome to the show.

Nazia Tasleem:

Thank you so much, Vish, for having me. It's a pleasure to be here.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Yeah, I'm glad to have you and I'm so glad that we are finally able to get to this. I know we've been trying to make this happen for a while.

Now, in our research for this, I didn't realize that you were from the same part of India that I was originally from.

Now that you have almost completed two years in Buffalo, what did you miss the most about your home during your time here?

Nazia Tasleem:

Oh, my God. So you are from Madhya Pradesh, too?

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Yeah, I'm actually, I think, pretty close to where you are from.

Nazia Tasleem:

That is amazing, Vish. So that goes without saying, right? Both of us are missing our poha and jalebi, because that is a staple breakfast.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Right, for those listeners who don't know, poha is a rice-based dish. It's a breakfast food. And jalebi is a sweet, kind of like a... I don't know how to describe a jalebi. It's basically sugar syrup that should be fried, and it's delicious, and ...

Nazia Tasleem:

It's a delicacy. Yeah.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Now I don't have the cooking skills to actually make it myself, but oh my goodness, I wish I did.

Nazia Tasleem:

You're always welcome at my place, Vish. I've learned to cook a little bit from the time I have moved here, and I think I've been able to better myself over the time, so you're more than welcome. I'll be happy to make some poha and jalebi for you.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Okay, so poha and jalebi. Food in general, obviously. What else?

Nazia Tasleem:

So of course you know the flora and fauna is pretty different in both the countries.

Being an asthmatic, I love being in Buffalo. I can breathe so much better, but of course I miss family, friends, the street food, those are the things that make me nostalgic.

But other than that, I think Buffalo is a fantastic place to be. It gives you enough time, especially given the pace of the city, you have enough time to have a look at yourself, introspect, study, think more about your broader vision, goals for the lives. I think it's, all in all, a beautiful experience.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

I'm glad you mentioned the pace of the city. It's interesting, because Buffalo is a big town, 350,000

people. It's not small by American standards, but it feels like a small town, primarily because I think people are nice, and it has a small town feel to it, but it has everything that a big town would have.

You mentioned street food, and now, although Buffalo does have a great Indian and Asian restaurant scene and a bubbling international food scene in general, I know you are an excellent cook, and I have had some of your kick-ass biryani and chicken dishes in the past.

How did this love for cooking start? How did it begin? Why did you start focusing on cooking? And a follow-up on that, what is your favorite Indian restaurant that you've tried in Buffalo?

Nazia Tasleem:

Okay, so I think necessity is the mother of invention. So when I moved here, I realized that I have no other option but to cook, because food for me is therapeutic. I need to have the food that we usually have at home to feel grounded and emotionally stable.

And this is also something that I discovered about my own self here, that I'm a little restless, because I do not get to have that food that gives me satisfaction. So some very light dhal and rice, or some curry or something.

I thought this is something that's going to make me feel a little better, so I started cooking. Not that I did not know how to cook at all, but cooking is an acquired skill. You become better with practice, and hence I started cooking. I did not get a lot of time back at home to learn, because I studied from a boarding school.

But yeah, I got a chance. I started making, and more than anything, it's the people. Everyone was so appreciative of what I cooked, and that gave me a lot of enthusiasm. I was like, "Oh my God, something I'm doing is working, because people seem to love it."

And also, thanks to LeaderCORE, another thing that I discovered about myself is that my love language is food. That is how I express myself.

If I love someone, if I like someone, and if I want to show my affection or respect, I'll cook. So yeah, I think that is how it happened for me. And food in Indian households, as you know, is a big part of our lives. At breakfast we talk about what is it that we're going to have for lunch, and then at lunch we talk about dinner.

So, of course, food is very important.

Buffalo has some amazing restaurants, as you asked. One place that I love the most and which to all our audience here I'd like to suggest, give it a shot, is the Buffalo Little Lamb. And they have this amazing hot pot scene going on, and you have huge screens, sports is playing, and it's an amazing experience. So it's

a must.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

I definitely have to try that. I don't think I've ever been to that place. All this food talk is making me super hungry.

And it's interesting, you mentioned LeaderCORE briefly there.

So just a quick follow-up on that. What is LeaderCORE, and how did the LeaderCORE journey make you discover the fact that your love language is food?

Nazia Tasleem:

Thank you. That's a beautiful question.

So when I was taking a decision to come to UB for MBA, one of the primary reasons why I selected the school was because the LeaderCORE program.

With substantial years of experience that I already have, Vish, I realized that at the end of the day, no matter what your job role is, you will get the required functional skills. If you are delivering, sooner or later, all of us are going to even out in terms of what we deliver, as a deliverable.

However, it is these final things and final nuances that differentiate us from the others at workplace. And these finer things are nothing but these soft skills, behavioral skills. I would also go on to say psychological skills, in terms of how mature are we to be able to understand the other person, his or her thought process, what works for them, how to get the best, not only out of them but out of our own selves as well.

And I knew it, because I already have enough experience to know that if a job requires X, Y, Z functional skills, of course, sooner or later everyone will have it.

I also think I've been fortunate enough to have mentors who've really helped me grow in life. And I realize that it is important to be that change agent or that catalyst in other people's life. So no growth is beautiful unless people grow together. And that's why LeaderCORE.

What's LeaderCORE? It is a program wherein you take a very in depth deep dive into your own self to understand who you are as a person, what works for you, how do you express yourself, what are some of the preconceived notions that you carry? What are some of the inhibitions and the shackles that you need to let go of to be able to be a better person, a better teammate, a better leader, a better citizen, a better human being?

So pretty much about self-awareness and also awareness about what are some of the things that people

value the most and how can we get the best out of them. That's LeaderCORE, in my opinion.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

I don't think I've ever heard a more beautiful and poetic description of LeaderCORE.

Nazia Tasleem:

Oh, thank you.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

It comes up once in a while in these conversations that I have with students, but that is such a wonderful way to describe it, that it's almost like a journey in self-discovery, and they have strategic interventions planned that help you do that. And it's such a great thing that you discovered this wonderful thing about you, and that's the whole point of the program.

So apart from food and the food scene in Buffalo, there's also a lot of other things that the city offers. And one of the things that I like is that it offers a lot of outdoor activities, even during cold winter months. What has been... In the two years that you've spent here, what have been your favorite outdoor things to do in and around Buffalo?

Nazia Tasleem:

So, Vish, Buffalo has a beautiful theater scene going on.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Wow. Okay.

Nazia Tasleem:

Yeah, and if you're someone who's into theater and arts, and also into comedy, you must check out, because something or the other is always playing. I remember last year with two of my friends, we went downtown to attend a live comedy show, and it was amazing.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Right.

Nazia Tasleem:

There was a program, food, laughter, interaction with people. And people at Buffalo are extremely, exceptionally warm and welcoming. So you never feel that you're meeting someone for the first time. So that's how you go on, you know, just ... I think the most beautiful part about Buffalo is you go out, strike a conversation with anyone, irrespective of where you are, and people are more than happy to talk.

So yeah, so those are a few things.

Also, I realize, me being me, I love to explore things, and I'll let you in on a secret.

So I thought, what better way would it be for me to explore the city than to take a chance on the [inaudible 00:10:45]? So I would take the Stampede, go to South campus, go to University Station, get down to the [inaudible 00:10:52] NFTA bus, and I would tell myself, "I'll board the third bus that comes and get down [inaudible 00:10:59]," and so on and so forth.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Oh, that's incredible.

Nazia Tasleem:

And this cool, stupid thing-

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Right, yeah. That's an exciting way to get to know a new city. Yeah.

Nazia Tasleem:

I know this is a little silly, too, but it's like a destiny game, right? You just want to see where does it take you, and this is a silly thing I used to do back in Delhi, too.

But then on a Saturday when you want to just explore, and I think you explore the best when you do not have things planned, just let destiny take you wherever you're supposed to.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Yeah. Again, all your answers today are extremely poetic and well-thought-out. I appreciate that a lot.

I didn't realize that Buffalo had such a burgeoning theater scene. I wish I had discovered that earlier. I love to be outside. I like trekking. It doesn't matter if it's raining or snowing or summertime. I love being outside. So that's certainly something that I like to do.

One thing that may be a little difficult for international students, especially international students, but

it's certainly difficult for a lot of domestic students moving to Buffalo is the weather. It can get pretty damn cold here.

So, speaking of the weather, how was your first experience of a Buffalo Winter?

Nazia Tasleem:

Wow. Well, so there's, again, a memory. I remember the first time it snowed. We were back at home, it was around 7:30 in the evening, and I was thrilled, exhilarated, because the country we come from, especially the part of the country that we come from, it doesn't snow, right?

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Mm-hmm.

Nazia Tasleem:

And it was surreal, so beautiful. I made videos, sent it back home.

And then the whole ... the scene of snowfall in Buffalo changed for me, because it started snowing, and it would snow every day. And how much are you going to enjoy? You have exams.

I remember it was one of our accounting exams, morning at 8:00 AM, and it was snowing real bad, and my hands were stiff, and I'm like, "How am I going to write for this exam?"

So it is that, but you know how it is, right? But you got to learn to embrace the Winters. And I remember some of my Corporate Champions team members were like, "You don't know what is it that's going to hit you. Nazia, when in Game of Thrones they say, "Winter is coming," they're talking about Buffalo." And they were right.

But I think it's beautiful in its own way, especially if you are around a window, just take a minute or two every other day and see how the color changes. Because I think, personally, Buffalo has one of the most beautiful sunsets in the world. It is beautiful, incredible colors. And these colors also keep changing as the weather changes, from orange hues, to purple, to blues, or whatever. So it's really beautiful.

Coping up with it is something which you have to learn, because, again, if you come from a country with a lot of sun, emotionally it can be daunting. It can get a little dark. So you have to understand what is it that keeps you warm, what is it that keeps you happy in terms of surroundings?

So personally what I did is I got some floral curtains to hang in the room. I installed some extra lights, a little bit of color here and there, a dash of color, so that it's not very white and it's not very aggressive. So that is something that worked for me.

And I mean, of course, in India every day we have incense stick being burned, mornings, right?

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Right.

Nazia Tasleem:

And that is primarily also because of our spiritual and religious belief.

But once you are away from home you forget these things. But then again, one thing, very small, is lighting these scented candles, especially during winters. So make yourself a nice cozy environment, colorful, music, have some candles, have some nice hot chocolate or something, right? Because it can get dark and daunting.

Again, like I said, it's your own journey. What works for you is completely unique. Figure it out.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Right. Yeah. I think what works for me is definitely keeping my surroundings bright, so I have a lot of light in my room, and it becomes kind of like my ... I don't think man cave is the right way to say it, but it becomes my sanctuary. It becomes the place that I look forward to go to after a cold outing outside, or going to class. Buffalo winters are absolutely-

Nazia Tasleem:

Vish, I'll just-

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Yeah.

Nazia Tasleem:

Yeah, I also wanted to tell you, do you remember the time when Matt had invited us to his place and he had this amazing cider drink, like apple cider, the hot one? Oh my God.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Right.

Nazia Tasleem:

Oh my God.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

I don't remember who made that, but it was absolutely delicious. For the listeners who don't know, a little bit of context here, Matt is a friend of ours, another peer in the MBA program. He's a local Buffalo resident. He has a beautiful house here with a gorgeous garden and a backyard and a fire pit.

Nazia Tasleem:

Beautiful.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Oftentimes you'd find after a stressful exam or midterm season, people would head out there on Grand Island and just have a good time. So it definitely helps to have friends who are locals who understand how to handle the winter, and the cider is one great example.

Let's talk a little bit more about your experience in the MBA program. We can talk about Buffalo for hours, for sure.

Nazia Tasleem:

Absolutely.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Especially as someone with excellent prior work experience, let's start with your favorite classes. What have been some of your favorite classes in the program, and why?

Nazia Tasleem:

Wow. So classes which had lots of case studies were the classes that I loved the most, because, like I said, if you have substantial years of experience under your belt, there are few things about business that you can't already understand and concepts that you've already used in life, practically.

So it's very interesting how the case studies are approached and broken down and solved. So I think for me, the classes that I enjoyed the most, of course, one of them was Professor Mayne's OB because it was fun. It was one of the classes all of us looked forward to.

The next one was Operations Management by Professor Suresh Nallan. I think it's an incredible course.

It's incredible, and his style of teaching is also amazing. Another one that I really loved was advertising, because ... You were there in the class with me, right?

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Yeah.

Nazia Tasleem:

Yeah, I loved what the content of the course was, but I also loved that all of us got to work on a live project. So we chose a dying brand and we prepared a campaign to revive it. We literally created an advertisement, and it was just so much fun, and so much learning, because you know how it is, those 10, 15 seconds or 30 seconds of ad takes so much amount of work. So it's beautiful. Yeah.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Yeah, as an industry professional, who came from advertising and marketing, that class for me was a great refresher of the fundamentals of business. We learned a lot about the history of advertising, how the field has evolved. And then at the end we were all allowed to, as you said, create a comprehensive integrated marketing campaign using multiple different sources.

We could create an app if we wanted to, a website if we wanted to, advertisements, print ads. And it was interesting to just see the depth of understanding and the depth of detail with which people came up with creative ideas on solving.

I remember your team did a presentation on Revlon.

Nazia Tasleem:

Yes.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

And the visuals were stunning. I was like, I didn't know we had graphic designers in the program, because it looked professionally made. It looked like it would be seen in a magazine, which was incredible.

Nazia Tasleem:

You are being kind, Vish. I know you- [inaudible 00:19:45].

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

No, it was actually really great, and I'm sure the grades reflected that.

Nazia Tasleem:

Thank you.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

You mentioned having work experience as a seasoned professional before coming and getting an MBA.

Tell us a little bit about your previous professional background, before coming to the MBA.

Nazia Tasleem:

Wow. Yeah, sure. So I started my career pretty young in life. I'd just finished my Master's in Planning and Entrepreneurship, and I joined a technology firm back at home in India. And I was one of the fortunate ones to start my career in the corporate field, which means that I was a part of pre-sales and mergers and acquisitions team, and this was not a very everyday profile that you get into.

But, for me, I was really lucky to get into it and I learned a lot. So from the very first day of my career itself, I learned to look at business in totality.

Because you are doing pre-sales, we had to understand what our organization was offering in terms of services and what is it that the client needed. And that's how you always want to make your bid better than the others, the competitors.

So you develop a lot of understanding, not only of the organization, but also of the industry, competitors, and what are some of the strategic advantages that you have versus the other firms.

And, typically, Indian IT firms give you an experience where you learn a lot, but you end up working really long hours. So I used to work some 14, 16 hours a day, and you will be surprised to know that within just two and a half years of experience there, I had worked on 650 [inaudible 00:21:35] assessment for pre-sales.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Oh, my God. That is a lot.

Nazia Tasleem:

Yeah, that's crazy.

And around 30 mergers and acquisition assessments. So it's huge. So although it's a lot of hard work, it also comes with a lot of learning.

From there, I moved on to joining another telecom firm as a program manager, but my role was much more than just being the program manager, because I was also the solution architect.

I, again, feel very fortunate to have found someone, a leader who believed in me and told me to understand the whole process, and design a program and then implement it. And that's how my journey as a strategy in transformation professional started.

I designed the program, we went live within four months. We had 97.4% coverage and it was huge success. I got India's Spot award for that, and that's how I found the love and passion for consulting.

I saw that this is something that I had created and I implemented it. I could see it happening and it gave me immense satisfaction.

From there on, I moved on to joining a... Thank you... Joining a one of the big four consulting firms. And I think it was the most amazing time of my career so far, because every day I was learning. I'm someone who's very high on life and if I have something new to learn every day, I am happy if you give me a job, which is very, very easy and which is very mundane, I'll be depressed, right?

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Right.

Nazia Tasleem:

So I need to have something to look forward to, to learn, something challenging. And here I was, because each and every team member that I had, my peers, they were amazing, fantastic, well-read.

And that is where I realized that I have this love for technology because I was constantly reading about what is it that is new, and how can I learn, and how can I use that in my solutions?

So I was working for one of the big fours in the internal strategy team, and our team's responsibility was to create a talent strategy which is three or five years ahead of the industry, because this what we were doing in-house, the human capital services would go out in the market and sell those, and get business. So it was imperative that we are a few years ahead of the curve.

So I have worked on over 16 robotics process automation projects, six Salesforce, six, SharePoint, Chatboard, which is very close to my heart, and we named the Chatboard as Delaney. And ClickView and Printing, so on and so forth. So I think some incredible learning there.

Post that I ended up joining a firm wherein I was hired to design a shared services center, but due to

some commercial complications within the organization, they did not have the budget for it. And they wanted me to somehow suddenly lead the region HR, and I had four teams reporting into me. I had to set up a lot, work a lot.

It was fun, but it wasn't my domain. Again, ended up joining a banking firm as associate advisor in strategy and transformation.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

So, that is an extensive work experience, right, that you've done so much, so many different things, 600-plus projects and multiple companies. What made you want to pursue a full-time MBA at this stage in your career?

Because for most people with that kind of extensive background, an executive MBA, or maybe even an online MBA might have made more sense. A full-time MBA is a break from the work. You are in school full-time for two years, obviously, you know, could have on-campus jobs as an international student. Domestic students don't have that limitation, but it's not the same as being a working professional full-time, right?

So what was the impetus for deciding to do a full-time MBA?

Nazia Tasleem:

So I would've done this MBA say five, six years sooner, but my mom was critically ill, and it was a choice for me to be her primary caregiver, and do whatever I could till the end. So it's a little later.

But again,...see, as a person, I know that if I want to do something, I want to give 100% to it. I wanted a full-time immersive MBA experience. I did not just want to touch the ocean by the tip of my fingers and go. No, I wanted to take a whole deep dive, because taking a career break, I know it's difficult, but it is important for me, because this was a time that I gave to myself to take a pause, look at where am I right now, envision a journey further, work on my own self in terms of learning certifications, like I said, LeaderCORE.

So I think as a professional, I am, and this is an advice I'd like to tell people every now and then, just pause and reminisce what you've done so far.

Of course, feel proud of it, but also take your time to see if you are going in the right direction. Even if you are, how can you make this journey more worthwhile? Because it's not just about reaching to the apex, but also consciously living even your professional life, you have to live very consciously.

It's not get up in the morning, go to work and come back. Do what you love.

One third of your life is your professional life. You don't want it to be dull and boring and you don't want it to be a burden to you. So I wanted that, I wanted to take these two years, and so I'm happy to share that I've finished my product owner certification. I'm writing my PMP on 15th. I have completed four certifications on sustainability so far.

I'm happy to also share that our LeaderCORE depends, also went through and we got that certification as well and an MBA so I made lots of new friends and learn so much about a new culture.

So what more could you ask for?

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

I love the analogy of, you didn't want to just dip your toes in the ocean. You wanted to take a deep dive and a full-time MBA is the right choice if that's the intent. Those are great motivations. So thanks for sharing those with us.

Now... So you decide that at full-time MBA is the next step. How did you go about selecting the right program for your needs? I know you mentioned LeaderCORE in the past, which is a unique thing to UB, but what were some of the other things that you were considering when selecting the right program?

Nazia Tasleem:

So I literally made an Excel. I assigned weighted averages to the reasons.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Very scientific.

Nazia Tasleem:

I can define the program.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Very consultant-like of you.

Nazia Tasleem:

Yeah, right. What else can you expect? I'm a consultant.

So yeah, so you got to know what your priorities are, what's important to you. For me, it was important to come to a school, which is a state school. The country that I come from, private schools do not hold a

lot of importance. And I'm not saying that it's true for across the globe, but it's something that I had in mind.

Secondly, I wanted to come to a city where wherein I'm not just running, I have time to do a lot of introspection. And most important reason why I chose UB is your value for money and your experience. UB has one of the most seasoned faculty members, our faculty members are doctorates from big universities, come with exceptional experience, especially if you go and look at the marketing faculties, analytics faculties and you'll be stunned. Or for that matter, operations.

I was just going through some of the research that's happening and I think it's incredible.

So of course when you are taking a decision to come to US and get your education, you want to learn from the best. So that was one of the key reasons why I chose UB.

And second is, I mean the kind kind of setup in terms of finances that I have that I had to take some of the student education loan and I did not want to take a loan so humongous upon myself that my whole life just became about returning or paying to the bank, right?

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Yeah.

Nazia Tasleem:

I wanted to choose a school wherein I'm getting the best of education so the money is not being extorted out of me. I think it's one of the best programs in terms of what you pay in terms of fees. It is very affordable for somebody like me. And I think the value that I'm deriving out of investing in this program, I think it is immense.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Yeah.

Nazia Tasleem:

So, I think incredible faculty, amazing opportunities to learn in terms of contests, in terms of Blackstone Launchpad. I think also one of the things that we did not talk about, Vish, In our conversation is the big one that happens in Buffalo, right?

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

No, 43North.

Nazia Tasleem:

43North. Because I think that is also one of the most amazing experiences and we could just see it because we were here at Buffalo, right? And it gives you... It's like a zone wherein you start to think and live out of your comfort zone. So I think those were a few things, and I think of course leader for so everything.

So that Excel that I made, it gave you the maximum number. It was always green on all parameters, and that's why UB.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Highly scientific way of making a choice. Just a quick note on 43North, 43North for our listeners is a local organization that's Buffalo-based. It's not associated with UB, but it is independent organization. It's an independent company that has the stated goal of essentially attracting a lot of entrepreneurs, and new businesses and new ideas in Buffalo, making it the Silicon Valley of the East of the country. That's the objective.

And students get to intern there, students get to work with a lot of startups. I know I'm working with one of the startups that won 43North last year for one of my consulting classes and projects.

Students also get the opportunity to go to the final round and actually see the pitches, and see the judges ask questions.

And for me personally, that was an extremely motivating thing to do in my very first semester. You actually get extra credit for the entrepreneurship class in the MBA program if you go and attend, if you go and network, so highly encourage that because it's a great way to network with the local business community, but also a great way to find internships for your summer between your first and second year.

Nazia Tasleem:

It's like a live Shark Tank, right?

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Right. It's an actual live event. It's televised, it's on YouTube, and it's a pretty big deal and it's one of the primary business activities that take place here. So, highly encourage people to definitely go to that if they get a chance.

Now, I know you didn't just attend classes while here because the whole purpose of coming here was this big great grand plan of self-discovery and journey.

You've also had on-campus jobs and you've been an active student ambassador for the student ambassador program, which is a highly selective program that only selects about 50 students from the incoming cohort across all graduate programs to be the voice of UB.

What tips do you have for students listening to this podcast on how they can manage their time and work life better?

Nazia Tasleem:

So I feel that first semester can get a little daunting, because that's how the program is designed. It's designed in a way to get you into a groove, and then from there on the things become better because you learn to organize yourself and time better.

So it's a little grinding process initially, but have faith and hold on, because things will fall in place eventually. I also wanted an experience of being a teaching assistant or graduate assistant for one of the courses, and I came across an opening, a campus opening on strategic management and I applied for it and got interviewed and got selected.

As far as the time is concerned, you pretty much have the whole calendar in front of you, and these campus gigs that you get, they are pretty flexible apart from the recitation classes that you're taking, reading and all pretty much you do on your own time, whatever works for you weekends or early mornings or late night, whatever suits you the most.

But I think it's not very daunting. If you want to do it would not take a lot of time, but you also learn a lot of things. So from my teaching assistant experience, I learned that American education system is vastly different from that of India, and each has its own merits, demerits, and I don't even want to get into it, but I think the most beautiful part is that you start thinking in those terms. You start respecting, first of all, you start identifying differences and you start respecting different ideologies. And I think that is very, very important.

Also, the course that I was supporting, it was an incredible course. I think it is... I would've, myself, been, if I had an opportunity in my undergrad, I would've taken that. It's amazing because you have cases, and you're pretty much learning what's happening right now in the industry, so you are a part of it. You're not an outsider sitting on the fence and having a look at the game. No, you're pretty much in it.

Yeah. So I think that you manage your time well. I got an internship in the summer to work for one of the firms again, and I was working in the product strategy team and that continued in the second

semester too, the following semester.

So I did not have a campus job that semester, but right now, again, I am the teaching assistant for PMBA classes. Technology and innovation, yeah.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Yeah.

Nazia Tasleem:

So it is interesting.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

It is interesting. And it can get a little difficult, especially the first semester. Professors usually advise students not to have on-campus jobs the first semester because you're just getting bombarded with so much work, but it's not impossible.

And you're an MBA student, so it's expected that you're going to manage your moods, you're going to manage your time and manage yourself. There are tremendous resources available, especially if you have good friends, if you invest in developing close relationships, you're always going to have a support system around you.

It's tough, but it's not an impossible program. And we are both adaptations of that-

Nazia Tasleem:

There's no process of becoming gold, which is easier, right? So I don't know how to translate this in English better, but in India it means that the more the rigorous the process of purification is, the better quality of gold you become. So don't shy away from the process.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Right. Yeah, that's, again, a beautiful way of looking at it.

So we could keep talking about your experience and all the achievements and accolades forever, but I do need to bring this conversation to an end.

So let me ask you, finally, what advice would you have for our listeners who are thinking about applying to UB's full-time MBA program?

Nazia Tasleem:

So I think first of all, you are thinking of doing an MBA itself is something which is amazing, which means that you already are invested in making yourself better, and kudos to you.

Take some time, write down what are your priorities, long-term, in terms of your career, also your personal life, and what are some of the things that you value the most. For you, is it about a brand? Is it about a particular subject? Is it about a faculty? Is it about an additional program like LeaderCORE that matters to you? Or is it that you're looking for a program where then you can get settled in a local Western New York community?

So what are some of the things that matter the most to you? And what are some of the things that will aid you in the long term for your career? Make a grid out of it and also leave some space for emotional reasons, because scientific ways of calculating things, or arriving at decisions, does not mean that you leave the weight out of emotional or psychological reasons. So have them baked in as well. Give them proper weightage too. And see for yourself what works the most.

I would be more than happy to welcome you at UBI if you are someone who has the tenacity, the grit, the resilience, and who has the intent of getting into the process, giving your best.

Trust me when I say this, you will have the support system, the best support system that any school can give you. You will get at UB, starting from all the professors, to peers, to system, to the CRC team who will help you fine-tune your resume and get a opportunity.

So there is a lot that the school has to offer, but again, we are a very warm, close-knit kind of group and we welcome people and it's Buffalo culture, right. You have to be warm and welcoming. So we pretty much welcome you aboard and if you're up for it, reach out to us and we'll be more than happy to assist you.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Great. Nazia, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with us today and sharing your experiences. There's a lot of gems in our conversation that I'm, I'm sure would benefit a lot of our listeners.

If anyone wants to follow your journey, professionally, where can they find you?

Nazia Tasleem:

LinkedIn. So I am on Insta, but I'm not very, very active. I'm pretty passive there, so I think LinkedIn is the best platform. My name is Nazia Tasleem and my email address for LinkedIn is nzia.t, T as in Tennessee,

A-S-L-double E-M@ gmail. So you can find us for LinkedIn.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Great. Thank you.

Nazia Tasleem:

Thank you so much, Vish, for having me. You were an incredible friend, an incredible peer, and I don't think there could have been anyone better to have this conversation with. You're always amazing. Thank you so much.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

I'm grateful and I'm also grateful that we were finally able to do this, so thank you for taking the time.

Nazia Tasleem:

Pleasure. Thank you.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

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Thank you, and we will see you in the next one.