

## S2: E135: Remembering Who You Are and Reclaiming Your Voice

Hello and welcome back. So I am very excited. We are talking to my guest Chanchal Garg today.

Chanchal is a powerhouse. She has a new book coming out and she is also a past client. So I'm very excited to introduce you to her today.

She is a speaker, author, executive coach, and conscious leadership facilitator. Chanchal transforms lives by helping clients break through limiting beliefs and build authentic, liberatory connections. Drawing on her MBA and her lived experiences, she addresses difficult truths directly while fostering environments of openness and collaboration.

For over eight years, Chanchal has facilitated Stanford University's Graduate School of Business' most popular elective course on interpersonal dynamics, impacting over 500 future business leaders. She is also the founder of RealSpace, a thriving coaching practice where she guides leaders to transcend cultural and societal constraints, harnessing their personal power in both work and life. Chanchal wrote, *On Earth, the lies we carry and the truth they bury* as a deeply personal reclamation and as an offering.

Her voice has been featured at events like Lululemon's International Women's Day Gathering and on podcasts such as *She Has the Mic* and *I Don't Give a Should*. Chanchal, thank you so much for being here today. Thank you so much for having me, Tiffany.

Yeah, absolutely. And I'm so excited on so many levels, only because I know your personal story quite well. I've read the book and most of it, at least, and I am just really excited to share, not only your personal story, but just with the women who are listening.

You know, I do have some male clients, but most of all, I work with women and I think empowering stories like you, yours, is so important for us to hear, to know that we're not alone, first of all, in experiences that we may have had, even if it's not the exact same experiences, but also just the wisdom that you bring to the table, but also the vulnerability that you share, and really just how you come to the table at sharing your truth has just been so powerful for me to witness. So as we get started, I would love to talk about the book first. And so it's a memoir, as I mentioned, and it's a moving account of women reclaiming their power, hence you reclaiming your power.

So what inspired you to write *Unearthed*? And then we'll follow up to that question. Yeah. You know, I think it was a couple of things.

When I first started writing the book, I would say I was about maybe eight or nine years into my healing at that point. And so it didn't feel as fresh. It felt, I was just starting to get to that point where this might sound a little weird, but I was almost grateful for the experiences that I've had, because it had turned me into who I was and who I am today.

And I don't think, given the resources, given the upbringing, given everything else I had, I would not have learned how to have my own sense of self, how to be my own person, how to reclaim my culture on my own terms. I would not have learned any of that without these experiences. And so when I looked at that, I was like, okay, well, if that's how I'm feeling, then how do I share that with others? Number one.

Number two, when I look at my own family and my own lineage, I've watched women be silent for generations. And I don't, and because they've been silent, I had these experiences, like if I had known, then I could have potentially avoided it. And so when I look at my children, both my son and my daughter, I want them to know.

I want them to know who I was. I want them to know what I went through. I want them to be able to look at their future and say, how do I learn from our past collectively? And so for that reason as well, I said, I don't want to be quiet about it anymore.

Thank you for sharing. And I think it just takes so much bravery. And I think too, because I obviously help people with branding and their stories and speaking from stage along with the general brand.

I love that you shared. You were at the place that you were starting to feel grateful and comfortable with sharing. Because one thing that I hear is sometimes people have been told, or they think they need to share their story right away.

And it's like, not necessarily. There can be a lot of harm in that. So I'm really glad that you shared about that specifically.

Absolutely. I mean, when it's raw and you're still dealing with it, I mean, I can't imagine sharing at that point, because I don't think I would have been able to completely heal. And the other beautiful thing is, when I got to that point and I started to write and started to share, my healing accelerated.

It was like so many things that are, especially in the ending of the book, the healing portion of the book, happened as I wrote the book. Wow. And so it was almost a catalyst.

I guess I didn't realize that. Yeah, that's so beautiful. It's probably like, I was going to say lethargic.

That's not the right word. Cathartic. In a sense.

Yeah. So, I mean, I don't want to give too much of the book away. Everybody's just going to have to go and buy it.

But you talk about being raised as a dutiful Indian daughter, and that is your heritage for everybody to know. But I think what's so beautiful, too, is obviously there's a lot of that that's specifically your Indian culture, right? But I know I resonate, and I think most women can resonate with it on some level, no matter their culture, because we're all women. But how did that dual cultural identity, being in America, but being this dutiful Indian daughter, shape your early beliefs around like authority, womanhood, belonging, your identity, all of those things? Yeah.

So, you know, when I look back, it's like, as I grew up, people were always choosing my identity for me. Right? I remember, and this is in the, I think it's in chapter two, where I talk about this place where I got this role in a play, but they didn't give it to me because they were scared of my father's response. And so I didn't get the, and it was like a lead role in a musical that I wanted so badly.

And nobody ever even told me until like two months later. And so it's like, and that's just one example of people choosing for me, rather than me choosing. And so what I started to learn was that, you know, I couldn't be my whole self in any one situation.

I had to code switch. I had to show up as whatever my surrounding was. And so it's taken me a long time since to say, okay, how do I choose? And how do I go in unapologetically and make my own choices? And as a child, that can be difficult.

And if you've grown up in a way where those choices were made for you, it can be hard to unlearn that, right? Like there's that story of the elephant where it's got like this chain around its foot as a baby. Have you heard the story? I've heard this. Yes, but it's so good.

Yeah. So this elephant, the baby elephant, they put a chain around its foot so that it knows that it can't go beyond the diameter of how ever far the chain can reach. And when it grows up, they take the chain off, but the elephant still doesn't go beyond that diameter because it can't.

And that's what we do. Absolutely. Yeah.

And it's so powerful to think about those boundaries, but also one thing I've talked about before on the podcast, and I'm not even exactly sure when or where, it doesn't matter, is sort of as women, oftentimes we show up in that chameleon fashion, right? Because we either want to fit in in different places or we're not sure where we fit in or to your point, our choices are made for us. And so we kind of have to navigate of how can I act? Where is it safe to kind of be myself? Where do I have to put on a mask? Even to your point in childhood, but I even remember in corporate, you know, being like in the C-suite mostly with mostly men, I had to act a different way than my true self. I think it hits us as women on so many different levels.

Yeah. I mean, the number of women leaders I talked to who say exactly what you just said, Tiffany, of, you know, like I go in and who I am at work is not who I really am, you know, but I have to behave in that way so that I don't threaten other people. I don't, you know, overstep.

I don't come across as, you know, mean or and a hard to work with woman, right? And so they do all these things and they know exactly what they're doing because they know what they want, which I applaud in many ways. And yet it's like there's a part of us that we're betraying in that process. And so it's really sad.

Yeah, it really is. So some other themes of the book, again, without giving everything away, are around spiritual and sexual abuse. And these are incredibly difficult topics to speak about, especially when it has to do with our faith and culture.

And again, when we're ready, it's it's so I like really applaud you for coming out and speaking about these things, because again, there's so many women and men, but especially women affected. And so we'll a little bit later, I want to talk to you about your own voice and how that came through in the brand that we did together, too. But specifically for the book.

And now as you're speaking about the book on podcasts and things like that, what really gave you that strength, like talked about having the strength and when you're ready, but what gave you that strength to share these experiences publicly? Yeah, so I would say, you know, when I left the spiritual community and this spiritual, so called guru, I had to find my spirituality within myself. And I would say, after years of finding that, because I remember, you know, in those first days, it was kind of like, I felt like I didn't even have legs to stand on. Because all of my faith, all of my belief had been put into this other person.

And then I'll knock down. Exactly, exactly. And so to reclaim that I had to really look within myself and say, Okay, where is my own spirituality? What do I want to lean on? And as that became stronger was when I said, Okay, no, I actually can share this because I'm not, I'm not sacrificing anything of my own.

I remember, you know, my biggest fear was that I was going to betray my own spirituality, which is what stopped me from speaking up for so many years. And so over time, you know, finding that within myself and recognizing it's, it's actually not a betrayal, but it would be a betrayal not to feel very powerful for me, personally. Yeah, that's incredible.

So there's a pivotal moment in the book during yoga class. And I remember too, when we worked on your signature talk, sharing this to when you were pregnant, that really sparked your transformation. So just for ladies who might be resonating with your story with again, not knowing all the details, but just having experiences as women as we do.

Can you take us into that moment? And what actually shifted for you? Yeah, so I was teaching a yoga class. And you know, in my culture, we're often told that you are not your body, right? You are a soul, you're not your body. And while I believe that, I think, you know, I think there's truth in that.

But it can be taken to an extent where it's like, Okay, well, I don't listen to my body. And I don't pay attention to what's going on in here, right. So as I practiced yoga, as I started to become more aware of my body, I used to say, you know, being able to move my pinky toe on command is more than just a party trick, right? It's me inhabiting every inch of my body and being able to listen.

And so when I could start to listen to that, all of a sudden, the messages like something's not right, something's not okay, here, really became began to become clear. And when I was teaching this yoga class, I was telling my class, and this wasn't like, I didn't use to teach like this. But I was telling my class, I'm like, you know, you should really check to see like, is your practice serving you? You know, and if it's not, then maybe you need to find a new practice.

And as I was listening to myself, I'm like, what am I doing? Like, this is my own. My studio, I'm gonna lose business. But yeah, I mean, that was what was coming out just sort of naturally in that class.

And afterwards, I went into the bathroom, and I looked in the mirror. And I had to ask myself, like, is my own practice serving me? And it was like a big sort of, oh, shit moment, to be honest. And I was also pregnant with my daughter at the time.

It felt like she was speaking as well, like, you need to get this stuff under control before I come. You know, she feels to me just, you know, and again, there's a lot of this in the book as well. But she, it very much felt like she was creating a space for me to trust myself to before she was born in motherhood, and beyond.

She continues to do that today. Well, I'm getting chills as I have, you know, my own daughter and bonus daughter daughters. It's so interesting how that just adds another layer to our life.

And I'm sure how grateful you were for that. In that timing, it's so beautiful. So speaking of that, just because we're both mothers, and I know a lot of my listeners are, how has motherhood influenced the journey? Well, again, it's just been like this constant, without her actually saying it, her being like, why don't you trust yourself? You know, she grew up with all these health challenges.

And as I was navigating them, you know, as so many women do, whether it's your own health challenges, or your children, your children's, like you go into the medical system, people don't listen to you. They don't believe you. They, you know, you're challenged at every step of the way.

And that was, that was the case in my story. And as I did that, there were times where I had to tell the doctors, no, I'm not going to do that. Or no, this is not the path, right, advocating for her.

And she always trusted what I was doing. Like there were times where she had to be on extremely restricted diets, at, you know, two, three and four years old. And she never complained, never complained, and was always like, always trusted me, like before she put anything in her mouth.

It was like, Mom, can I, is this okay for me? You know, and not in a way that was fearful, but in a way that was loving and trusting, you know, and she's still, you know, she's, she's learned to do this on her own today, but she's still like, will come to me with some of those things. And so, you know, as these doctors and, you know, other people in our lives were doubting my intuition, she trusted it. And so in that way, I feel like she was like, you know, you can trust yourself.

That's incredible. Yeah, when we can't do it for ourselves, sometimes it's funny how that works, right? It's, we should be able to trust ourselves probably more than anyone else yet. We defer that to other people, but it makes sense since your decisions were made for you as you grew up, you know, but what a gift, like you said, changing that generational patterns is just, yeah, incredible.

So I'd like to shift now more into how you, you know, how this book and how your past has really influenced this personal journey, influenced and shaped the way that you show up as a coach and educator, because it sounds like, again, there's just so much wisdom that you've gotten to the point where you can actually, in a sense, have some gratitude for the hardships, not only for yourself, but also so you can serve other people. Yeah, I, you know, when I look at my work as a coach, as a facilitator, as any of that, I think the biggest thing that I really want

people to know is that the best wisdom, the best truth that you'll ever find is the one within you. And so I would say my job, the way I see my job as a coach, as a facilitator, as any of those things is to really be a mirror, to say you've got what it is.

I don't have the answers. Nobody else has the answers. You've got to find them for yourself.

And so I would say that's probably the biggest way that it's shifted my journey. And then beyond that, really just looking at my own sort of path to getting where I am today, right? Like, you know, through my framework of the Unearthed Power Matrix with identity, language, and embodiment, really learning how those three things have shaped my journey to really get aligned with my own values, first finding my values, choosing my own identity, and then aligning them with the language and embodiment has been so helpful. And so in that way, I use that framework with clients as well.

Amazing. And so one more question around that lines, but a little bit deeper because, you know, we talked about how just experiences in our lives affect women in general, but specifically as a woman of color. But I feel like this applies to all women who are abused, but, you know, it's obviously even more so in immigrant communities and things like that.

Speaking up against abuse can feel impossible. So I know this is a big part of your mission. And then I want to go into like the branding process a little bit more than tell everyone how, you know, what type of work you do and how they can get involved.

But I do want to mention this because I think it's so important. I just was on a workshop earlier teaching about purpose and like why our purpose and our mission is really what should drive a brand. Yes, we're in, you know, business, we're in business to make an impact, to make an income and to serve others.

And we always say that, but I feel like when we come back to the deep purpose, that's really what it's all about. And that's what can fuel us. And so I'm kind of, you know, putting this on you as like, this is your deep mission and purpose, but I'm sure it's at least part of it, especially the work we've done together.

What message do you hope the story specifically of the book sends to these women, all women, but specifically women of power? And how does that tie into your purpose? Yeah, I would just say that like your power. So this isn't my quote, but one of my dear friends, Sheila Warren, when we were talking about my book, she was telling me about this experience she had and this phrase came to her and she said, my power is not, oh my gosh, I'm forgetting the word now, but basically I don't get my power from somewhere else. Right.

And it was such a big thing because when we look at like, even as leaders, we go into this place and we're like, oh, I'm on this platform now. Oh, I'm on, you know, this podcast or I'm on this stage and therefore now I've made it right. Right.

Or now I'm powerful or now I am, I have, you know, credibility or whatever. You have credibility no matter what. Yeah.

Right. It doesn't matter what stage you're on. You've lived your life that gives you credibility in your own experience and nobody can challenge your experience.

I don't care who they are. And so I think that's the big thing. Like, don't doubt your own experience.

Don't doubt your own wisdom. Go out in the world and lead with that because you know, there's, there's so many myths out there around what truth is and where it comes from. And it's not all true, you know? So I would say that's the thing, right? Like, just trust yourself.

You know what you're doing. And, and honestly, like, look at our world. If all the other stuff was working, we wouldn't be where we are right now.

A hundred percent. And that's, I love that because, you know, empowering women to not only trust themselves, but to use their voice is so important more than ever right now, because we're not headed in the right direction, but I truly believe that, you know, women with powerful voices, we are going to be the change. I mean, it's, there's no doubt in my mind.

So I love that it comes back to that, that trust again, but then also using the voice because you can trust yourself, but if you're not putting yourself out there to share either, then it's not going to really change anything. Yeah, the world needs you. Yeah, absolutely.

So then I'd love to just move into our work together a little bit because I had the honor and the pleasure of, obviously you already had, you know, real space, your company, you've already been doing amazing work with Stanford. And really the goal was to brand the book. And then how does that tie in with the full brand? Right.

And so obviously you had a publishing team and things like that, like that we're working on that side. So just from that perspective, I'd love to hear how that supported you. I love, you know, at the beginning we were talking about the identity piece and I, I always come back to like identity and voice are such a big part of our brand too, because if you don't know your identity and you can't nail down your voice, then it's hard to really speak in a way that's magnetic and that makes sense and attracts people, which is, I always say like make your message a movement.



So yeah, I'd love for you to just share with the audience your experience during that process. Yeah. I think one of the things you said and you say all the time that just always sat with me and made me exhale was when you said you can't see your message from inside the bottle because I'm someone who wants to go out there and say, choose your identity, like know what, know who you are and you know, all this.

And I couldn't see that for myself as a coach. Isn't that the funny thing? Same with myself. Yeah.

And I couldn't see it. And there was a lot of like self-criticism around that for me, because it's like, I teach this stuff. How could I not know it? And so to work with you and have you reflect that back to me was just so powerful and also so, I felt so much relief in that.

Right. And then beyond that, right, like your process is so, it's not cookie cutter. You know what I mean? Like it's really tailored to the client is what, how I experienced it.

And so I felt like as you were trying to identify my voice to do my website, to do all these things, to create my brand manual, I was discovering it as well. And so it helped me like, you know, after you and I worked together to create my brand manual, it's like, yes, you went off to create my website, but then I was like, oh my gosh, now I can do my landing pages. I can do this.

I can do that. And I came back to you with all this stuff because I'm like, okay, I've got my voice. Right.

And so I think, you know, in many ways, just the way that I like to work too, I like to work with people who are empowering. And that's what I got from you. Right.

Like you empowered me to use my own voice, to identify my own voice. And it just, it felt so clear. It felt so clear.

Well, thank you for sharing. And that's my, one of my favorite things to do. I always say, you know, I can't really change the world of being a brand strategist necessarily, but the way I can is empowering other people.

And again, I love working with everyone, but specifically powerful women like yourself with a really powerful story that can make a difference in the world, not only the story, which I know is already impacting and going to impact so many women, but also the work that you're doing. It's funny because it's kind of similar in a way, but it's very, very different, right? Like the coaching that you do, and then I'm doing it in the same lens, but it's branding. So it's just, it's just been so special to work with you.

So thank you for the opportunity. All right. So as we start to wrap up here, everyone, definitely let's talk a little bit about, obviously they can go to the website.

We'll have that linked below [chanchalgarg.com](http://chanchalgarg.com). I won't spell it here. Just like scroll down and you can link right there. And yes, we built the beautiful site for her.

So check that out. I know you're also on Instagram and as chanchal underscore unearthed and LinkedIn, they can just search your name. We'll put those links below as well.

And then tell us a little bit more about the work that you're doing, the best place to find the book, and then the program that you're starting soon, if they're interested in really getting support. Yep, absolutely. So the book is available everywhere books are sold.

Barnes and Noble, all the bookstores, indie bookstores, as well as Amazon. In terms of the program, so we do have a program starting mid-September called Leading Between Worlds. And this is a three-month online program that is going to be focused on embodiment, identity, and language.

And it is for women leaders who are looking to be able to bring them their whole selves to their leadership. So often what I hear from women is that, I have to show up in a certain way. We talked about this just a couple of minutes ago.

And so it's like, well, how do you not abandon any part of yourself? And that doesn't mean that you're always showing up as a lion, right? It means that you're picking and choosing, but you're not betraying any other parts of you in that process. And so we go into a really in-depth process around, are you aware of what you're choosing your identity to be as you show up in the world? And then how are you using your language? What is the embodiment of that not only look like, but feel like for you, right? How do you want to feel when you go into these rooms? And it's amazing because in this quiz that I have that I know you'll link as well, so many people are like, I'm fine with silence. And you'll know what that is as you go through the quiz.

This idea of being able to be okay with silence. So many of us have learned to be okay with it, but we don't recognize that when we're in those moments, when we are silent, our body is tensing, right? What does that feel like to be silent? It's like, yeah, we've learned cognitively to do things, but how are we experiencing them? And so this program goes into a lot of depth around not only how are we showing up, but what we feel like internally so that we can, again, bring our whole selves to our leadership and change the world, honestly. So beautiful.

Yeah, so we will definitely, first step probably would be quiz, the book, make sure to take those. And then definitely if you feel called, Chenchao is amazing at what she does. So definitely check that out as well.

And thank you again, just for being here, for sharing your story, for being brave to do that. I know it's not easy and it's just such a good, for anybody listening, if you've been afraid to share your story.