

Summary Report

Making the Difference: Finding the Soul of Our Organisation

A residential seminar for people who work within
offender management

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HELD AT

The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University

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Address: by Ms. Loretta Jacobus, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Correctional Services, South Africa

The Minister provided an overview of the Correctional Services policy in South Africa, explaining the paradigm shift in recent years.

“There are many reasons why there are high rates of crime in South Africa and the Correctional Services see themselves as a positive element in making a difference.

The core business and sole mandate is the safe and secure custody of offenders, including keeping them in humane conditions.”

The minister quoted President Mbeki’s 2004 state of the country address.

‘For too long our country contained within it and represented much that is ugly and repulsive in human society. It was a place in which to be born black was to inherit a lifelong curse. It was a place in which to be born white was to carry a permanent burden of fear and hidden rage. It was a place in which to live in some places was to invite others to prey on you or to condemn oneself to prey on others. It guaranteed neighbours who could not but fall victim to alcohol or drug stupors that would dull the pain of living, who knew that their lives would not be normal, without murder in their midst and rape and brutal personal wars, without a cause’

Traditionally, prisons in South Africa have been the tail end of the criminal justice system; passive recipients of offenders, concerned only with locking them up for the protection of society. There used to be a culture of brutality, gang violence, and retribution, particularly in the pre-democracy era.

“There have been changes to that culture in attempting to make a difference to the lives of those we care for.”

With the advent of democracy in 1994, there were numerous legislative and policy changes, including a constitution and a bill of rights that enshrines dignity for all, including offenders.

“This new paradigm places rehabilitation and reintegration into the community at the centre, focusing on needs-based interventions and moving away from simple retribution.”

These measures have already shown an increase in successful parole applications and non custodial diversions, particularly for young people, a reduction in time spans before trial,

and a significant reduction in violence in institutions.

“There is an understanding that there are grave issues to be addressed generally in society and that the advance of this new rehabilitative way of seeing Corrections is a part of a moral regeneration across many fronts to both address and prevent crime.

One part of that involves bringing in to juvenile facilities, young people who are able to say how good life is ‘out there’ while allowing offenders into schools to illustrate that crime does not pay at all.”

There is also a new emphasis on community and restorative justice in preventing crime.

“This is a reawakening of the traditional ways of African people dealt with offenders in their own communities.

There are many challenges to overcome. One is the simple physicality of the prison structures, never designed for any rehabilitation purposes but to simply incarcerate. They lack education and vocational areas; there is no space for prayer or counselling, or mothers with their babies - just rows of cells. This requires us to build new centres, taking finance and time.”

There is a shortage of skills in the system to take this forward. This is not about simply bringing in a group of ‘super rehabilitators’ but to develop those who currently work in the centres to be rehabilitators. However, at present, their mindset is such that they don’t really understand the paradigm shift.

“Changing that culture is a long, hard struggle. These are the most important people in the change process but their morale is so incredibly low; the conditions they work in are terrible. It is not a career young people generally choose but is seen as a career for poorly educated people who cannot do anything else. Changing that view is very difficult. We are working hard to increase the recognition for prison staff.

We have had our new democracy for over twenty years but some people still hold the views they had then. That is difficult to challenge. Changing the language and mindset of people is a constant process of education: the previous regime, under the

Department of Prisons, was very military based; we now have the Department of Corrections.

It is hard to change a view that sees that many of those who get incarcerated become the best educated people, particularly regarding the Constitution. They can quote sections of the Bill of Rights saying 'I am entitled to this or that' but they don't mention the rights of citizens not be violated by themselves. It is difficult to keep a balance.

Provision of Health Care is another difficult and ongoing issue within corrections. We want to offer basic healthcare to all to take forward our commitment to treating offenders humanely.

Irrespective of the difficulties described and many others, we are still on course to create a justice system that cares both for victims and for perpetrators of crime alike. Our slogan is 'Correctional Services: A Place of New Beginnings.' We want staff to be a part of that, to show they can make a difference."

The Minister took questions:

Question: What about women prisoners?

"There is a small but growing population. A worrying trend is the number who have either killed their spouse for insurance money or have killed within abusive relationships.

In prison, mothers are allowed to keep their children with them up to the age of five years. We try to place them with families or foster parents before that time. We are discussing bringing the age down."

Question: At what age are young people held in custody and what interventions are there?

"Up to 18 you are a juvenile. The Constitution says children cannot be held in custody but some have committed serious crimes. Our youngest is 13 years old; he is in for murder. We are trying to identify secure facilities outside of prisons for such children, and to offer education and courses."

Question: What can you leave us with?

"All of the issues discussed can be arrested by the good use of crime prevention initiatives; to work with young people before they get arrested or enter prison. If we do not do that we will continue to need to recruit more police and prison staff; we will continue to have large prisoner populations.

We also need to offer people access to services: a decent house, running water, basic services. We need lights in all the streets. By improving the living conditions of people we are raising their dignity and their respect for themselves and those around them. These measures all contribute to crime prevention."

Finding the Soul of Our Organisation,
Mike George, Author and International Management Consultant

Mike asked people to consider 'what is the soul of an organisation' and how they would describe that soul? Also, In reflecting on this to consider (i) how you see it? (we filter this through our beliefs) (ii) how it really is? (how we hear other people talk about it) and (iii) how it could be? (the measure of our desire for it to happen.)

"Is the soul of the organisation not just a collective psyche of the individuals within the organisation? What you're describing in is what is visible; the way we do things around here or, in other words, the culture."

Mike then described the trail from the soul of an organisation to its culture.

"At the human level, the soul is equivalent to consciousness. A part of consciousness are one's values; that which we care about most at any given moment in time. Values, in turn, shape our attitudes, and we have an attitude towards everything! Finally, attitude shapes our actions and behaviours: our culture.

This trail reflects the fact that we live from inside out."

Mike shared a personal perspective on the connectivity between each of the components in this trail.

"Absolutely everything around us changes whether it is relationships, thoughts feelings, emotions, beliefs, or the world. What never changes is the one who observes all of this; the self, the soul, the 'I' of 'I am.' That which never changes' is described as truth."

From truth come the core values, the soul's innate values of peace and love.

"The deepest values of the soul are not realised until we stop and look inside. When you are at real peace you act with love and

experience contentment: the deepest form of happiness.”

Values shape attitude so the value of peace creates an attitude acceptance and while love creates an attitude of care and respect.

“In the ideal world we would see truth aligned directly to culture and these values would shape our attitudes; we would see respectful, caring, giving people. This would be the currency of our conversations.”

When we don't experience such an ideal it is usually because our values have become lost and replaced with beliefs: that which I think or have been taught to think is correct.

“When we lose our connectedness to truth and the core values of peace and love, (conditioned) beliefs are created. These then shape our actions and create culture.

For example, we believe that to find peace we need relaxation. At the end of a busy day, in order to relax we watch TV. As this is really stimulation, we are deceiving our self.

Further, we believe that love has to be acquired, that it comes from outside, as in romantic love. Equally, happiness equates with excitement. No! Excitement is what happens to water in a kettle – it is agitation!”

The belief that the source of these things is outside of oneself, the rest of one's life will be spent searching for something.

“This is the culture of addiction. Do you see this in your organisation? ‘Other people make me feel...’ Are they responsible for my happiness? ‘If they don't do ...’. Are they responsible for my peace?

Continue to ask yourself, ‘Am I anchored in a story (a set of beliefs) or my truth?’ Someone who is grounded in their truth can handle anything, any situation of adversity, and remain unaffected. They will be in their state of peace and love.”

As we do the right thing, our core values become our virtue and manifest in our actions and behaviours. To release this seed of truth I have to remove the baggage of my mis-beliefs and to return to the original.

Mike asked, *“What does this insight mean to my capacity to make a difference and the manner by which I achieve this?”*

Audience responses:

- To be of positive influence I have to get rid of the belief that I can control someone else and to accept people as they are. I have to drop my ‘story’ (beliefs) of other people.

- Just one or two people within the organisation can bring about change.

- We have no control over what has gone before. We only have control over my part here and now and what we do from now on.

- I'm not able to care for others or alleviate their suffering if my state of consciousness is ‘suffering.’

Question: If I am at peace here and now, how can I extend that and contribute to others who are not experiencing that?

“To ask that question means that you are not in the present but wishing for something for the future! If you are fully present in everything you do will be your contribution. How powerful that is will depend on how present you are! Also, the more present you are the more ‘attractive’ you become. It is then more likely you will be called into a situation to make a contribution as opposed to the ego saying ‘how can I fix this?’ Nothing in this world happens by accident!”

Keynote speech:

When You Think You Can't, Know You Can! with Stuart Boreham, Atlantic Oarsman and Motivational Speaker

Stuart was born with cerebral palsy which left him spastic in his lower limbs. What he lacks in strength in his limbs he has made up for in strength of will-power to succeed.

Resume:

- First physically disabled person in the world to row an ocean when he crossed the Atlantic from The Canaries to Barbados. He covered 3341 miles solo, unaided and unassisted in 109 days from November 2003 to March 2004.

- Member of the first yacht crew, made up entirely of members who had a disability or who had overcome from a life-threatening illness to race around the world (in the BT Global Challenge 1996-97 aboard the yacht Time and Tide)

- First person to travel on a working ride-on lawnmower from John O’Groats to Land’s End. This journey, in 1996, raised funds for and awareness of The Time and Tide Trust, a charity that promoted sporting opportunities for those with a disability.

Stuart’s inspirational presentation weaved together the motivation and experiences of these challenges from his unique position of a disabled sportsman. Some of the key learning points are shared here.

“Because of my disability, I experienced a lot of bullying at school. I now see that as a positive thing for I learned self-determination, to stand on my own two feet, and not to expect other people to do things for me all the time.”

Following an accident in his first go-kart race he lost 5 pints of blood, broke his thigh bone in six places, had a steel plate inserted and spent nine months of work. Although open to criticism, his parents are very supportive of encouraging Stuart to follow his own desires.

Having been inspired to inquire about participation in a round the world yacht race, he felt that it would not be possible because of his disability. However, later that year, he saw an advert for disabled people or people who had recovered from a life-threatening illness to make up an entire crew for the race. As Stuart said, *“When you think you can’t do something, know you can!”*

Regarding such a crew in a round the world race, people were very critical saying, *‘It can’t be done. It shouldn’t be done. It’s too dangerous. If some one has an accident they are too far away to be removed from the boat.’* The response from the race organiser was that all crews, regardless of their ability will be in the same position!

In a TV interview, the winning skipper of the previous race, who came into port behind the disabled crew of *Time and Tide* was asked how he felt. *‘My hands hurt; my feet hurt; my whole body hurts but what hurts me most is coming in behind them! (pointing to Time and Tide)*

“This was not said as an insult but in recognition of the achievement. It shows that whether you have a disability or not, everyone has ability within them. It is a question of finding what you want to use as the vehicle for

that ability. The only person who sets the limitations to what you can do is yourself. If you can dream it you can do it.”

Regarding rowing the Atlantic, Stuart spoke of his confidence in his equipment, the support structure, and the planning. Following a rigorous training, what was key was his confidence in his own ability.

“I had absolute inner self belief. If you want something enough, you will achieve it. It is this motivation that enables you to stick at the task, regardless of what comes.”

“My guiding principle was to achieve the crossing solo, unassisted and unsupported. At a point when I was low and feeling vulnerable a yacht came along side and offered various small gifts. My initial response was to restate my principle. I did eventually succumb to their persistence. However, the ice-cream and newspapers they threw to me fell in the water!

The lesson was a valuable one: to always hold onto your values and principles

Managing Our Mind with Maureen Goodman, Programmes Director, Brahma Kumaris (UK)

Referring to Stuart’s journey, Maureen suggested that, *“Making a conscious choice to be alone with ones self and ones thoughts can be an interesting and enriching experience. Our mind needs to be very strong when we are looking at our purpose in life, aligning ourselves with our truth.*

Managing my mind means to understand my mind; to consciously create thoughts where I wish them to go; to our inner resources.”

There exists a strong connection between thought and energy. A state of negativity and worry is associated with an increased number of thoughts and so less available energy while a calm and contented mind generates fewer thoughts so more energy is available.

“To achieve my potential, I need to manage my thoughts. When I recall my past then I am living in the experiences of the past and I begin to think, feel and act in the same way. The patterns of our past thoughts, feelings and attitudes actually bind us to that past experience and it becomes difficult to make

changes and move ahead into new ways of thinking, new attitudes and actions.

To change my thinking is the seed to make profound changes in my life. This also impacts on others for thoughts and feelings create a vibration which in turn affects the atmosphere.”

Question: Why do we have so many thoughts?

Thoughts are mostly in response to the external environment; we see someone or something and it leads to a trail of thoughts. The external world tends to come inside, uninvited. Often this can be associated with confusion and worry: What? How? Why? If it's people who come into our mind, they can dominate, especially if it has been a hurtful interaction.

“What if I explore my thoughts and feelings such that they become so strong they create a positive influence the external?”

‘It is a lack of wisdom to think that the one who praises me is my friend and the one who insults me is my enemy.’ Such phrases help us to become free in our thinking and reveal what it is that my happiness is based upon?”

To make the best use of the scheduled period of silence required some preparation.

Silence is not a time without thought but time to use the mind to uplift both yourself and others; to create good feelings; to create quality thinking that frees me from confusion and stress bringing peace and clarity. Silence allows access to the inner resources.

“If I don't value something I won't be able to use it properly. If I don't value my resources within then I won't use them properly!

A still mind is a mind that is present and so catches the pure intention. It is a mind that has quality thinking: is not racing. It is a mind that is moving in a way that I wish it to.

The world is in constant change. During silence, I can touch that part of me that never changes - the real self? I then touch the original qualities that I share with every single human being – love, peace, truth. This begins to influence my mind, my attitude, and my actions which all become powerful; filled with respect, compassion and truth.

Limitation only exists in the mind.”

Experiences of Silence

We tend to define ourselves according to how other people see us and the roles we play. Each role we play carries an expectation and when we don't see beyond that role, there is a huge obligation to fulfil that expectation.

“When we realise we are greater than the roles we play, we come to the experience of the inner being, the soul: the unchanging essence that informs everything I do. With this understanding I neither feel that I have to prove myself to another person nor feel the need to maintain my self esteem on the basis on having to play that role well.

It is this state that leads to a deep sense of calm, stability, and clarity. I can begin to nurture the self and not be distracted in so many different directions. If I live by the truth of who I am then I can be who I truly am. Truth doesn't need to prove itself.”

Whatever you give your thoughts, time, and energy to, it will increase. If I give time to consider the essence of the self this will become the anchor in my life.

“When faced with anger, of course I have to become involved. If I remain connected to that inner sense of who I am, it is possible to remain free from hate or vengeance. I don't allow that to be violated by the aggression that may be coming to me. I mustn't become the same as the situation but to influence it in a different way. I can then offer something to the other person that helps them to see the possibilities of a way forward.”

Being reactive drains our energy. When we forget our self and react, we forget our values and our dignity. This then requires a lot of energy to repair the situation, perhaps over a long period of time. In this manner we become drained, fatigued or burned out.

“If we give of ourselves without connecting with our inner values and inner beauty, we develop compassion fatigue.”

Silent reflection is the method to create and maintain that sense of separation needed to prevent reaction. This requires the practice of going within on a regular basis, not just in challenging situations. This helps accumulate inner strength providing greater strength than the situation in front of me.

This is the purpose of the Brahma Kumaris *Just-A-Minute* programme.

(www.just-a-minute.org)

“Walking from one room to another, take just a minute to go within; travelling up an escalator, take just a minute; waiting for a bus, take just a minute. Affirm that ‘I am a peaceful being.’ Nurture the self. If you value yourself, you will find these moments.”

Yet another level of thought is elevated thought; those which take me deep into the self and connect me with the divine. Its elevated thoughts that give me power.

In planning something, let do so with a clear mind. To plan in confusion, is not planning in the present but with the mind anchored in the past or the future.

“I sit in silence, focussed within, before giving my mind to the task in hand. For me this will include thinking about God; God as the Ocean of Peace who has given me the experience of this peace. In this way, the right thought will come at the right time and the task is completed very easily.”

Session 4: When I Change, the World Changes with Sister Jayanti, European Director, Brahma Kumaris

In this world, it appears that many things occur randomly.

“Silence is important as it allows us space to make connections. Specifically, we begin to make connections between what is going on inside me and that outside and around me. We find that what goes on inside has a direct impact on what goes on outside.”

Events don't just happen but created. Events, including climate change and other ecological events happen because of people.

“We were in the middle of a cold war in the seventies; in the eighties we had glasnost; today we can see the ice is forming again between east and west. How did that happen?”

The bricks that fell in the Berlin wall were the same bricks that had been there for more than forty years, so why did they suddenly fall. That is because people had changed, and people had made an inner decision, and inner change and the wall was no more.”

How I am inside influences my responses, my interactions and my relationships. When I am calm the world around me is calm, and my responses are considered instead of reactive.

“We know that if we approach someone in a particular way, we can get a particular reaction; there is a blueprint. We can predict an outcome because we know the blueprint. Is there a blueprint of goodness below our present reactions? If so, what sort?”

Between 1988 and 1990, the Brahma Kumaris carried out the largest act of research ever undertaken by an NGO. In a project that became ‘Vision for a Better World’ they asked three main questions. *‘How do you see a better world? How do you see relationships in that better world? How do you see yourself in that better world?’*

“We expected to get a very wide range of answers from the 129 countries involved in the project where the only rule was that only positive language could be used. In reality the vision and hopes of people across the world was summarised in one word: values.”

They spoke of a world of love, of joy, of beauty, of integrity, of justice. From the princes and politicians to the aboriginal colonies in India, leper colonies in the Philippines, shoe shine boys in Brazil, they all shared the same vision. However, a vision without action is only one part of it. What steps can make that vision a reality?

“The shoe shine boys in Brazil, in a country of terrible and increasing violence, shared a vision of a family of street boys in harmony. They decided to make that a reality by ensuring that each member of the family had the tools they needed. If someone ran out of polish or needed new brushes, they would provide them for each other. A group in the Philippines decided not to wait for the Government but built a road to their village.”

To talk of that better world and a better self is to tap into your own original values.

“As is my vision and my attitude so the response I get from the other. If I see you as bad, I put a stamp on that aspect of your personality and you are bad. My vibrations

make it a self creating prophesy. Your reactions will fulfil that prophesy.

How do I change my vision? When I spend time connecting with myself and getting rid of all that external stuff, I find something that is very pure; untouched by the external world. I find the original state of every human being, I find goodness.”

The start of a spiritual and indeed humane approach is to first see the goodness in oneself and then to see this is also true of others around. This is the original blueprint with all the other stuff stripped away.

“Stay connected to your goodness and emerge it from within. I may neither have the information about the other person, nor the time to know the story of every human being around me, but what I can do is find the time to go inside myself, and to connect with the truth and beauty within.

A stone with rough edges can hurt you. However, to smooth off the roughness, you don't have to use force. Rather than a hammer and chisel, expose the rough edges of the stone to flowing water. For my own rough edges, if I take the time to look within, to find silence, am able to transform myself.”

Valuing Myself, workshop led by Craig Brown, GP and *Values in Healthcare* Facilitator

As professionals in a care situation, there is a tendency to do things for others and forget to care about ourselves. In addition, sick staff has implications at an organisational level; financial and efficiency. In the long term, it affects morale and staff retention. It also affects people's families and their work colleagues.

The workshop helped to explore our own self-care but also our need for support, in order that we can introduce positive change and self-renewal in our lives, respect ourselves, and create opportunities for self-discovery.

In recognising our own worth, we are better able to acknowledge the intrinsic worth of others. This leads to mutual respect and harmony in all our relationships. We benefit, our colleagues benefit, our clients benefit; our self-respect

becomes an example to others and in turn earns respect from others.

Some of the areas addressed were:

Caring for Myself. Many people rarely think of how they care for themselves and it can be difficult for them to address their own needs.

Participants were invited to explore ways in which they care for themselves. They were then invited to suggest how the items on their lists could be grouped into areas or themes. One particular grouping was then explored: physical, mental, emotional, social, environmental, and spiritual.

Sources of Support. For those working with offenders, emotional trauma, verbal and physical violence, and tensions can be emotionally draining and spiritually challenging. We can end up 'burnt out', exhausted and of limited help to our colleagues and clients. How do we unburden ourselves and where do we look for support, not only in our jobs but also in our personal lives?

Participants were invited to share experiences of occasions when they were supported at work and when they supported others, identifying the qualities demonstrated. They then identified current gaps in support, identify people who act as personal sources of support in specific situations and develop action plans to improve support.

Making Changes. We do have control over many of the changes in our own life, and can introduce changes which improve our level of well-being.

Before making changes we have to decide what we want and make time to reflect on what is really important for us. To make space for these new changes, we must let certain things go. This may provide a sense of relief as we do many things out of a sense of guilt or because we 'ought' to.

Participants were invited to;

- identify a self-care goal,
- list things that they are willing to let go of,
- identify what might prevent you from achieving their goal
- consider the resources that can help you achieve their goal.