

SUMMARY REPORT

# **INTEGRATING THE VALUES INSIDE**

A SEMINAR FOR STAFF OF THE PRISON  
SERVICE

20-22 JUNE, 1994

held at

The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University,  
Global Retreat Centre  
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## Setting the Scene

With Mal Gillan, Senior Prison Officer, HMRC Reading, and Viv Lever, Deputy Education Manager, HMYOI Huntercombe

Malcolm explained that while he acknowledged that a great many things were happening for prisoners, staff were perhaps being neglected. People who work with prisoners deserve a chance to learn how to counteract some of their pressures. He saw the seminar as an opportunity for each individual to rediscover his or her own inner resources which could be used to cope with change or upheaval in their work

Viv Lever saw the seminar as a terrific opportunity for an exchange of views, sustenance and sharing with each other, as well as a breaking down of barriers.

## Values, Principles and Applications

By Tim Newell, Governor, HMP Grendon

*"Where there is no vision, the people perish."  
(Proverbs)*

"Our vision is to provide a Service through both directly managed and contracted prisons, of which the public can be proud and which will be regarded as a standard of excellence around the world."

Every prison is currently developing a four year strategic planning programme. The purpose is a utilitarian one, but it can also be used in ways to identify and support the human and spiritual purpose in long-term developments.

Hopefully, such strategic planning will particularly establish what the staff would like to see achieved in the next four years and start rebuilding in that direction. This could be with a view to improving the work atmosphere, inter-departmental relationships, personal relationships, creativity, and so on.

So, how do we inform our work with the values of integrity, commitment, care, equality of opportunity, innovation and improvement? At HMP Grendon we are committed to upholding the following purpose:

To be a therapeutic community: to serve the community outside by helping men who come here to have no more victims.

To achieve this, the following objectives have been set:

- to help each man improve his self-confidence and self-worth;
- to help each man become less offensive and abusive in the way he behaves towards others;
- to help each man stop committing crimes.

Inherent in this are a set of beliefs and values:

- The right to be treated with dignity and respect.
- The right to be listened to and have opinions and feelings considered.
- Everyone has the potential to develop and change.
- Everyone is responsible for their actions.
- Behaviour has meaning (we don't dismiss behaviour as stereo-typical).
- To challenge behaviour there must be a safe environment.

There seem to be five main areas of deprivation experienced by people coming into custody which can be painful and wounding:

1. Liberty -confinement to en masse disciplinary measures and loss of access to one's family can be very painful.
2. Goods and services - the loss can shock one's self-image which is sometimes built upon possessions.
3. Heterosexual relationships - an absence of tenderness can lead to a monochromatic nature.
4. Autonomy -a mass of rules which seemingly have no sense and leave the individual highly dependent.
5. Security - how safe people feel with each other in a vulnerable setting.

Our values can work to redress these deprivations through various developments within the current agenda.

Liberty: new design of prison; re-categorisation to move to less secure prisons; family ties improvement; neighbourhood prisons.

Goods and Services: choice emphasized; privilege list expanded; earning capacity increased; own clothes.

Heterosexual relationships: more frequent and better facilities and family visits; home leaves; sentence structure - greater certainty about date of release and parole applications being considered.

Autonomy: openness in decision-making and accountability; access to outside agencies; sentence planning; "compacts" - giving more control to prisoners ; "grievance procedures" - introduction of ombudsman.

Security: assessment - induction procedures are more able to help people feel there are aspects of prison life over which they have some control; relationships - staff/prisoner relations developed; purposeful activity

In summary, we must find methods which offer optimism and hope. While optimism may

sometimes seem unrealistic, hope has a much more long-term reality. People can then find it possible to forgive themselves and achieve grace. By having mercy on themselves, they are able to feel merciful towards others. Thus they show transformation in their lives to become the people they would rather be and the people others would want them to be.

### **Stability through Spirituality**

With Sister Jayanti, European Director,  
Brahma Kumaris

#### What is a spiritual outlook?

The challenge of maintaining a positive vision in prisons can be greatly facilitated by the understanding that every individual is not only a human but a being; that is, a spiritual being. An improvement in the conditions of working in prisons optimized when there is a deep power of spirituality within the individual.

For instance, a major obstacle that both staff and prisoners have to combat is fear. By switching to a spiritual focus, I can reduce my fear. When my perception of the situation is centered in my 'human' emotions, I become trapped in them but if I can alter my vision to my inner 'being' I can regain control of myself in that situation.

#### How to create and sustain a positive vision.

My state of mind provides the background and foundation for my vision. The possibility of being able to change my circumstances comes from understanding the creativity of my inner world and effecting change there. When I create my vision I can determine my thoughts and the actions that emerge from those thoughts and they can remain with me as a motivating power. If I lose sight of it, I become unable to control my behaviour and become trapped by circumstance.

By allowing the energy of thoughts to be wasted I am leaving myself in a vulnerable position. This energy is perhaps my most vital resource for positive thought has immense depth.

There are three main causes as to why our vision becomes negative:

1. Circumstances, especially in prison there is a huge amount of negativity to combat.
2. Other people. I cannot change how other people behave i.e. I cannot control it but I can change my own responses to their behaviour.
3. Negativity about myself. For instance, do I have a powerful image of myself on Monday mornings?

There are positive ways to counteract these attitudes:

1. Adjusting and re-focusing one's vision. When circumstances are not going in the direction I wish for or in the face of failure, I have to see the task and myself as separate and learn from the situation.
2. Learn about others. If I want to do something constructive, I have to look for something positive in the other individual.
3. Learn to see what is of value in myself and how I have learnt from past mistakes. Don't see that which is defective or weak but focus on what is powerful and positive. Then I retain positivity towards others and to the circumstances of my surroundings.

#### Methods to Come Back to Stability Within Myself

The real foundation for change is to touch that which is my inner identity which acts as a powerful anchor to provide me with stability. This requires a shift from my previous self-identification; my possessions, my relationships, my roles. If I totally identify with my status or role, where will I stand as a human being when these are taken away? When I find the powerful core of my own inner being, I find five things: wisdom, love, happiness, peace, power. These are the original qualities of every human being. The journey of our life is to rediscover these.

**Question:** The very nature of our work in assessment is to look at the negative. By always focusing on the positive, isn't one in danger of sweeping obvious negative aspects under the carpet?

In my experience, it is not possible to avoid seeing the negative in front of us but by consciously focusing on the good aspect in a person you can bring out the best in them. If I only see the negative then I may be missing what is available to me had I taken a positive view – the realization, motivation and methods to deal with it.

**Comment:** The comment about over-identification with one's role is extremely valuable because my particular role has changed. Most people, including myself, see this as disintegration. You affirm that no matter if one's role changes I am still in tact and have the possibility to find value in my new post.

This energy is perhaps r

#### **Breaking the Cycle of Confrontation and Control**

The main point underlying my efforts to dissipate situations of confrontation and conflict is, however negative my interaction with another person, however short the time to work with that person, however pressing the demands on me, it can turn into something positive.

We tend to perceive confrontation as a breakdown in communication or barrier. Instead we should see

confrontation as an invitation to communicate. Confrontation is communication. Making each interaction positive expresses value for the other person and for oneself.

Behaviour has meaning. We tend to attribute too much meaning to a person's behaviour too early. If we can somehow find a focus, a new frame, usually we will notice a pattern to use that enables us to move alongside them. In this way, we can replicate patterns of behaviour without replicating the meaning behind it.

In situations of confrontation, where both parties are insisting, "Respect me!" the only result can be conflict. The method to avoid this would be to show respect, thereby opening a new pattern of communication on which a good relationship can be built over time. But staff and inmates alike are afraid to not 'stand their ground'. The way around this is to see it as simply finding new ground. This opens communication not at the end, but at the beginning - not with what you want the person to do, but with what that person is doing. Gentleness can be a great source of strength.

The psychology of prisons makes us feel that every situation is potentially dangerous. But we intensify this and the pressure on ourselves by trying to stop every charged situation immediately. In reality, only one per cent of the time does a situation turn out to be immediately dangerous. But if every situation is treated as very dangerous, we will not be alert to deal with it effectively when one does come. It requires attention to see what is happening, rather than what might happen.

By doing something unexpected, we can break patterns. Or even, just by not doing, by not increasing one's share of the power balance, the situation can be eased. People desperately want others to allow them to continue to follow their patterns, and so there might be resistance, yet it follows that any change must cause a change in reaction.

Prisoners will keep doing things to confront me. If nobody gets hurt it is not a crisis. They consistently make you responsible and then try to undermine your responsibility. In this way, they never reach a point of self-control, because we are always jumping in and nipping things in the bud. This is widely endorsed because of the fear of things getting out of control.

Control is when the people themselves don't cause damage or riot.

We influence people all the time. We can guide, teach, nurture, but we cannot control. At the same time, we don't encourage inmates to control themselves. Instead they put up barriers against us. Yet these barriers can show us the way through to them.

Change in behaviour doesn't come from constraining behaviour but through expanding behaviour. Confrontation always incites an either/or situation; this is very narrow. We are trained to narrow things down, contain, nip things in the bud. Redirection brings change. For there to be change, there must first be acceptance.

**Comment:** *"The prison system has developed a very effective way of moving people without getting hurt. Yet, I have seen cases where it has proven itself to be a handicap. We know it works well, and so instead of finding more efficient measures to deal with potent situations we fall back on the measures we know we can perform well. Perhaps it is because we keep looking for ways to feel proud. In one such situation, a prisoner asked to get a book five minutes before lock up time. I succumbed to the potential anger of my colleagues and argued with him. Instead of backing down, I ordered everyone to move the prisoner. It was time and energy consuming and inflamed a situation which could have been more simply dealt with. It was entirely my mistake. These sort of mistakes are happening all the time because of the pressure we put on each other."*

**Comment:** *"Depending on the ethos of the prison, the authorities and staff are expecting you to react in certain ways. It is very difficult to introduce this more individual way that you are speaking of because it undermines the way the prisons are operating. Unless the entire system is thinking in this way, you are undermining the system."*

If not me, then whom? We cannot change the whole system. Also, we can to a large degree act as individuals within our institution. Each of us has a certain amount of space to be what we think is good. If we cannot, then how do we expect the prisoners to. The inmate has a very small space compared to ours so we should approach this small space in the best way we can. Be sincere.

**Comment:** *"The staff who are valued are those who are able to relate to prisoners in a constructive way and can get them to do things and create an harmonious environment. They are usually the quiet ones not the machos ones."*

**Comment:** *"What has been missing is that these ideas have not been highlighted and so people have come under the firing line of their peers. Now we are perhaps reaching the time when we can declare that this is official, then people will latch on to it. It is okay to have a vision, to try new things."*

What is generally being said here is a reflection of the psychological shifts that happen to us which convey a sense of our feeling that we do not have power over our circumstances because of the governors, colleagues, or the entire system. But if we believe that we can make a change we will. I could argue for both viewpoints, but have chosen

the view that people are generally good because it makes me feel happier. Life would be oppressive to think otherwise. We can all choose. By choosing, it affects the regime. Where no one feels they have control, we fail to see the control we do have.

## **Feedback**

- *“What is remarkable about prisons is that people find themselves with people they would normally never associate with. If people can cope with this they might see it as an enriching experience.”*

- *“A teacher of meditation does have an unusual influence because as they do not represent a threatening party, the prisoners are generally happy to talk openly. I have seen dramatic changes within groups who practice meditation.”*

- *“Numerous approaches and programmes have been and gone! It would be useful to have short, medium, and long-term feedback to see what effect all these had and how perceptions have changed as a result of them. With such a research document, the Home Office could be informed, with proof what is working. Ex-prisoners should also feedback.”*

- *“There is an enormous amount of information of how people can change deep-seated behaviour and habits. What people need to personally consider is: (1) how to bring about change; (2) what can be my regular practice of it; and (3) how am I affected by the company I keep.”*

- *“Bullying is a predominant concern. Young men serve a double sentence in not only being confined but in coping with harassment. We have to find means to open up dialogue between them. Teaching dance, maths, acting, literature etc. are opportunities to grasp. As well as giving people new labels, these could widen our perspectives.”*

- *“Part-timers do not at present see that the most important relationship is between the prisoner and officer and should seek to find out how they can fit into this puzzle. At our prison part-timers are invited to work for a day with an officer. It is a lack of communication that prevents them from doing that.”*

- *“Communication is the cutting edge. All the groups of the institution have their interfaces and these should be examined at the appropriate time and place.”*

- *“Management are willing and keen to respond to what the public wants from their prisons, however, we have no clear perception of what they want.”*

## **Stress Management**

with Mike George, Management Consultant

The mental symptoms of stress are always prior to the physical symptoms. They are forms of mental

or emotional pain and include anger, tension, anxiety, frustration, etc. Pain is simply a messenger which comes to tell you there is something you need to change.

When experienced daily, the mental symptoms of dis-ease in the mind soon manifest through the body in the form of disease. This is the psychosomatic factor.

When we feel stressed we tend to point the finger at outer circumstances and other people as the causes of that stress. In truth, they are only triggers.

Each of these outer circumstances/relationships represents a form of change and we have to create a response to each. The creation, quality and expression of our responses are the currency of our relationships: the creative process flows from the inside out, from thought, feeling, attitude, action, character, and ultimately defines our destiny.

This idea is encapsulated in the saying:

*Sow a thought and reap a feeling;  
Sow a feeling and reap an attitude;  
Sow an attitude and reap an action;  
Sow an action and reap a character;  
Sow a character and reap your destiny.*

Only you create your thoughts and so no one else is responsible for how you feel, for your attitude, etc. This is the most important principle in stress management. However, we give our power of creation away to our technological ‘toys,’ especially television which we allow to influence our thinking and our feelings (influence not create). Our creative ability is further impaired by the negative quality of energy which we ‘consume’ from the media.

With our ability to respond weakened, the quality of our response deteriorates. We therefore begin to make mistakes, create inappropriate responses and then point the finger of blame as we project our negative, stressful feelings onto others. We consequently cry ‘victim’ as we blame circumstances, other people, the clock; the system, even our own personality for our feelings of stress.

To transform the experience of stress you need to change the way you think:

- a) becoming aware of the quality of your thoughts and acknowledging that you are their sole creator;
- b) being aware of the influences on your thoughts from outside e.g. media, other people, circumstances etc., and to stop consuming any negative influences.

The other primary influence on your thinking comes from how you see yourself: your self-identity. We tend to label ourselves and others according to job, position, nationality, skin colour, belief, system, age, gender, etc. When we do this:

1) we see the world coloured by these labels, e.g. a photographer sees the world as potential pictures, the policeman sees others' behaviour through his perspective of what is lawful and unlawful;

2) we defend these identities (by attacking others after imagining the threat);

3) we fear loss of power, status, money, possessions which come with the label.

So we can easily live our life in perpetual fear which is often very subtle. If every experience of stress were examined its roots could be found in some form of fear deriving from the attachment to these labels, or extensions of those labels.

You are not the label. These labels and their extensions (money, privilege, possessions, etc.) do however represent your **acquired values** in life. They are derived from outer circumstances and conditions and are therefore subject to change. They also tend to be material values. However, the main internal influences on your thinking are your **innate values**, e.g. peace, love, happiness, confidence, tolerance.

We have learned to seek the experience of these qualities from external sources when in fact they are already there. When they are accessed from within your own consciousness they provide the positive energy (spiritual power) which you can use to create positive responses to outer circumstances and relationships.

The method to access these qualities is meditation. Give yourself time every day to:

Withdraw - your attention from all outer activity;

Focus - on one of your innate qualities, e.g. peace;

Concentrate - on that quality;

Realize/Experience - that quality.

This practice also withdraws your attention from your negative thought and feeling patterns which have been created based on your acquired values over a period of time. By accessing your innate values you create positive patterns which become a part of your personality giving you the strength to create a positive, fear-free response, even in the face of negativity or other peoples stress.

Hence the essential need to give yourself the gift of time every day for your own personal meditation. Meditation is the foundation and most important activity of effective self-management.

### **Cooperation and Communication in Relationship**

Chaired by: Gail Bradlev

*This was an on-going role-play between Mal Gillan, SO HMRC Reading, Georgina Long, Prison Education Coordinator, Brahma Kumaris The major components of the role play are presented here.*

“One of my biggest issues is working with colleagues inter-departmentally as I am conscious of exposing myself. In education, I see an aspect of personal growth which others don't see. I want to convey this to other departments. I consider that Joe needs more trust and would like to make him a blue-band. Yet the official response is generally mocking and they say I am just being manipulated. The officers show resistance and opposition and don't take me seriously. Such is the stereotyping I meet daily.”

*“From an officer's point of view, I see that you are stereotyping me. Because of what you expect of me you incite a negative response. You are coming to me with confrontation in mind, shouting, ‘Respect me,’ whereas you are not making any attempt to understand or respect me. We also want to identify the good in a person. When I deliver the prisoner, you address him by Christian name and ignore me completely, shutting the door in my face. You brand me the same as the inmates do, as one of the guys in white shirts and blue trousers. I don't think you're giving us the respect we deserve.”*

“Prison is all about relationships. It is an intense society with intense reactions. When I have found my inner peace, I will come into the situation light, free and at ease. I will see the officer as a human being not as a ‘hat’ and will appreciate the work he is doing. This will elicit their co-operation. The officer's system is security for me.”

*“Yes, but perhaps I cannot bring myself to be peaceful at that time. So what do I do in the meantime?”*

The whole group continued to discuss the situation:

*“It seems highly pertinent that the two people who organised the seminar are the two that enacted this part-time education officer and full-time officer confrontational scene. It is a key to the success of this whole seminar that the two principle people are from different departments and through their willingness to co-operate and communicate have formed a powerful collaboration.”*

“When you really believe in the bond you have with the prisoner that will overcome your fear of the expectations of others. When you really believe what is right you will do it. In institutions, no matter how powerful the pressure, we will not do something if it runs against our principles. Even so, sometimes the pressure gets too tough. We should look at reducing the pressure of our circumstances.”

*“The search for peace seems to be the keynote for it all. If we can bring this into our daily lives it would bring respect for everyone.”*

“We have a deep dishonesty which does not want to reveal what is inside us. I think quite frankly no one is really exposing themselves. If the staff and officers were really prepared to be vulnerable with each other, they would take the prisoners' situations more seriously. We can find peace when we are faced with absolute honesty. The search for honesty and truth about what we really feel is where we should be looking.”

*“To love your neighbour as yourself,” is an important subject before finding peace. However, we don't love ourselves so we don't love our neighbour. Once I lose sight of who I am, then I lose my self-respect and also my respect for others. That is why I come into situations blind, seeking respect.”*

“We do have different roles of soldier and peace-maker. Soldiers are not peace-makers, and vice-versa, yet we co-exist. It is a matter of building bridges to understand the roles each of us need to play. We can't expect others to play our roles. We must respect each other's roles.”

*Who can cite what are the six goals of the prison service? (One person said yes.) Yet this is the aim of the Prison Service. When people have different goals there can be incongruities in methods.*

### **Keynote Address**

by Dadi Janki, Co-administrative Head, Brahma Kumaris

*“When a person can be truly peaceful he becomes free from tension. Then one can pay attention to oneself and carry out one's tasks with attention.”*

Dadi suggested that in paying attention we need to observe

- the content of our own being inside;
- the relationships with our colleagues;
- the people we are wanting to serve.

*“My primary attention, which must by necessity incorporate the other two, is to serve. I should be paying attention to what I should be doing so that I can receive co-operation and give co-operation, too. If our relationships are good then we are able to serve properly the people we are meant to serve.*

*We deeply want to achieve success in the service we do. If we are not meeting success it is because we have not been able to understand ourselves or one another. The first aspect to understand is what I want to do, and prepare myself.*

*I was taught: “Do first and speak later.” When we simply listen to speakers, we get tired. If the soul is weary, even if we are hearing something good, we will be unable to assimilate it. When we can inculcate something good there is the ability to take a step forward. This leads to satisfaction. The soul should never stop learning. Meditation teaches the*

*soul to experience humility, divinity and truth and then we can begin to progress.*

*Through humility we come to love peace; where we have no desire to prove anything. If with humility we are able to say ‘yes’ we are able to bring others closer to ourselves. Human beings have many virtues which should be drawn out and expressed. For this we need to become examples. It is important not to get into a conflict of “you” and “I”, and “yours” and “mine”. If someone is not giving me respect it is my duty to give that person respect. Even if someone is not giving me love, let me draw love from God and give that love to them.*

*I feel such compassion for the people I see trapped. There seems to be three reasons for this.*

*i) Naivety: they don't discriminate clearly the impact of good or bad action and are not able to see the outcome of what they're doing.*

*ii) lack of consideration to what they are doing, out of laziness or carelessness.*

*iii) sometimes a person makes a mistake. I must learn to discern clearly what is right from wrong. I then need determination to not do what is wrong. If I see something right, let me do it today, not tomorrow. If I develop the habit of putting off what is good, I will never do anything good.*

*What is honesty? Let me follow the path that I understand to be correct then I am able to be honest with people. If I do not deceive others, then the result is that I can never be deceived by another. If there is honesty I can serve altruistically. Honesty means that what is inside will be demonstrated outside. If another person becomes angry and I maintain my peace, then my positive attitude will help him to overcome his negativity. If I don't react with anger then the other will change.*

*If I use two words with good feeling instead of ten words, I can bring greater benefit and it leaves no scope for imagination or misunderstanding. Even if I don't understand someone let me not use my imagination in a negative sense, because whatever I do will come back to me.”*

**Comment:** The important word for me is love. But to lock someone up is not an act of love, although it is an act of service to the wider community. Many of us feel that our work sometimes is not honest so we have to come to terms with compromise and uncertainty. To be able to be brutally honest all the time might cause friction. Although all of us feel enriched coming here we realise there are a lot of problems when we go back.

“I resolve problems by going deeply into silence, and then, free of tension, I can face things with attention. This separates you from the situation. Let me have inner stability so that others can see how I face problems. The problem is external and my power is internal. Let me strengthen my inner power

so that I can face any situation: with tolerance, patience and love. Sometimes one has to show a stern eye for the sake of truth. Internally, don't let the heart be affected, but externally let the words be shaped by love, teaching and discipline.

### **Session – Feedback**

Chaired by Gail Bradley

In the prison service it is amazing what you can do providing you don't mind who gets the praise.

I picked up a tremendous sincerity in an atmosphere I have never experienced before. It is an assimilating experience. For me, the core task is keeping the peace. We are 'peace officers.' This definition ought to be a beacon that takes people out of bed and takes them to their work.

It has been a lovely dance with very little stepping on each other's toes. What divides us is comparatively small to what unites us. We tend to look at what divides us with binoculars. I have thrown away the binoculars and now see the common vision.

It has been interesting looking at ways of dealing with conflict. It is important to share feelings because that induces our empathy. To achieve peace between people can be a painful struggle so we have to find ways of sharing feelings, being vulnerable, not making "you" statements, but making "I" statements. A lot of very good things have been shared here and this breeds a lot of trust and confidence.

Time seems to have been changing. I cannot imagine this meeting taking place five years ago.