

# Working in Prison - Vision to Reality

A seminar for people who work within and  
care about the prison system

Tuesday 27th - Thursday 29th October 1998

held at

The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University  
Global Retreat Centre  
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**Appreciative Inquiry** led by Anne Radford, Consultant/Coach

Appreciative Inquiry is a highly effective management tool which enables people to look for what works for both the individual and the organisation. It helps to build on past success and gives insight into possible future directions.

Through the use of Appreciative Inquiry, (AI) our vision of working in prison can be brought closer to being a reality. AI is a technique that affirms what I am already doing and what I can do more of.

The AI technique explores:

Personal discovery : what are you doing in your work with prisons and prisoners that is actually working, i.e. when you are at your best. Through reflection, to get in touch with these occasions in a way that you may not have given time or space to before, to appreciate what is working and to further enquire in order to understand. What are the underlying values to this.

Dream: Imagine how would you really like to work? What might some of these results look like, feel like and how do they impact on others?

Design: What options do you have to get closer to your preferred future, your vision?

Destiny: How to sustain that momentum? How to do more of what you want to do? This will involve plans, ideas, notions, drawings etc; to take back to work.

Personal discovery was actioned through pair-wise interviews using the following questions.

1. **Tell me about your work:** Why did you want to work in prisons? What is it that you most value about it? What interests, excites or draws you to the topic of this retreat?
2. **A 'High Point' in your time working in prisons:** I would like you to reflect on your time working in prison. Obviously, you have experienced ups and downs. For the moment I would like you to reflect on a 'high point' when you brought together your vision and values in your work – a time that was most significant or meaningful for you and you felt most alive, proud, creative or effective. Share the story of this high point experience. What made it a peak experience? What felt truly special? Are there lessons that might be brought to this retreat's topic?
3. **Valuing Yourself:** Without being to humble, what is it that you value most about yourself in linking vision and values in your work?

4. **Increasing the link between vision and values in you work:**

- a) Suppose that one night, when all were asleep, there was a miracle and everything was in place to increase the link between vision and values in your work. How would you know when you went in to work the next morning? What would it be like? What would be the same? What would be happening? What would you be hearing? How would you be feeling?
- b) What 3 – 5 steps can you envision for increasing the link between vision and values in your prison in the next 2 to 3 years? This is about personal responsibility in the prison rather than looking for external resources.

**Keynote Address** by Sir David Ramsbotham, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

### The past

In providing some background to his work and viewpoints as Chief Inspector of Prisons, Sir David drew on examples from his army experience that were reflected in the Prison Service also.

*– "I come from a unique regiment that required to train people to not only act as individuals and use their own initiative but to support each other; an ethos of trust and affection between all ranks."*

*– "What were the values we reached? First, whatever you are told to do, do it instantly, without question. Ask questions afterwards. You instil standards and values you want others to show on the battle field, which will save lives. Secondly, you should do everything to the best of your ability, not to someone else's ability. The leaders' job was to identify each person's talent, to develop and nurture it and also to mould it into the team."*

*– "In the army we had many, many inspections to make sure everyone was ready for their operational role. The most important thing to establish was that inspection was not an inquisition to find fault or blame but a method to help the organisation to improve operational efficiency."*

*– "You must be quite clear what the establishment is being asked to do and then ask yourself whether it is resourced to do it."*

### The present

*– "I believe the biggest challenge facing the Prison Service at the moment is the change that is required. All sorts of people and, most refreshingly the young people coming into prison tend to appreciate the change."*

- “Local prisons have become multifunctional, community prisons in which you find all lengths of sentence being served, young offenders and the mentally disordered. How can such a prison have a sense of purpose? The training system becomes distorted because of too many short-term prisoners in it and, therefore, they can't do meaningful work programmes with them. Open prisons are distorted in the same way.”

- “The first duty of all management in the Prison Service is to help governing governors govern their prisons and not the misplaced duty of first serving ministers. This requires top-down, clear directions as to what that prison is expected to do, how that should be done. It also includes the consistent delivery of resources with which to do it, so that any prisoner, in any part of the country, receives exactly the same opportunity and treatment.”

- “One of the problems of devolving power from the government to governors is that governors, in making strategic decisions about cuts will be prison specific. This will lead to very significant differences between prisons. For example, a prison with a very strong POA may cut education or probation and work in order to keep staff while other places, where they include the staff in cuts, will still keep education.”

### The future

- “Specifically in relation to local prisons, they should be a ‘key player’ in the Criminal Justice System, rather than being seen in isolation. The prison needs information about an individual, from health care, police, courts, probation, schools, etc. Based on that, they can make the needs assessment.

- “There are three specific tasks. The treatment and needs of the individual should begin the moment he comes into the prison. It is then the job of the Prison Service to place that person where those particular needs can be best met.

There should be places where people go for their resettlement for the six months at the end of their based in the urban places from which the prisoners come from.

To tackle the short-term system offender who is a scourge to the police, community and everyone else. If that happened then the training prisons will be for training. Quality courses, programmes or opportunities, lasting for a period of time, could be developed. The sentencers, being made aware of these programmes, can link the sentence to what can actually be achieved? Similarly, community sentences can be something positive with an aim and purpose.”

- “I believe education is the most important factor in combating recidivism. In prisons, many can't read. By using prisoners to coach others may contribute to theirs and others rehabilitation by giving them a sense of responsibility.”

- “With the establishment of co-terminus criminal justice boundaries throughout the countries, there will be a common boundary for police, courts, probation, education, prisons, health and social services. The prison establishment must put area representatives into each of those 10 areas to fully represent the Prison Service and to co-ordinate the provision of local support to the prisons.”

- “I would like to see the removal of staff selection staff for posts. Instead, target talents. Find people who you think are potential governors and you make certain that they are put in places where they can gain the experience necessary for their next step.”

- “When we go to prisons, we can see many examples of good practice – 1180 have been identified in the time I have been Inspector. Each of these needs to be optimally implemented”

- “The issue of staff culture is the most fundamental problem prisons faces. There are those who cling to the old traditions and there are those who embrace change.. I believe the job of the next Director General must be to take on this culture head on and change it.”

- “I am optimistic most of all because of the quality of the staff. They are quite capable of delivery, provided they are lead, directed and steered by the organisation.”

### Vision to Reality – Dare to Dream

Mike George, International Management Consultant.

- “A visionary emerges, one who sees a different way of doing things or a different way of being, usually when things have become rigid. We need to be clear about what our vision is because it is that which will fuel our behaviours.”

- “Vision, in its simplest form, is a mental picture, a preferred future state. It could externalised, that is about my situation or it could be a vision that is internalised, relating to my state of being.”

- “Internal factors that influence the creation of vision will include intuition, values and insights. Intuition is the innate sense of knowing what is right and wrong, what is good and bad. Values are those things that you care about most in your life. They lie behind all our thoughts and actions. Insights are the beliefs gained as we grew up. All of these things influence the mental pictures.”

- “External factors that influence the creation of vision will include images of the world through the media, people and a divine source of energy.

The news for example quickly affects how you think, feel and act. We allow people to influence our mental pictures by being open to criticism, praise or through comparison. The Divine has an incognito effect.”

- *“The challenge is to be ‘aware’ and to start making choices about how to create my vision. To begin the vision formation I need to bring into my awareness my sense of identity (who), my sense of context (where) and my sense of purpose (why).”*

*When I am quite clear about these 3 things it brings inner strength to my vision making it into reality in the face of the non-co-operation of the other energies in life.*

*Context itself has different levels and will also define my identity. For example if the context is your work place, then your identity might be what you have got on your business card. If it is your family, your identity might be according to your role in the family.”*

- *“What you are trying to achieve is your purpose. This will also be dependant upon your context. If you base your identity on the role you play then that will throw up a specific set of values relating to job knowledge, systems and functions. If you go a little bit deeper and you identify yourself not with your actions but with your being, your values would be much deeper. They will be the deepest things of spirit; peace, happiness and contentment. These values will then feed into your vision rather than the values associated with role.”*

- *“Your purpose might be survival or service. Most people, when they begin a job, their purpose is to serve. After a while it becomes survival because whatever we are doing becomes threatened by organisational change. Suddenly I am feeling threatened and so move my purpose from what was originally one of service to survival. Therefore, there is, a need to clarify how you see yourself, your identity, and the context of your relationships.”*

- *“We all desire to see change for the better. This can often be another way of saying you want people to change. Powerful leaders and visionaries have got tremendous self-control but they never try and control others, for they know they can't. They understand that all they need to do is to radiate the vision of how they would like to see things working. They walk into the context where they know who they are, where they are and why they are there. What they have consciously created filters into the immediate atmosphere, through their being, to influence the atmosphere and people. This is one of the deep secrets of bringing vision to reality.”*

- *“Our challenge is constantly to raise our awareness of these three foundations: who I am, where I am and why I am here? This is what will define our values and the picture that we create of our preferred future state. These values will then be reflected in the behaviours we wish to see.”*

- *“The most powerful way to influence another human being is to have a vision of values. When my vision is filled for example with respect, then that is what is going to bring to life others in that context.”*

## Vision Becoming Reality

Open Forum with Malcolm Gillan,  
Principal Officer, HMYOI Huntercombe

- *“I can create a vision at a number of different levels. It can be a global vision, a daily vision, or even a vision that helps me to get through a particular situation. It is about recognising the purpose and the values that we want to bring to each situation, into the interactions that we have with each person, with the colleagues we are working with and the prisoners whose lives we are trying to influence. The important thing is to recognise when the vision, fed by your values, is actually linking into the reality of your life.”*

- *“For me, it is about seeing things differently, having a clear idea why I am doing something at work, why I am doing it in a particular way. It is recognising other people have values they are bringing to work and that their values may be different to mine, although no less important. It is about understanding their values and not trying to impose my own.”*

- *“When I understand both the purpose of the organisation and the system that I am part of, and the part that I play in making the system work, then that is the ‘real’ bit about ‘reality. That is living the vision.”*

- *“It is when my personal vision does not match that of the organisations vision that things go wrong. Perhaps we can insulate ourselves within our own vision and hold on to it so much that we are not then aware of how other people's visions fit in with ours. Co-operation then does not take place.”*

- *“We are now moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> century where, for many, family life has changed hugely, evident in the changing relationships, loyalty, pride and support. Perhaps a consequence of this is that so many people coming into the system don't know how to pass on values to those, in need around them. While there is huge failure around, there is also huge success. We need to look at good practice. The good practice is not celebrated enough. I have this vision of the prison as one huge, extended family, however, when we are actually working in the prisons that common support is not apparent.”*

- *“It is about the language we use. Following an interaction with a prisoner in distress, it was suggested to the officer involved that he showed a great deal of care. He reacted to this. Had it been said that his actions had been ‘professional’ that would have been fine, but to suggest was ‘caring’ was difficult and challenging for him to accept.”*

- *“We can help prisoners to develop their own values only by demonstrating those values ourselves. A lot of prisoners do have positive values, their actions are values-based, but they are unable to put words to it. If asked why you do things in a particular way, they just*

*say it's the right way to do it! It is just a matter of recognising values."*

*– "The most important reality is the reality of 'now'. It is my reality, and the only reality that matters is just this second. It is the quality of my response, in that second, that is crucial. That I might have an agenda of 101 things I need to do today, but it is this moment that is important."*

*– "If we could actually recognise the good things the prisoners have and get other staff to see the good things too; if we all appreciated each other and it was not a case of them and us. If we grew as a community changing in the right way then prisons could be really good, positive places."*

The forum closed with a period of reflection in which participants were asked to give consideration to the following four questions

- How might it be for you when you feel that your vision and your reality are coming together?
- How can you recognise this in your interactions with other people?
- How does this affect your interaction with your organisation or the systems within that organisation?
- How do you, as an individual, recognise when the 'buzz' is there?

### **Valuing the Self – A Foundation for Design**

Sister Jayanti, European Director, Brahma Kumaris

*– "Let me value myself as a human being which means valuing two parts of the self.*

*Firstly, there is the human side and that needs proper attention: proper diet, rest and exercise. Connected with this, is the recognition that I am a unique human being, playing a unique role in this world with a unique and special contribution to make.*

*Secondly, there is the inner being, the inner self. Today the expression is "the inner child" and the traditional expression is of being "a child of the Divine.. Both statements tell us that there is something very precious inside that has to be cared for, valued, sustained and nurtured with love and attention."*

*– "If I value myself, I value the work that I do, the family that I am with, the people I work with and work for. If I have a real awareness of my own value then I will be free from a state of dependency, in which I need others to confirm my value."*

*– "One of the ways in which I am able to become more aware of my own value is to give sacred time to myself for replenishing the mind, body and spirit."*

*– "We easily forget the beauty, truth, goodness and strength of our inner being, the soul. In that moment our inner values become influenced either by the*

*mediocre, the mundane or the downright negative. For this reason, in a very conscious way, I feed my mind nourishing things, in moments of silence.*

*In periods of silence I am able to look inside and recognise my highest truth and potential, the goodness and beauty that is in my own inner being. The nourishment of the self with good thoughts and information, good, spiritual ideas, reinforces the strength and the goodness within the soul.*

*If I remind myself and make myself aware of my highest values each morning, I will stay close to the truth of these values. If, through the day, I take moments for reflection, then I am able to see whether I am still aligned to my own innate values. Sorting things out at the end of the day will allow for a new, fresh start the following day. I value my own mental energy, my mind, knowing how precious and powerful it is."*

*– "Once you start looking at what is going on in your own inner being you will see areas that are wasteful. Part of the transformation of our vision into a reality, is to be able to deal with that, also."*

*– "Time is valuable. Let me be aware of the value of my conscience, in the work that I do and the relations that I have. Logic and reason have to play an important role, but so does conscience. If there is something that my conscience, my intuition tells me, let me put value on that, I mustn't ignore it, even if others around me challenge it. If I value myself, I will be true to my conscience."*

*– "I must see and value the aspects of the inner self: the mind, the conscience, the deepest aspects of my personality. As I learn to value myself in this way, I see others with respect and treat every individual around me with dignity".*

### **A Place for Truth – Destiny's Precursor**

Dadi Janki, Co-administrative Head, Brahma Kumaris

*– "To go into silence means to go into the self, to think about what it is that I need to do for myself and how it is that I have to do it.*

*– "If I give time and thoughts to myself with a lot of love, honesty and cleanliness, my own conscience remains very clear. It is my conscience that tells me what is right and what is wrong. People suppress their conscience because they feel they have to do what the world expects of them.*

*Many people work hard in order to please others so that they accept and give importance to my ideas. When we work in this way to please others, this*

*pleasure tends to be superficial, not deep inner pleasure or happiness. Afterwards they realise whether the value of what they did was right or not.”*

*– “The situations of the world are such that they are constantly changing. If I don’t have spiritual strength then, when difficulties arise, how will I cope with them? I have to keep my inner state strong and in a state of equilibrium. We have to protect ourselves in order to be able to help others.*

*So, in every situation, I have to ask myself: What is right and what is not right and then do that which I know to be right. If I am faced with something which is not right, but which I am expected to do, then I will avoid it and only do that which is right. The response I get from others also is that this is right, which increases my courage, faith and confidence in myself. Thus, as time goes on, I will never be faced with a situation whereby I will be compelled to do that which is wrong. Because of my own truth, I will only be faced with that which is right for me to do. I will do that with honesty and truth.”*

*– “When there is something good and positive you have to do, there will be many obstacles that come your way. With courage, faith and determination we can do whatever we wish. Spiritual wisdom and understanding is like wealth and that enables me to wear the mantle of responsibility.*

*It becomes very natural whereby I will do that which is useful and will not do that which is not useful for me. It is not that I want others to see me in a specific way. If I don’t look at myself but only become engaged in looking at other people, then people will turn around and say to me: Who are you to tell us what to do? My responsibility is to transform myself so that the world can be transformed. If I feel that this is my responsibility, I am not going to be burdened by it, am I? One has to recognise one’s potential. I don’t want to be like everybody else but a person that helps the world and for that I need a lot of spiritual energy.”*

*– “Spiritual knowledge, spiritual understanding, is like a light, which enables us to do whatever we wish and also to inspire others. Spirituality means to know and see what is inside the self, not to just see the external happiness and peace that exists. Open your inner eye and look at yourself. Be introvert. Be introspective. Go into silence and set aside everything external. Create good, positive thoughts and then I feel that I have inner strength that helps me in my interactions, my relationships and the tasks I carry out. My thinking changes, my attitude becomes very clean and I feel that very good vibrations are being created. When you receive and give co-operation to each other, then spirituality also grows.”*

*– “Only when you stop thinking about the things of the past, will you think in the right way at the present moment and be able to put right that which has gone wrong in the past.*

*My thoughts must be of a very high quality. Let your thinking be of high quality, such that you are able to find solutions. If you see the problems and think about the problems, then it will appear from your face that you are having problems. If a person with problems comes in front of you, and you have a face of problems, what help are you going to offer them? Two benefits of quality thinking are, I don’t become influenced and impressed by people, nor do I have dislike or displeasure towards others. I become safe inside and maintain my own self-respect. So check yourself and move on and you will make the path clear for others to move forward too.”*

*– “Don’t just think about spirituality but do spiritual things as well. When I have the light of spirituality, I have to use that light. So, let there be light in your life for others.”*

### **Personal Design and Destiny.**

Viv Lever, Former Education Manager, HMYOI Huntercombe

To synthesise all the information, to reflect on personal insights and realisations and to ground the experience in the practical, participants were asked to create an action plan. This would enable people to draw closer to and ultimately achieve their perfect future state.