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Chapter 11

Spiritual-based Entrepreneurship: Hindu and Christian Examples¹

Ethical leadership and raising awareness about the importance of responsible decision making in organisations is becoming one of the focal points of academic and social discussions. There is a growing level of practical and academic interest in spirituality (Bouckaert and Zsolnai, 2011) particularly in Western countries (Goldman Schuyler 2007; 2010) where the consequences of ego-driven, materialistic behaviors are clearly visible both in organisations and in society as a whole (Lewis 2011; Greenberg 2011).

Individuals and communities need to find new ways of working with and relating to each other and the environment in order to survive, make sense of life and prosper. Support for this attitude comes less from government initiatives and more from the innovation and creativity of individuals who choose to take control and put their trust more into the internal and spiritual powers than into external forces. Spiritual traditions around the world may also help to put life into a broader context and remind us moral values and behaviors to support a happy and meaningful existence.

The chapter offers two examples. One is from a Hindu and the other is from a Christian social entrepreneur. Although the stories are different these two entrepreneurs share a

¹ Acknowledgement: The author would like to thank and acknowledge the support and inspiration of Mr Anupam Jalote, (Green Oil Energy Sciences (Pvt.) Ltd, New Delhi, India) and Professor Alan Barrell, (Entrepreneur in Residence, Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning, Judge Business School, University of Cambridge, UK) who shared their life stories and provided the information for the two case studies in this chapter.

fundamentally similar outlook on life. Both of them lead a life based on spiritual principles. They both took a leap of faith and chose a “road less travelled” by following spiritual guidance rather than only rational thinking in their personal and working lives.

The basic principles of Hinduism and Christianity are described to illustrate the search for purpose, meaning and connectedness. The author believes that spirituality and the wisdom traditions direct our attention beyond the self and encourage us to find individual fulfilment by serving the common good and the interests of the community. The paper concludes suggesting that by tapping into the timeless wisdom of our rich human heritage we can connect with others in meaningful ways, overcome cultural, political or religious barriers and find new ways of working together.

1 Introduction

The current global economic and environmental crises are an invitation to reflect and review how we relate to work, to nature and to each other in society. There is a strongly expressed view that we have made a moral mistake (Lewis 2011) and the behaviour of leaders has been described as immoral, unjust and without much coherent idea of how to fix it (Greenberg 2011). Our behaviour and decisions today will have far reaching consequences not only for the life of the people who currently inhabit the planet but the quality of existence of future generations. “Thus moral responsibility demands that we take into consideration the welfare of those who, without being consulted, will later be affected by what we are doing now. Without our choosing it, responsibility becomes our lot due to the sheer extent of the power we exercise daily.” (Jonas 1996: 99). Zsolnai argues that the state of ecological capital, financial capital, human capital and intellectual

capital together determine the fate of future generations. Zsolnai's data indicates that "there is no country in Europe which would not present some burden for future generations in one or more domain." (Zsolnai 2011: 7).

There is a high level of discontinuity between technological development and our assumptions about leadership and how we are to relate to each other in the workplace and beyond (Obolensky 2010). A growing number of scholars (for example Senge et.al. 2004) urge us to broaden our views, take more personal responsibilities, and offer all that we can both individually and collectively towards finding solutions to the complex challenges in the world. Pruzan argues that "What is clearly needed is a change in the mind-set, values and principles of our leaders, as well as of those who finance our enterprises, and of those who teach and mentor our future leaders. At the very minimum, what is needed is an expansion of the concept of 'success' so that it transcends the prevailing myopic focus on short-term financial gains." (Pruzan 2007: 6)

"In Africa they say that there are two hungers, the lesser hunger and the greater hunger. The lesser hunger is for things that sustain life, the goods and services, and the money to pay for them which we all need. The greater hunger is for an answer to the question 'why?' for some understanding of what life is for." (Handy 1997: 13)

The way people satisfy these two hungers has changed dramatically over the centuries. When farmers worked in the fields and craftsmen were responsible for designing and creating products, work had its own natural rhythm and workers received direct feedback from their labour. I am not suggesting that life was easier then or that everybody had the awareness or the desire to develop a balanced external and internal reality. What I

propose is that while the eyes and hands are focused on the external task and something of tangible value is produced, the heart and soul has a chance to get into a meditative, interconnected state and feed the inner hunger for purpose and meaning.

In the technology and profit driven world work has become fragmented and complex. We rarely see the exact outcome of our efforts at the end of a working day. The product of labour has become less tangible particularly in industrialized, service oriented economies. We seldom get into a relaxed 'flow' like state (Csikszentmihalyi 2003) of oneness with our work. Work is often done without clear purpose and we push ourselves and others towards tangible, often short term financial targets without asking ourselves 'why'.

Searching for meaning requires personal reflection, a willingness to examine one's life and how it can connect with and enrich other lives. Most of us know that there are more important things than money. As Aristotle pointed out: 'Wealth obviously is not the good we seek, for the sole purpose it serves is to provide the means of getting something else.' (quoted in Handy 1997: 15). However, finding that 'something else' is a personal quest for the individual and in Handy's term it requires 'Proper Selfishness'. "To be Properly Selfish is to accept a responsibility for making the most of oneself by, ultimately, finding a purpose beyond and bigger than oneself." (Handy 1997: 9)

This kind of 'proper selfishness' is the polar opposite of the unstoppable greed for money, fame, power and possessions in the hope that the soul's hunger can be satisfied by more of the stuff that can only satisfy the 'lesser hunger' in us.

Current forms of education provide plenty of opportunities for learning how to satisfy the hunger for money and material success; however, one needs to search actively and select critically the appropriate guidance when it comes to searching for meaning and purpose in life. The growing interest in mindfulness meditation (Kabat-Zinn 1994), embodiment of leadership (Melina et al. 2013., Palmer and Crawford 2013.) and the demand for ethical, sustainable and spiritually inspired business (Bouckaert and Zsolnai 2011) indicates a shift in attitudes of seekers who want to live and work differently.

In this chapter I set out to illustrate the general points of connectedness and the value of spiritual practice in one's life by presenting two real life stories. The stories come from different countries and from very different circumstances. These autobiographical reflections were shared with me by an Indian and a British social entrepreneur.

The data collection started in 2008 when I visited India and met *Anupam Jalote* who told me the beginning of his journey and how his spiritually based actions led to the establishment of the GreenOil company. We kept in touch over the years and I followed the journey of Anupam through Indian newspaper articles and email exchanges between 2008 and 2013.

I have been observing the work of *Alan Barrell* since 2007. I have a great respect for Alan's integrity, hard work and enthusiasm for entrepreneurship. Although I have known Alan for six years I have only found out about his Christian spiritual practice in 2013. I interviewed Alan in London on the 15th of October 2013 and in Cambridge on the 18th of March 2014. He shared the stories of many remarkable life events that led to his strong faith and daily spiritual practice.

Before proceeding directly to these narratives, I shall first look at developmental psychology and discuss the different stages of human development and suggest that searching for meaning and higher purpose is a natural human desire, an integral part of development and a healthy human life. I shall review some definitions of spirituality giving special attention to Hinduism and Christianity in order to offer a broader context to the reflective stories.

2 Finding Meaning and Purpose

Erik H. Erikson (1963) divides human life between birth and death into eight significant phases. Each phase has its specific learning opportunity and an individual needs to develop certain positive emotions and their negative counterparts in order to grow and mature through these phases in a healthy manner psychologically. If we fail to develop one aspect fully within its natural phase we will carry the task with us to the next phase. If we accumulate a 'backlog' of psychological development it is part of our make-up, tending to show itself primarily under stress or external pressure.

The eight phases continually interact with and reinforce each other all through human life so they need to be considered as an evolving, psychological and emotional development process rather than closed, distinct and self-contained units of development.

Erikson says that we should not use these categories as check lists and that the 'positive' aspects should not be simply looked at as achievements secured once and for all at a given point in time. He also states that the negative senses are equally important and they

remain the dynamic counterpart of the 'positive' ones throughout life.

In his book "*Insight and Responsibility*" Erikson (1964) outlines the basic virtues that are the lasting outcome of the favorable balance between the paired concepts of the eight stages of maturity.

Basic Trust versus Basic Mistrust: Drive and *Hope*

Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt: Self-Control and *Will-power*

Initiative versus Guilt: Direction and *Purpose*

Industry versus Inferiority: Method and *Competence*

Identity versus Role Confusion: Devotion and *Fidelity*

Intimacy versus Isolation: Affiliation and *Love*

Generativity versus Stagnation: Production and *Care*

Ego Integrity versus Despair: Renunciation and *Wisdom*

Erikson calls the italicized words at the end of each line *basic* virtues because without them, and their re-emergence from generation to generation, all other and more changeable systems of human values lose their spirit and their relevance. For him these basic values are the cornerstones of all religions and cultures; they are the basic principles that constitute the foundation of well-functioning communities and societies (Illes 2009). These virtues are demonstrated within large families and close communities where the older generations teach the younger members by example. This is an education that is continuous, informal and is not restricted to the classroom.

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 2003) the total fulfilment of one's potentialities, which usually generates happiness, depends on the simultaneous presence of two processes. "The first is the process of differentiation, which involves realizing that we are

unique individuals, responsible for our own survival and well-being, who are willing to develop this uniqueness wherever it leads, while enjoying the expression of our being in action. The second process involves integration, or the realization that however unique we are, we are also completely enmeshed in networks of relationships with other human beings, with cultural symbols and artefacts, and with the surrounding natural environment. A person who is fully differentiated and integrated becomes a complex individual – one who has the best chance at leading a happy, vital, and meaningful life.” (Csikszentmihalyi 2003: 28-29).

Both Erikson and Csikszentmihalyi argue for the balance between one’s external and internal development. I believe that internal development, self-discovery and the search for meaning and purpose is not an individual luxury or an institutional responsibility. It is a fundamental necessity for the healthy development of humans and therefore must be a prime responsibility both for individuals and communities. Irrespective of the spiritual tradition or religion one draws upon, spirituality requires an individual willingness to explore oneself (Whitehead 1926), and reflect on one’s own actions (Collins and Kakabadse 2006).

If we want to nurture the inner self we need to turn towards our rich tradition of philosophy, religion and spirituality. What will resonate with us personally will depend on our cultural heritage, childhood experiences, level of development, current needs and our environment. Getting to know one’s inner self is a highly individual quest. It requires patience, solitude and gradually should become an integral part of one’s daily life.

I believe that although it is good to learn from the experience of others, our personal

experience and much of the wisdom literature through the ages indicates that this is an area where one should primarily follow one's inner guidance, feelings and intuition.

3 Hindu and Christian Spirituality

There is no universally accepted definition of spirituality. The word has different meanings for different people and in different cultures (McSherry and Cash 2004). It is generally considered to be a complex, intercultural, multi-dimensional concept (Cook 2004; Hill et.al. 2000; George et.al. 2000; Moberg 2002; Bouckaert and Zsolnai 2011). Muldoon and King (1995: 336) suggest that spirituality is “the way in which people understand and live their lives in view of their ultimate meaning and value”. Clark (1958) defines spirituality as the inner experience of the individual as evidenced by attempts to harmonize day to day life with the Beyond. Meezenbroek et al. (2012) define “spirituality as one's striving for and experience of connection with oneself, connectedness with others and nature and connectedness with the transcendent” (Meezenbroek et al. 2012: 338). In their book “Leading with Wisdom” Pruzan and Pruzan Mikkelsen (2007) provide an interesting collection of perspectives and definitions on spirituality, not by academics but by business leaders from around the world.

Connectedness plays a crucial role in every human life. Connectedness with the transcendent includes connectedness with something or someone beyond the human level, such as God, the universe, transcendent reality, a higher power or consciousness. The term one uses is determined by one's cultural heritage, life experience and environment. This level of connectedness includes feelings of oneness, awe, hope, joy, sacredness and adoration of the transcendent (Cook 2004, Meezenbroek. et. al. 2012) and

in my view this will inform and influence one's relationship with others and the environment. In Christianity for example spirituality can mean seeking oneness with Christ's spirit.

In Hinduism, particularly in the Vedantic school of thought, spirituality is understood and connecting with the Atman, the eternal spirit that attains all human life and appreciating and acknowledging Brahman, the spirit that maintains the universe.

Connectedness with oneself is expressed through actions based on moral values, authenticity, inner harmony, self-knowledge and search for meaning (Elkins et.al. 1988; Young-Eisendrath and Miller 2000; Hungelmann et.al. 1985; Howden 1992; Mahoney and Graci 1999, Illes, 2012). Self-knowledge and connectedness with one's true self is the foundation for building meaningful relationships with others. The quest to "Know Thyself" has been an integral part of human development throughout human history and each individual needs to make personal choices and discoveries on that journey. Connectedness to others and to nature can be expressed through compassion, caring, gratitude, selfless love and wonder.

Hindu Spirituality

Let's turn our attention to Hindu spirituality and see the wisdom one can get by studying one of humanity's most ancient and sacred texts the Vedas. The Vedas may be thought of as the 'Old Testament' of Indian religion (Abhayananda 2006).

The Vedas are the oldest of mankind's works on philosophy, predating the earliest Greek works (Bhaskarananda 1998). They are said to have been compiled from an oral tradition by a sage, Vyasa, into a set of hymns concerning all aspects of life. There are four main Vedas and four additional Vedas. The *Rig Veda* tells about peace, prosperity and liberation. The *Yajur Veda* describes the sacrificial rituals and rites for prayer. The *Sama Veda* explains the use of chanting and music. The *Atharva Veda* gives practical application in the arts, sciences, medicinal secrets and explains the nature of life and time. The four additional Vedas deal with preventative medicine (*Ayur Veda*), military science (*Dhan Veda*), performing arts (*Gandarva Veda*) and technology in the broadest sense of the word (*Staptya Veda*) (Mascaro, 1968). Vedanta is often referred to as the 'end' of the Vedic texts called the Upanishads, where 'end' can be understood both as a goal and as its being the culmination of the Vedas. Vedanta (Veda = knowledge; Anta = end) is revered by Hindus as the highest expression of truth. "Truth is one; men call It by many different names." (Abhayananda, 2006. p.6.) According to Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), leading Indian freedom fighter, philosopher, poet and spiritual leader, in the introduction to his translation of the Upanishads (Aurobindo 1985, cited in Abrahams 1995: 70): "The idea of transcendental unity, Oneness, and stability behind all the flux and variety of phenomenal life is the basic idea of the Upanishads; this is the pivot of all Indian metaphysics, the sum and goal of our spiritual experience." The great sage Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), a leading figure in the introduction of Indian philosophy to the West in the late 19th century, refers to Vedanta as "...the culmination of knowledge, the sacred wisdom of the Hindu sages, the transcendental experience of the seers of Truth ... the essence or conclusion of the Vedas, so it is called Vedanta". (Vivekananda 1987. quoted in Pruzan 2015)

According to Vedanta this Universal Consciousness is manifest in all of creation and

independent of scientific concepts of matter, time and space such that all physical and social reality, the subject matter of scientific investigation, has its source in a timeless, omnipresent Source, the Universal Consciousness. Although omnipresent, the highest manifestation of that consciousness in sentient beings is in humans; we are embodiments of this Universal Consciousness and are endowed with the capability of self-reference and thereby eventually of self-realization – of realizing the unity of the individual consciousness with all consciousness and the Universal Consciousness; the unity of the individual self with the ultimate source, the Self. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vedanta>) Seekers meditate and go to the depths of the soul in search of God-realization and self-realization. The Vedanta develops the philosophy for the identification of the Brahman – the spirit that maintains the Universe with the Atman, the eternal spirit that maintains each individual. (Vyakarnam 2001).

A Hindu Social Entrepreneur

Anupam Jalote, a social entrepreneur is the CEO of a biofuel company in India. However, he chose a life that is based on spiritual principals. He found the courage to take a leap of faith and follow his heart and spirit to work and create something worthwhile and meaningful not only for himself but also for a community of small farmers in a deprived area of India.

Anupam Jalote was born and brought up in a middle class Indian family. He attended good schools and achieved good grades. His family taught him to respect all forms of life and take good care of people and nature. From his grandfather he learnt about the Vedas and the rich heritage of culture and religion. Anupam learnt to appreciate and respect his

Indian roots, the interconnectedness with nature and the colorful human and spiritual expressions of life. He developed a deep pride and self-respect in his Indian-ness, a profound love for the environment and a burning desire to help to take India to greatness once again.

After completing a university degree in Mathematics and Economics, and an MBA, Anupam started paid employment in 1988. He worked in sales, in consulting and as a systems analyst. He was fairly successful in all these fields, however, he never really felt that he belonged to the competitive corporate world.

In 1995 he got married and in 1996 joined the rapidly emerging telecommunication industry. He started as a district sales manager of a large Indian firm and within 18 months had become the head of Product Management and Marketing. He changed positions within the company and became the head of a profit center operation. He was in charge of 50% of the firm's operation in that particular Indian state.

Anupam was well paid and enjoyed the praise and appreciation of both superiors and colleagues. He was successful in a conventional business sense but somehow he did not feel contentment or joy. His income paid the bills of the family but he felt a growing void in his heart.

During this period Anupam had three very serious car crashes. Any one of these incidents could have been fatal. All three cars were totally destroyed and in a miraculous way Anupam was not hurt in any of these incidents.

He started to have a feeling that perhaps life (and God?) was trying to tell him something that he could not hear in the frantically busy life that he had. It was time to slow down and listen inwardly to figure out the way forward. Anupam took a year off and went to Germany where he completed his second MBA, in 2001-2002. Away from the workplace he had time to think, reflect on his life and when he returned to India he felt reinvigorated. With his new MBA a lot of new opportunities presented themselves and Anupam started to work for one of the most prestigious Indian companies, the Tata Group in Mumbai. Tata is held in high esteem not only because of the high quality of its products and services but also for its ethical conduct.

At this time Anupam lived quite close to the Sanjay Gandhi National Park and went for long walks. He wrote down and shared with me the following thoughts and reflections that started to enter his mind during these walks:

- “Was it a sheer accident that I was born in a well-educated, progressive family and got the finest education available?
- My life had been spared three times.
- I have always been very sensitive and acutely aware that India has two halves: one half is competing with the rest of the world and the other half is completely dependent on an increasingly corrupt and self-serving government. The poor people in India have not been able to increase their living standards over the past 50 years.
- Is it just a coincidence that these thoughts are entering my mind now or is there a larger force out there? (I have to confess I have never had a full vision of my life but I received small, incremental insights and clarities.)

- What if I started to use my talent to serve the poor half of the nation? Could I make a lasting, positive impact or would my life be wasted?
- What are the fundamental problems that plague these poor people? To my mind the main problems are the lack of education and energy. With energy these people could break their dependence on the state system and move up the value chain in agriculture. With education they could absorb newer and better technologies and lead better lives.”

It took Anupam about a year of soul searching to crystallize these thoughts. Even when he knew what he wanted to do he was not in the position to start his new venture straight away. He needed to support his family and build up some savings for his children’s education.

He took a well-paid job in Delhi and worked there for 4 years. His work in a telecom company was truly soul-destroying. “Was the sum of my existence the fact that I was able to increase the efficiency of operation by 3.62%?” This question was haunting him and made him very unhappy. Mamta, his wife helped him to let go of this huge burden and told him: “if you want to follow your dream hard enough, then just do it, do not think too much about it.” So with his wife’s blessing Anupam decided to quit the corporate sector in June 2008 and set up his own company GreenOil.

GreenOil is based on trust. The bio fuels business requires large tracts of land. Anupam’s focus was on using waste land, and planting a species of trees that were hardy enough to survive on semi-arid and waste lands, and yet produce non edible oil seeds from which biodiesel could be produced. As he did not have the financial resources to purchase the

thousands of hectares for the plantations he needed to come up with a different plan.

The government had the land, but Anupam knew from past experience that the government was a slow decision maker and without personal connections in high circles he would not have a chance to get any land.

His research revealed that small plots of waste land were owned by individual farmers who were not putting that land to any productive use. Anupam helped to organize these farmers into cooperative societies. The land ownership remained with individual farmers, but collectively they formed a land bank. In the process Anupam had to overcome a lot of suspicion and distrust. His offer sounded too good to be true but in the end the farmers decided to go ahead and give this venture a try.

The newly formed land bank societies invited GreenOil to invest on their land to set up biofuel plantations, and enter into a long term agreement for the purchase of the seeds produced. The villagers retained control of their land, and started to earn money from the plantations after three years. The money came from land that had never given them any returns before. It is not surprising that the farmers were happy to receive the additional income.

Anupam took a great risk. Although the farmers welcomed the GreenOil initiative and the revenue it generated there was no guarantee for the company to keep its position in the future unless it developed lasting, trusting relationships with the farmers.

Creating trust over a period of years, with actions, rather than with words became the

missions of GreenOil. The company has gradually become an integral part of rural life continuously creating value both for the local farmers and the enterprise.

Anupam knows that he had chosen a road less travelled (Scott, P. 2006.) when he set up GreenOil five years ago. His days have been filled with meetings, negotiations, fighting with and for the farmers. He is tired in the evenings but he knows that he is following his path and purpose in life with integrity and that gives him contentment and faith in the future.

Christian Spirituality

According to The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (Cross and Livingstone (Eds.) 1997: 1532) spirituality “is used to refer to people’s subjective practice and experience of their religion, or to the spiritual exercises and beliefs which individuals or groups have with regard to their personal relationship with God. It is usually to regard prayer, meditation, contemplation and mysticism as major factors in spirituality.” According to Campbell “All final spiritual reference is to the silence beyond sound. The word made flesh is the first sound. Beyond that sound is the transcendent unknown, the unknowable.” (Campbell and Moyers 1991, Ch. 4 para 42)

On the 7th of September 2013 and on numerous occasions previously I spent several hours discussing Christian spirituality with an Anglican Priest, Brother Martin, who has been a member of the Franciscan community, for 53 years. Parts of the interview were recorded and transcribed. According to Brother Martin (for further reference see Huxley 2009) from the beginning of time people looked at a force bigger than themselves in the

world and they called it God. People believed in and worshipped God throughout the ages. The Jews particularly had a strong relationship with God. They realised that God was not only a force in the world but he also had personality so the Jews started to call him Father. Christians believe that the same God sent his son into the world. This is Jesus Christ. Jesus did not only show us revelations about his Father but he also observed the selfishness and sin in the world. He stood up against the sins of mankind and by his death, Christians believe, he saved the world. Before departing from the world Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide Christians in the truth. In Christianity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit together are called the “Trinity” and Trinity means God. In Christianity there is one God represented by these three entities forming a perfect relationship. The Trinity is explained in Matthew’s Gospel through the baptism of Jesus. “When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were open to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven saying “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Holy Bible, Matthew 3: 16-17)

The Trinity is the foundation of Christian belief and Christians seek a close relationship with God through prayer, meditation, contemplation and following God’s commandments and guidance in their daily lives. The life of Jesus gives Christians an ideal, faultless way to connect both to God, the Father, to human beings and to the environment.

How should practicing Christians conduct their daily lives one might ask? There is clear guidance for that in the New Testament of the Bible. One’s number one responsibility is to seek communion with God and see God in other human beings and in the whole world.

“For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me. Then the righteous will answer Him saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick or in prison and come to You? And the King [God] will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’” (Holy Bible, Matthew 25: 35-40)

The Bible tells to love, respect and help one another including strangers. It is a tall order and Christians who take the teaching of Jesus to heart will try to conduct themselves in a way that would meet these norms and requirements as closely as possible.

The following quotes from the Bible will also guide and reinforce believers’ attitude and responsibility towards God, other people, themselves and their environment:

“For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit;” (Holy Bible, Romans 14: 17)

“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own;” (Holy Bible, I Corinthians 6:19)

“Guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.” (Holy Bible, 2 Timothy 1:14)

“No prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit.” (Holy Bible, 2 Peter 1:21)

Practicing Christians seek daily commune with God through prayer, meditation, contemplation or reflection. They seek the guidance of God in decision making and listen to the silence of the heart before taking action. They also aspire to behave in a way that is in line with the life and teaching of Jesus.

A Christian Social Entrepreneur

Alan Barrell is a biologist turned salesman turned businessman, entrepreneur and venture capitalist. He is a champion and keen supporter of the next generation. Alan is Entrepreneur in Residence at the Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning, Cambridge Judge Business School, Visiting Professor at University of Xiamen and Shanghai College of Science and Technology, International Research Fellow at Laurea University Helsinki and at the Tohoku Fukushi University Sendai Japan. Alan is also engaged in support of NHS Healthcare Reforms and his work with young entrepreneurs extends to Board Membership / shareholdings in four early stage companies and to being Chairman of Trustees of NACUE - National Association of College and University Entrepreneurs. In his spare time Alan raises money for the charitable causes he supports. He is also a practicing Christian who has lived most of his adult life following spiritual principals.

In 1973, Alan Barrell was a thrusting young executive – 33 years old – working his way up the ladder of a large international Health Care Company. He had been baptized as a baby and confirmed as a Christian in the Anglican faith when a teenager, but had totally lapsed from active engagement in any Church. He still “believed” – but did not “practice”. Alan was happily married with three children and spent long hours away

from the family earning a living to provide for all of them. In 1973 Alan's father and mother in law suffered a near fatal car accident. Through a series of miraculous events the couple recovered to full health. This traumatic event, the fear of losing his loved ones, the prayers of nuns and other spiritually gifted individuals transformed not only the life of the severely injured couple but also opened Alan's heart and mind to a broader, more spiritual and faith driven way of life.

Understandably Alan believes in miracles as he and his family has been blessed with more than one. Since that time Alan's faith has been renewed and he will never lapse again. He does his best to thank God in practical ways through his work and daily actions.

When I interviewed Alan he told me how special he had felt after the miraculous healing of his mother and father in law. He tried to think about the event afterwards in a rational way and came to the conclusion that there were far too many 'coincidences' in the story not to feel the hand of God and the action of the Holy Spirit.

Through this personal experience Alan felt a unique connection with the divine and started to notice the interconnectedness between people and all other creatures in the world. This realization gave him a new purpose and inspired him to become a 'meta-connector' of people and networks. Alan has spent the next forty years of his life trying to understand people's needs better and use his insights, knowledge and networks to help people to make appropriate decisions and find the right solutions.

Alan is deeply convinced that the Holy Spirit is always with us and is working through us

regardless of one's beliefs or religious orientation. When we face a dilemma thinking about the issues deeply is very important. Not long after the transformational experiences Alan's American medical production company was not happy with the level of productivity in Alan's subsidiary. They informed the management team that the unit would be closed unless productivity improved substantially within a short spell of time.

The majority of senior managers intended to keep this information close to their chests. They felt that talking about the danger of factory closure openly could generate unrest among the workforce. Alan knew that the employees had the right to know the truth. Despite the disagreement of his senior colleagues Alan called a meeting and shared the news honestly with the 500 people whose jobs were in danger and asked them to make suggestions for increasing productivity.

Alan's honesty and the truth energised people and they came up with new ways of improving efficiency and increasing productivity. This factory was one of the major employers in the region in the 1970s and people knew that finding an alternative job for 500 people would be rather difficult.

The fear of factory closure mobilized the dormant talent and energy of the workforce, improved team spirit and encouraged collegiate behaviour. Alan's honesty and integrity initiated a 'we are all in it together' culture. To the great surprise of the American parent company the UK subsidiary's productivity had increased substantially in six months and the factory avoided closure.

Alan felt that by moving beyond his own personal interests and focusing on helping other

people his managerial work became truly meaningful and rewarding. He shared with me a more recent example. In 2013 he was one of the judges at a Global Business Challenge competition for young entrepreneurs in Hong Kong. A group of female social entrepreneurs presented a business case to raise money to educate women about personal hygiene in the textile industry in Bangladesh.

Women in the textile industry work in harsh conditions. Many of them are poor and uneducated. The lack of facilities and information make life particularly challenging when women are facing their monthly period. The disposable towels that are readily available for women in Western countries are prohibitively expensive in Bangladesh. Even if these women had the money they would find it difficult to go into a shop where the shop keepers are typically men and buy these essential products. Currently they use old rugs and strips of old garments. It is not surprising that many of them suffer infections and diseases.

The female entrepreneurs at the competition proposed a recyclable sanity towel made of bamboo shaving. This innovation makes the towels recyclable and affordable even for poor women. The enthusiastic entrepreneurs also set up a network of women called the 'info fairies' to educate women and promote these towels initially in the textile industry in Bangladesh.

Alan was very impressed by the dedication and commitment of these female entrepreneurs in Bangladesh who set out to improve the life of many other women. He reflected on their presentation and decided to use his extensive network to raise funding for this social enterprise in the UK.

Alan is actively searching for opportunities to help people. He believes that by serving people and helping them to achieve their purpose, to create something worthwhile and good we are also serving God's purpose in the world.

4 Discussion

Why do we need to talk about spirituality and bring it into the discussion of business and entrepreneurial research and practice? How can it help to reduce the ethical deficit currently present in business? "Spirituality – as an inner experience of deep interconnectedness with all living beings – opens a space of distance from the pressures of the market and the routines of business-as-usual. This distance is a necessary condition for developing innovative ethical ideas and practices. It restores intrinsic motivation and provides a long time horizon." (Bouckaert and Zsolnai 2011: 4-5). It invites individuals to put life and work into the broader perspective of meaning and purpose. Anchored in a spiritual belief one looks at business and ethical dilemmas from a rather different vantage point. When one feels accountable to the Creator of the Universe and one follows the guidance of the Spirit, it is easier to make a morally sound decision and feel the responsibility for and the interconnectedness with all living beings.

Anupam, the Indian social entrepreneur found his purpose and built a meaningful life by giving up his secure multi-national employment and creating a sustainable green energy enterprise in a remote part of rural India. His spirituality informed and guided his decision making. It was not easy for him to leave behind the financial security and social status that the multinational corporations provided. However the growing gap between

the life he was living and the life he felt he needed to build gave him such a discomfort and unease that he decided to take a leap of faith into the unknown. He obeyed his inner, spiritual guidance, resigned from the corporate world and became a social entrepreneur building a trusting community of small farmers by helping them to move from chemical to organic farming, providing work opportunities for more than 50 people, seed funding rural entrepreneurs and contributing to sustainable energy production. This process of hard work also helped him to create a happy and fulfilling life for himself. This case is an example of courage, faith, service and connectedness. It demonstrates the positive influence of spirituality on entrepreneurial initiatives and how we can achieve our life purpose by following our calling and connecting to ourselves, to others and to nature in a deep, meaningful way.

Alan Barrell's life was transformed in his mid-thirties when he experienced the power of miracles in his own life. Alan is now in his seventies and devotes his life to helping people to set up innovative enterprises based on solid values of ethics, sustainability and spirituality. He is a caring grandfather, an active member of his community and he travels all around the world to promote entrepreneurial learning and supports young people in the early stages of their careers. Alan is a public speaker with a positive outlook on life. He inspires large audiences with his lectures and gives his time freely to students who seek his advice about assignments or dissertations.

Alan prays regularly and visits his parish church in Cambridge every Sunday when he is not travelling. In his work he does not talk about his spiritual practice but his principles and authentic behaviour attract trusting people into his working life from different cultural, spiritual or religious backgrounds.

Neither Alan nor Anupam talk much about their spiritual practices in the workplace. It is something that they both consider private and personal. They both have a strong connection with the divine, the all connecting force of the universe. Although they use different names, follow different rituals, celebrate different festivals they are both informed and guided by the same spirit. Their decisions are based upon the spiritual principles expressed in the Vedas for Anupam and in the Bible for Alan.

In their communities and in their work environments they lead by example and their behaviour inspire others to act in more considerate and connected ways.

In this paper I have used two very different examples of spirituality to illustrate the positive impact of such practices on working life, entrepreneurial behaviour and decision making. A growing body of research evidence demonstrates that “business leaders can achieve success, recognition, peace of mind and happiness, while at the same time serving the needs of all those affected by their leadership, when they lead from a spiritual basis.” (Pruzan and Pruzan Mikkelsen 2007: XIV).

5 Conclusion

This paper focused on some aspects of connectedness and spirituality. It was argued that in order to address the complex challenges of the world that impact the lives not only of those who currently live on the planet but also the lives of future generations as well as of the environment we need a more connected and responsible approach to decision making.

Spiritual practices help individuals to put life into a broader perspective, look beyond ego driven desires and search for meaning through seeking connection with the transcendent, with others, with themselves and the environment.

A Hindu and a Christian example were offered to illustrate that although the language, the texts and the practices are different in the two spiritual traditions they both encourage people to follow and practice spiritual principles, seek connectedness with the transcendent, with other people, themselves and the environment. Spiritual practices require self-discipline and courage to reflect on one's actions and behavior honestly acknowledge mistakes and shortcomings and aim for continuous improvement.

Research in developmental psychology gives equal importance to one's external and internal development and suggests that a fully developed individual (someone who has a well-developed capacity to reflect and explore the inner world as well as the external world) will lead a life that is respectfully connected to others and to the universe through wisdom.

Where we find the approach that resonates with us and how we learn to connect with the silence inside is incidental and secondary to our ultimate need to belong to that all connecting silence. "I learned the practice of Buddhist sitting at a Trappist monastery from a German Jesuit priest teaching Christian spiritual direction to Indonesian Catholics in Java. Perhaps that says something about the adaptability of the wisdom of the practice of Buddhist sitting. But the silence toward which this practice directs us does not belong to Buddhism or any tradition that adopts it. Rather, we belong to the silence and continue to search in innumerable ways for its embrace." (Gross and Muck 2003: 19)

To satisfy our need to connect requires commitment and self-discipline to a daily practice of meditation, prayer and reflection. Whilst this is a personal choice and gives benefits primarily to the individual its impact on the business and the social environment should not be dismissed or underestimated.

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