# Put Your Spirituality to Work

## Book 2: Work as a Spiritual Practice

Conversation starters for the workplace

Debra and William Miller
Edited by Vijay Srinivas

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## Conversation Starters for the Workplace

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2-sided printing and copying.

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# CONTENTS


**Introduction** 1

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2.1 | Shifting to a Spiritual View of Work | 5 |
| 2.2 | The Power of Spiritual Character | 7 |
| 2.3 | Spiritual Character Part 1: Defining Your Spiritual Context | 9 |
| 2.4 | Spiritual Character Part 2: Identifying Your Spiritual Purpose | 12 |
| 2.5 | Spiritual Character Part 3: Embodying Spiritual Values | 14 |
| 2.6 | Spiritual Character Part 4: Reducing Ego Desires | 17 |
| 2.7 | Practicing Sacrifice at Work | 20 |
| 2.8 | Totally Involved – Completely Detached | 23 |
| 2.9 | Working with Devotion | 25 |
| 2.10 | "Waking Up" Spiritual Wisdom | 27 |
| 2.11 | Bless Outside for Happiness Inside | 29 |
| 2.12 | See, Savour and Serve the Divine | 32 |
| 2.13 | Positive Spirit – Positive Influence | 34 |
| 2.14 | Seeing the Eternal in the Temporal | 36 |
| 2.15 | The Spiritual Basis of Creativity | 38 |
| 2.16 | Turn Your Challenges into a Creative Journey | 40 |
| 2.17 | A Safe Landing | 42 |
| 2.18 | Generating Your Future | 44 |
| 2.19 | Yes, But… Yes, And… | 47 |
| 2.20 | Being a SPIRITED Person | 49 |
| 2.21 | Waking up at Work | 52 |
| 2.22 | Light Up Your Work with Purpose | 54 |
| 2.23 | Clearing the Fog | 56 |
| 2.24 | Spreading the Wealth | 58 |
| 2.25 | What's Learning You? | 60 |
| 2.26 | Beginner's Mind | 62 |
| 2.27 | A "Transforming" Attitude | 64 |
| 2.28 | Getting to the Heart of the Matter | 66 |
| 2.29 | Dauntless and Determined | 68 |
| 2.30 | Divine Assignment | 70 |

**Appendix A:** Starting a conversation group 73

**Appendix B:** About the co-authors and editor 83

# INTRODUCTION

**SUSAN**, a telephone service representative for a large health insurance company, once taught us an extremely important lesson about "work as a spiritual practice." She was known as one of the best at her job. Whenever she received a call from an angry person complaining that a huge bill had not yet been paid, she silently kept a spiritual *mantra* going in her head as she listened to the caller. It helped her maintain a peaceful mind and reminded her that the caller was a spiritual being in his or her own right. She kept connecting with the caller, heart to heart, in every word she said and patiently demonstrated her accurate listening. Soon, angry callers became calm, and began to trust that she would really do her best to help them.

Susan saw her job as a spiritual practice. She knew that her work time consumed a large portion of her life and therefore she wanted to invest every precious minute of that time for spiritual growth. It naturally gave her the dividends of high job effectiveness and high personal fulfilment.

What does it mean to see work as a spiritual practice? The Hindu *Bhagavad Gita* teaches three interconnected pathways for spiritual practice: the path of seeking and gaining spiritual wisdom (*jnana yoga*); the path of strengthening devotion to the Source of creation (*bhakti yoga*); and the path of selfless service to others (*karma yoga*). At work, we have the opportunity to cultivate each of these pathways and to use our work situations as a practice ground for our spiritual growth.

How would this actually work? Our interviews with spiritual-based business leaders have given us many examples. A human resource director once joined a company where there was a huge conflict between the professional staff and top management. He located his office in the middle of the professional staff, rather than isolating himself on the management floor. His basis for doing this was his innate faith in the

unchanging Truth that we are all Divine. It wasn't something he needed to preach about, it was something he naturally lived and demonstrated through his actions at work. As a result of taking this step, he was able to facilitate a complete turnaround in the attitudes of both the management and the professional staff.

The chairman of an international chemical company once told us, "Everyone must feel taller when they walk out of my office than when they walked in." Through his devotion to the spiritual growth of each employee, he made this his number one priority. He said he was willing to give whatever amount of time it took to support his people through any challenge or opportunity they faced at work. He would tell them with a big smile, "You can only get away from me if you feel better about yourself and the situation after we talk, than you did before."

A partner with a large CPA firm taught us about selfless service when he shared an experience he had with a young employee. This employee had made some key errors that brought negative attention to the firm. While the partner agreed with the decision to let the employee go, he also sought to selflessly assist the employee by meeting him personally. He had the young man fly to his city and throughout their meeting together he treated him with respect and dignity. The partner's intent was to help the employee leave the firm with self-respect and self-confidence, so that he could learn from this experience and be successful in the future.

So, ask yourself: *What does "seeing work as a spiritual practice" mean to me? How can I see work as an opportunity for furthering my spiritual growth?*

STARTING A CONVERSATION[1]. Have you ever wished that you could more easily talk about spirituality at work, yet didn't know how to begin? The easiest way we've found is to have an inviting and stimulating topic, an atmosphere of open hearts and minds, and some contemplative self-inquiry questions.

Inviting and stimulating topics. Each article in this book can be a stimulus to start an inspiring conversation about work as a spiritual practice. Each one is around 700 words in length and can be read in about 5 minutes. Throughout these articles we share how to bring alive the words of spiritual masters, teachers and leaders from various cultures worldwide in your everyday work.

An atmosphere of open hearts and minds. We have found that inviting and stimulating conversations about spirituality at work absolutely require an open mind

[1] For a full discussion on how to start a conversation group, plus guidelines for facilitating a group, see Appendix A.

and, more importantly, an open heart if you truly want to go beyond surface talk. We also discovered what it means – and doesn't mean – to be in conversation and dialogue, rather than in argument and opposition. To us, conversation means:

- Listening and sharing from the heart – not arguing from the mind
- Inquiring with curiosity – not conducting an inquisition
- Self-disclosing – not lecturing
- Discerning – not criticising
- Learning with humility – not "knowing it all" with arrogance
- Respecting each person's own experience – not being dogmatic about "the right way"

Spiritual texts in India make the distinction between the *mind* that excels in dualistic analysis and the *wisdom of the heart* that can see the unity underlying all diversity. We've learned that the type of conversation we are talking about is guided by that unitive intelligence, while arguments occur when the dualistic mind is solely running the show. To uncover and illumine what it truly means to make spirituality the foundation for our work, we found it was essential that we allow the wisdom of the heart to be in charge. It is far wiser than the analytical mind – it sees more expansively, more deeply, and more clearly. It also allows true conversation and dialogue without sacrificing the capability to observe, discern, and discriminate.

Contemplative self-inquiry questions. When you reach the end of an article, you will find self-inquiry questions; we heartily encourage you to "stop, look inside, and listen." Listen for your inner voice of wisdom and then hold each inquiry in silence without needing to have immediate answers. Allow your knowing to deepen slowly. From that space within you, begin to share and listen to others with an open heart and mind.

**Where to start?**
**Select an article that feels most enlivening**
**and invite your colleagues to engage in a conversation!**

**Also, see Appendix A for lots of ideas on**
**how to start a conversion group.**

## 2.1 SHIFTING TO A SPIRITUAL VIEW OF WORK

How do you currently view your work? And how does that view shape your experiences and decisions? You will find that seeing work from a spiritual view gives you a totally different perspective toward situations.

A FINANCIAL consultant once spent many hours working to secure prospective clients, but was unable to close the sales. His manager told him that either he would need to improve his numbers or the company might ask him to go. The consultant began to view both his manager and his prospects as adversaries. He became sceptical whether his work would ever pay off and despaired about his career.

At this point, we invited him to see his work from a spiritual view. He realised that his spiritual view involved the notion of deep, inner trust. He discovered that when he saw his work situations through the spiritual lens of "trust," he could release his negative judgments and feel in himself a greater capability to earn and keep another person's trust.

From this spiritual view, he realised that the work he had done for his prospect was very thorough and trustworthy. He went into the next meeting trusting himself and trusting that his client would see the value of what he had prepared. He got the account, and a whole new track opened up for him for his confidence and career.

*How do you currently view your work? And how does that view shape your experiences and decisions?*

We have found that seeing work from a spiritual view gives us a totally different perspective toward situations we face, just as it was with the financial consultant. Those "different perspectives" have qualities such as:

- *Appreciating the "gift" of the situation* – there's less resistance and more openness to explore the opportunities at hand.
- *Broadening time horizons* – it's easier to see "What's brought us to this point?" and "What's the effect on the future?"
- *Having no attachment to a particular outcome* – there's more creativity and less defensiveness.
- *Rising above dualities and paradoxes* – the situation is no longer a case of "win-lose," choices.
- *Exercising wise, heartful discernment* – decisions are made with a clear, compassionate mind.

So how do you shift to a spiritual view of work? First, define what YOU mean by "spirituality." Spirituality can mean many things to different people such as:

- Tapping into a deeper meaning in life
- Having a relationship with the Source of creation (i.e. Brahman, God, Allah, etc.)
- Being "fully conscious" of the Source of life and living from that awareness
- Living in harmony with the essential nature and inter-connectedness of creation
- Inquiring into the nature of one's true Self
- Experiencing oneness with Divinity
- Living all aspects of life according to a set of religious principles

Second, expand on your definition. If your definition of spirituality is "having a relationship with the Source of creation," then you might expand on it by saying:

> *For me, there is a single "Original Source" of all Creation. People, and all creation, are embodiments of Divinity. The purpose of life is Oneness with the Divine.*

Third, review your expanded perspective of spirituality and see if you can find a 1-to-4 word "theme" for it. This theme is your "spiritual context" – the 'container' or 'frame of reference' within which you view and experience your work. A theme that runs through the above example is *Oneness with the Divine*. For the financial consultant, the theme was "Inner Trust."

Fourth, put this spiritual context to work by asking yourself: *What is a situation I face at work that I would like to see and act upon from a spiritual view?* With that situation in mind, quietly bring the theme of your spiritual context into your present awareness. Without attempting to solve or change the situation, examine it from the perspective of your spiritual context, asking yourself: *How does this situation look from my spiritual context? What would I think, feel, say, and do from my spiritual context?*

In summary, ask yourself: W*hat is my own personal definition and understanding of spirituality? What is the theme of my spiritual context? What difference do I see in my work situations when I shift to a spiritual view?*

## 2.2 THE POWER OF SPIRITUAL CHARACTER

Spiritual character is already inherent in our very nature – we do not have to look outside of ourselves for it. It's an inner power that radiates and communicates beyond our words and deeds.

**IN HIGH SCHOOL** and college, Debra excelled in accounting and William in mathematics. So, from time to time we love to represent new ideas using numbers or equations. As we were looking at the components that make up our view of spiritual character, we realised there was a great equation we could use:

$$\textit{Spiritual Character} = \frac{\textit{Spiritual Context} + \textit{Spiritual Purpose} + \textit{Spiritual Values}}{\textit{Ego Desires}}$$

In this equation, *Spiritual Context* is how purely you live by a spiritual view of life that gives meaning to everything you do. *Spiritual Purpose* is how focused you are in fulfilling your most essential goals in life. *Spiritual Values* are how well you embody the spiritual qualities that are most important to you. And *Ego Desires* is how much you live to fulfil self-centred, self-serving needs and wants.

What we love about this equation is that it clearly demonstrates the source of the power of spiritual character, and its relationship to our ego desires. Our spiritual character goes up as we strengthen our spiritual context, purpose and values, and as we reduce our ego desires. As our ego desires approach zero, our spiritual character approaches infinity.

In future articles we will focus on each component of this equation and share with you how you can fully develop your spiritual character.

For now, let's explore the power of living and working from our spiritual character. To begin with, spiritual character is already inherent in our very nature – we do not have to look outside of ourselves for it. We have all the "raw material" within us, and all we have to do is recognise it and nurture it to maturity.

What is this "raw material"? Spiritual texts from around the world give us some insight:

> *Be sincere and truthful; be fearless and equanimous; show goodwill to all; don't harm any living creature. All these are the virtues that reveal the real nature of human beings: Divinity. (Baghavad Gita 16:1-3)*

> *The seed of God is in us. Given an intelligent and hardworking farmer, it will thrive and grow up to God… and accordingly its fruits will be God-nature.* (Meister Eckhart, 14th century Christian mystic)

> *We are all of God, and towards Him we are progressing*. (Koran ii:156)

> *If you want to know Me, look inside your heart.* (Tao Te Ching 70)

In the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, where William is a guest faculty teaching MBA students, the foundation of their education is building spiritual character. This is based on the teachings of its founder Sathya Sai Baba, who says:

> *The end of education is character. Many people think that knowledge is power. It is not so. In fact, character is power.*

The respect that the students have for each other, their teachers, and others is clearly evident even in the smallest tasks they are engaged in. Their ability to collaborate creatively together in a wide variety of academic and community projects is one of the most noticeable aspects of their spiritual character.

Just like this university, our daily work life provides a rich opportunity to develop the "true power," of our spiritual character. This power is not the same as "authority or positional" power in an organisation. It's an inner power that radiates and communicates beyond our words and deeds.

A spiritual-based leader we interviewed was known in his organisation for speaking honestly. As a result, he developed an unusually forthright relationship with the chairman. When offered a prestigious position in the chairman's office, he turned it down because he felt he would "lose his soul." He believed it would require him to do and support things that he didn't necessarily believe in, and he was unwilling to do that. As he says, "I was never so ambitious that I tried to advance my career at any cost."

In summary, the Buddha spoke of the power of spiritual character when he said:

> *Those who have character and discrimination, who are honest and good and follow the dharma with devotion, win the respect of the world.* (Dhammapada #217)

So, ask yourself: *What are ways that I express the power of my spiritual character at work? Where do I feel my spiritual character could be stronger?*

## 2.3 SPIRITUAL CHARACTER PART 1: DEFINING YOUR SPIRITUAL CONTEXT

Spiritual context is the first step in developing your spiritual character; it is the 'container' or 'frame of reference' within which you experience all of life, including your work.

IN OUR 1ST article on spiritual character ("The Power of Spiritual Character"), we shared with you the following equation that we use to define and develop spiritual character:

$$\textit{Spiritual Character} = \frac{\textit{Spiritual Context + Spiritual Purpose + Spiritual Values}}{\textit{Ego Desires}}$$

The first element of this equation, your spiritual context, represents your spiritual view of life. The dictionary defines context as: *the interrelated conditions in which something exists or occurs: an environment*. So your spiritual context is the spiritual 'container' or 'frame of reference' within which you experience all of life, including your work.

To define your spiritual context, take some time to inwardly reflect on and answer these questions:

1. How do you define spirituality, in your own words?
2. How would you expand more fully on your definition? (this is your spiritual context)
3. What is the theme, in 1-4 words, that summarises what you've thought of?

Here's how Ashoke Maitra, former Human Resource Director for the Times of India, answered those questions:

1. *My definition of spirituality is that the soul is Divine, and the goal is to manifest this Divinity.*
2. *I believe that I am not the body; I am the soul, and each soul is potentially Divine. I may manifest this Divinity through karma, bakthi, or jnana yoga; or, I may do it by teaching, training, or being a carpenter. What matters to me spiritually is to give expression to the Divinity that is perceived as dormant, but is actually alive in each person.*
3. *My spiritual context theme is "Manifestation of latent Divinity."*

What does a spiritual context look like in action in the business world? Ashoke has brought his spiritual context alive in his employee training programmes. As he says,

> *We are telling people that, "Yes, you have joined an industry. Yes, you need your children, family, a certain amount of technology, and money to survive in life. But this is not all there is. Your true joy will come in your own spiritual realisation."*

To put his spiritual context to work, he has developed employee training programmes that include subjects such as self-perfection, controlling and integrating the body and mind, and examining values and mental balance. *"All of this has to do with your original self,"* Ashoke says.

Here's how you can put your spiritual context to work:

1. Identify a work situation that you would like to see from a new perspective.
2. Look at that situation from your spiritual context.
3. From your spiritual context, ask yourself: How do I now see this situation? What new insights and feelings am I aware of? How could I approach this situation from my new perspective?
4. Write down any creative ideas or solutions that come as a result of seeing your situation from your spiritual context.

Sometimes it's easier to practice these steps on a work situation that isn't quite so personal. Try this situation:

> Imagine that you're working in an insurance company processing claims. Your company recently made a major public commitment to reply to claims within 96 hours, so the pressure is on everyone to be very productive.
>
> You work fast, but many in your workgroup are dissatisfied with this work pressure and spend a lot of time complaining instead of working. For the past two weeks, your supervisor has given you almost twice as many claims as she has to others who are equally paid, but less productive. The supervisor tells you it's because you're faster and the group needs to keep up with the new performance standards.

*From your spiritual context, how would you see and approach this practice situation?*

To build your skills in working from your spiritual context, find ways to keep it in your awareness throughout the day. Find such things as pictures, cards, poems, quotes, and books to remind you to keep your focus on seeing things from your

spiritual context. Perhaps share this article and your spiritual context with co-workers who might be interested and supportive of these ideas.

It's important to give yourself a chance to mature as you grow in your overall spiritual character. Ultimately, be patient. Be persistent. And remember to "practice, practice, practice."

## 2.4 SPIRITUAL CHARACTER PART 2: IDENTIFYING YOUR SPIRITUAL PURPOSE

Spiritual purpose supplies direction and energy to our work, beyond the normal motivation to do a good job. It gives meaning to otherwise mundane affairs, and inspires selfless service to others.

**AS WE DISCUSSED** in our previous articles, the first step in developing spiritual character is to identify your spiritual context, which is your spiritual view of life. The second step is to identify and live your spiritual purpose.

William once attended a dialogue between a Christian monk and a Jewish rabbi on the similarities of their spiritual purpose. Brother David Steinelrast and Rabbi Dinn spoke eloquently of their common belief in One God and their similarity of spiritual values. Finally, during question-and-answer, a woman in the audience said, "I'm thrilled to hear what you've said, but let's face it: Brother David, you're a celibate monk, and Rabbi Dinn, you have a family with 12 kids. What's so similar about that?"

William moved to the edge of his seat to hear their answer. Brother David smiled and replied, "It's really very simple. For each of us the goal of life is to find the circumstances in which we most easily experience an intimate relationship with God, and then repeat those circumstances as often as possible. For me, that's when I'm alone; for Rabbi Dinn, it's in the context of family."

Each of us has our own way of naming our unique spiritual purpose. In Sanskrit, this purpose would be called our individual *dharma* and signifies our unique role or duty in life. It grows out of our spiritual context and can find a powerful expression through our work. For Brother David, his spiritual context was "intimacy with God" and his spiritual purpose was "to pursue that experience of intimacy alone and to communicate about it with others." As an author and speaker, he is most eloquent in helping others find within themselves their own sense of spirituality and purpose.

Spiritual purpose supplies direction and energy to our work, beyond the normal motivation to do a good job. It gives meaning to otherwise mundane affairs, and inspires selfless service to others. In a life sciences company, whose mission was to help provide food for the expanding population on this planet, executives spent time together defining their individual sense of purpose. Here's what key individuals said about their purpose:

- Corporate President: *I inspire and connect people, capabilities and strategies to feed the world and make it a better place to live.*
- Business Sector President: *I nurture and am nurtured by the extraordinary potential of people and the magnificence of nature.*

To identify your spiritual purpose, begin by tuning into your spiritual context, and imagine you are 75 years old looking back over your life. From that vantage point…

1. What would you want to have acquired?
2. What would you want to have achieved?
3. What would you want to have experienced?
4. What gifts and talents do you want to have developed and expressed?
5. What contributions do you want to have made?
6. What type of person do you want to have become?
7. What relation do you want to have developed with the Creator and the creation?

Look through all your answers and see if you can find a theme, especially in the last three questions. See how your theme relates to your spiritual context and try on this theme as your "spiritual purpose." Look closely with your heart, for as Carl Jung once said:

> *Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. He who looks outside, dreams; he who looks inside, awakens.*

In a workshop for managers at an industrial gas company, the participants answered these questions and then formulated their purpose statement. One woman said her purpose was to help each member of her family fulfil their potential 100%. When she started to connect that purpose to her work, she saw that she could consider *all* her employees as part of her family; thus making her spiritual purpose at work to help each employee fulfil their potential as human beings, not just as productive workers. Making this connection, she immediately felt her enthusiasm and her motivation for her work rise exponentially.

So, ask yourself: *What would I consider to be my spiritual purpose? How is it based in my spiritual context? How do I see I can use my work to fulfil that spiritual purpose?*

## 2.5 SPIRITUAL CHARACTER PART 3: EMBODYING SPIRITUAL VALUES

Spiritual values are qualities that you already have inherent in you, They are natural, spiritual strengths that you can draw upon in your life and work, and are the basis of a happy, healthy, and whole human being.

**IN THE PAST** few articles, we've focused on various aspects of developing spiritual character, as found in our equation:

$$\textit{Spiritual Character} = \frac{\textit{Spiritual Context} + \textit{Spiritual Purpose} + \textit{Spiritual Values}}{\textit{Ego Desires}}$$

Here we focus on how to embody spiritual values. The word "value" comes from the Latin verb "valere," which means "to be worth" and "to be strong." Spiritual values reflect what is important to us from a spiritual perspective. They are also natural, spiritual strengths that we can draw upon in our life and work. We like to say that they're built into our DNA – "Divine Natural Attributes" – as they are the basis of a happy, healthy, and whole human being.

Spiritual values are qualities that you already ARE. They are your natural strengths that you can draw from in the most challenging situations. For example, Ken Bertaccini, the Chief Quality Officer of AT&T Consumer Products was given the monumental task of turning around one of their least profitable divisions within two years, or the business would be abandoned. His overall strategy included a training programme focused on values such as truthfulness and right action – called "Project Miracles."

Ken continually brought forth his personal spiritual value of love throughout the process. Later when he became CEO of his division, he altered the business's statement of values to include the word, "Love." As he told his employees:

> *I think we're ready to legitimise the "L word" and put love in our business... Love in the context of love your neighbour as you love yourself, and treating others as you would like to be treated. Putting love in our Shared Values Pyramid sends a message to our people and to everybody, inside and outside AT&T, that we really do care.*

By applying his most natural spiritual strength of love, Ken Bertaccini's division became one of the most profitable in AT&T within two years, and had the highest morale as well!

As we've studied spiritual texts from many religions, we've consistently found five common values that define human nature at its highest: truth, right conduct, peace, love, and non-violence. For example:

Baghavad Gita 16:1-3:

> *Be sincere and truthful; give freely and control the senses; be fearless and equanimous; be loving and show goodwill to all; don't harm any living creature.*

Jesus said:

> *The Truth shall make you free… Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness… Peace be with you… Love one another… Love your enemies.* (John 8:32, Matthew 5:6, Luke 24:36, John 13:34, Matthew 5:44)

Sayings of Muhammad, #173:

> *When you speak, speak the truth. Perform what you promise. Keep your heart free from malice towards anyone. Love your fellow-beings first. Withhold your hand from striking.*

These spiritual values are fundamentally important to work success:

- *Truth* can open lines of communication, leading to more informed, wise decisions.
- *Right action* can ensure that agreements are kept, building trustworthiness.
- *Peace* can foster proactive rather than reactive responses, and focus on resolving issues rather than blaming.
- *Love* can generate sincere caring that results in a more aligned teamwork among employees.
- *Non-violence* can provide an uplifting spirit of collaboration and respect for people, resources, and the environment.

When we are sincere about working by our spiritual values, even those who don't consider themselves spiritual can appreciate them. For example William once conducted an exercise (which you might also want to try) with school bus drivers, focusing on their values at work. He asked them to (1) *List the top ten things that are important to you; (2) select the top three; (3) name one that you would like to see more of in your workplace.* One person was rather resistant to this "values stuff," and was rather rough in his language. But when the group was reporting the top values

they'd selected, everyone's head turned in surprise when he said, "Love." He explained, "Isn't that what life is about? Loving yourself and each other the best you can."

*Drawing from your spiritual context and purpose, take a few moments to reflect and see what spiritual values come most naturally for you. Using your list of spiritual values, identify ways you can actively express them as strengths in your work.*

## 2.6 SPIRITUAL CHARACTER PART 4: REDUCING EGO DESIRES

Our spiritual character goes up as we reduce our ego desires; but if we increase our ego desires our spiritual character approaches zero. Spiritual character is true power – the power that will be honoured by others who see their own, pure selves reflected in you.

**HAVE YOU EVER** known someone at work who always focused on "me, me, me" – preoccupied with enhancing their reputation or career, even at the expense of other people? You might have thought, "This person has such a big ego." The desires that spring from such an ego greatly diminish spiritual character.

What exactly are "ego desires"? The word "ego" is the Latin language word for "I" and means "the self, especially as contrasted with another self or the world." An ego desire originates from a feeling of separateness; its motivation is to satisfy individual wants and needs for our own self-centred, even selfish, benefit.

In our article on spiritual character ("The Power of Spiritual Character"), we shared with you the following equation that we use to define and develop spiritual character:

$$\textit{Spiritual Character} = \frac{\textit{Spiritual Context} + \textit{Spiritual Purpose} + \textit{Spiritual Values}}{\textit{Ego Desires}}$$

We love how this equation clearly demonstrates the relationship between spiritual character and ego desires. In a way, ego desires are the singularly most influential aspect of the equation. Our spiritual character goes up as we reduce our ego desires; but if we increase our ego desires, our spiritual character approaches zero.

What kind of ego desires do we have at work? We might be concerned about:

- What do others think of me? (status, reputation, "image," getting attention…)
- What do I think of myself? (self-image, self-importance…)
- What self-gratifying experiences can I have? (achieving goals, being recognised…)
- What things can I have? (office/work environment, latest technology…)
- What power can I have? (job authority, control…)
- What money can I have? (salary, other compensation…)

Are these ego desires natural to have? Yes -- from the feeling of separateness. But from a spiritual view, they are limiting and even harmful. The mind is a desire-fulfilling mechanism. If an ego desire is fulfilled, the mind looks for another one to fulfil; it's a never-ending process, infinitely expanding our ego desires. Thus, for everyone, in any job, the downside of having many ego desires can be a heavily burdened mind, with physical/emotional/spiritual burnout.

If the mind with its unlimited ego desires is the master and we are its servant, then we act in ways that are self-centred, egotistical, indulgent, and greedy. Thus, we diminish our spiritual character. If instead we are motivated to act by the promptings from our spiritual context, purpose and values, we are more likely to focus on:

- Looking for ways to meaningfully serve others, rather than to achieve personal gain
- Telling the truth even if it's temporarily embarrassing
- Collaborating rather than arguing a point
- Taking responsibility for mistakes or for hurting someone by sincerely apologising
- Genuinely considering in advance the impact of our thoughts, words and deeds on others
- Acting ethically rather than corruptly

So how do we actually reduce our ego desires at work? We suggest these beginning steps:

1. Become aware within yourself of the difference between your ego desires and promptings from your spiritual character. Make a list of the ego desires that arise for you at work.
2. One by one, take each ego desire and replace it with a spiritual prompting by asking the question: "From my spiritual context, purpose and values, what am I prompted to think, say and do in this situation?"
3. Day by day continue to build your awareness and strength to shift from your ego desires to your spiritual promptings at work.

You will notice that when you follow your spiritual promptings, you will more and more have the feeling of not being the "doer." You will no longer need to be the primary beneficiary of what you do, and yet your sense of deep inner fulfilment will increase. Your recognition and appreciation of the simple things in life will also naturally increase. All this occurs because you are exercising your deeper, spiritual nature at work.

Some say knowledge is power. Instead, we say that spiritual character is true power – the power that will be honoured by others who see their own, pure selves reflected in you.

So, ask yourself: *What are examples of my ego desires at work? What spiritual promptings might replace them in what I think, say, and do?*

## 2.7 PRACTISING SACRIFICE AT WORK

"Sacrifice" is a word that has many unpleasant connotations for people, especially in the workplace. But from a spiritual view, sacrifice is anything that takes a situation and makes it sacred, holy, whole and healthy.

**"SACRIFICE"** is a word that has many unpleasant connotations for people, especially in the workplace. When a manager says, "We have to make some sacrifices around here," it usually means giving something up, or doing without something, either of which would make things more difficult.

But there's an entirely different way to look at sacrifice, from a spiritual point of view. From its Latin roots, the word sacrifice actually means "to make sacred." Following the chain of original meanings, sacred means "holy," holy means "whole," and whole means "healthy." Thus, sacrifice is anything that takes a situation and makes it sacred, holy, whole and healthy.

The *Bhagavad Gita* speaks pointedly about the source and importance of sacrifice (yagna). First, true sacrifice involves selfless action that is motivated from our spiritual source:

> *Every selfless, sacred action (every sacrifice) is born of the Godhead. (3:15)*

Second, sacrifice is the fundamental law of nature.

> *All of life is born of, nourished, and sustained by selfless action, by sacrifice. The whole scheme of nature is centred not on grabbing but on offering selfless action. (3:14, 15)*

Third, sacrifice inspires us to dedicate the fruits of our actions to benefit the greater whole:

> *At the beginning, mankind and the obligation of selfless service were created together. Sacrifice means offering, helping and being dedicated to the welfare of all humanity. It implies a mutuality of existence with all other beings. (3:10)*

So, sacrifice is essential for us to be in harmony with creation as well as the Creator. Not to sacrifice is to move away from holiness, wholeness and health. In terms of our spiritual growth, the purpose of sacrifice is to give us the opportunity to reduce our ego desires, and thus feel less separate from Divinity (more whole and healthy).

How can we practise sacrifice at work? One starting point is to be aware of our motivation. If we are motivated by our ego-desires – which are based on separateness rather than our connection to the greater whole – we will feel that sacrifice means "giving up" something while still feeling a desire for it. If we are motivated from our spiritual source, we will feel that sacrifice means "giving to" something that is bigger than ourselves, thus leaving us with a natural sense of fulfilment.

One way to tune into our real motivation is whether we are attached to receiving something in return for what we do. In other words, are we primarily motivated by what we might get back, or by what we are able to give?

The spirit of sacrifice is a fundamental foundation for a prosperous, healthy workplace. For example:

- The marketing department of an agricultural-chemicals company in India annually makes a small "temple" constructed from its various products and conducts a ritual honouring their customers as embodiments of Divinity. Thus they dedicate themselves to serving their customers as they would serve God.

- Many shopkeepers we have met consistently take a moment to offer silent thanksgiving whenever they receive money from their customers. They continually remember Divinity as the source of their well-being.

- A multi-national company had accumulated a large pool of money for management bonuses; but the top management, led by a spiritual CEO, decided to use the money to give everyone in the company two days of vacation. And management told their customers that the company would be closed for two days to celebrate their success.

- An entrepreneur we know who operates a travel agency and taxi service, always puts major decisions on his home altar and waits for Divine guidance before taking any action. He sees every aspect of his business as an opportunity to serve Divinity in his customers.

Ultimately, working with a spirit of sacrifice brings forth our own highest potential because it strengthens our connection with the sacred source of life. It also evokes the best in others while contributing to the harmony and well-being of all.

So, ask yourself: *How do I know when the motivations for my actions are coming from my spiritual source? What are some specific indicators I have at work that tell me when I am selflessly serving others in the spirit of sacrifice?*

## 2.8 TOTALLY INVOLVED – COMPLETELY DETACHED

When your source of motivation comes from your spiritual basis, you will naturally experience an equanimous detachment, while at the same time being fully dedicated to and acting toward your goal.

**G. NARAYANA**, Chairman Emeritus of Excel Industries, Ltd. in India, once told us:

> *If you worry about the fruits, then you have your attention on the scoreboard and not the ball. If you concentrate on the ball, the scoreboard will happen automatically. If you are looking at the scoreboard, you will lose the ball. If you do good work, you will get the returns, so do not worry about them.*

The text of the *Bhagavad Gita* further explains:

> *Do your worldly duty, but do it without any attachment to it or desire for its fruits. Keep your mind always on the Divine.*

Both of these statements have enlightened us personally about what it means to be "totally involved, yet completely detached" in our work. We also refer to this as desire-less action or self-less action. But how is this possible in the workplace, where everything is so goal-driven? Isn't it natural to be attached to meeting goals? If we weren't attached, wouldn't we put forth less effort?

Yes, setting goals and working toward them is natural. So, what makes the difference between being attached and being unattached to a goal? The key we have found is to recognise the *source* of our motivation. Is our goal intended to satisfy a self-serving ego-desire? Or is our goal coming from our spiritual basis?

When our source of motivation comes from our spiritual basis, we naturally experience an equanimous detachment, while at the same time being fully dedicated to and acting toward our goals. Here is what we have found happens when we work from this spiritual source of motivation:

***We engage in our work at our full capacity.*** Have you ever wanted to accomplish something so badly that you felt extremely worried and tense, and you couldn't really think clearly? In sports, it's well known that the athletes who can be totally focused, yet relaxed, perform at their very best. At work, when we are unattached to an outcome, we open ourselves to a higher wisdom that enables us to use our full potential to accomplish the goal.

***We focus on goals that come from a transcendent source****.* Have you ever accomplished a goal only to discover that having achieved it, it was not very satisfying? When we ask our inner guidance, "What goal is most called for here?" we are more likely to set goals that are transcendent, not ego-based – ones that have a pure meaning that provides a true sense of fulfilment.

***We gain wisdom from the outcome, no matter what it is.*** Have you ever failed to reach a goal and later realised that not reaching the goal was the best thing that could have happened? If a goal is not reached, it's the perfect opportunity for learning – for gaining new Self-awareness and knowledge, and to strengthen our ability to listen to our intuition and conscience.

***We grow spiritually.*** Have you ever felt that you were a personal failure when you didn't achieve something? Coming from a spiritual basis, we can trust in our inherent worth as a spark of Divinity, rather than feeding our egos and measuring our self-worth by our achievements.

V.V. Ranganathan, a senior partner with a leading professional services firm, sums up these lessons:

> *Yes, God has given me the equipment to pursue my desires, but I must do so in such a manner that they are not fuelled by selfishness or egoism. This means to immerse myself in the work that I have been entrusted to do and perform it with devotion, without expecting anything in return. And I know from my own experience that this works.*

Some people approach self-less, desire-less action as "following the Will of God" -- they tune in to a "higher will" rather than their individualised ego-will. Others see it as dedicating the fruits of their actions to a Divine Source, which leads them to give their very best no matter what the circumstances. Still others simply foster an inner equanimity about the results and act from that basis.

So, ask yourself: *When have I experienced being totally involved, yet completely detached at work? What was my source of motivation at that time? How can I build on the strength of this experience?*

## 2.9 WORKING WITH DEVOTION

The path of devotion brings us a purity of mind and heart that leads to spiritual fulfilment. This naturally allows us to give others the best of what we have to offer through our work.

**YOU MAY KNOW** people who are "devoted to their work" – meaning that they are dedicated to their careers and their jobs. If this comes from the ego, it means that they experience self-gratification from what they do. The reasons could be many: perhaps the power they enjoy, perhaps the use of their talents, perhaps the difference they make through their work. There's nothing wrong with this type of devotion and certainly it has contributed to the betterment of our world in many ways.

However, if our devotion to our work only remains at this self-gratifying level, we are missing a huge opportunity for spiritual growth. So come with us as we explore this path of devotion as a spiritual practice at work.

In Swami Ranganathananda's commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita*, he explains the instructions that Krishna gave to Arjuna regarding this path of devotion:

> *Krishna tells us, "Whatever actions you do, do it as an offering for Me." This means if you are working in an office, treat that as serving the Lord. Then he told Arjuna, "Keep Me as the supreme Goal." That means make everything secondary and God as the primary goal. Then he said, "Be My devotee." Here he is telling us that the only relation between you and He (God) is pure love. If only we were to keep to these few practical instructions, nothing more would be needed. Bhakti (devotion) is always simple.*

These instructions are similar to those given by the Buddha when he advised people to take refuge in the consciousness he attained. And Jesus clearly asked his disciples to believe in him and his teachings so that they could know God. Also, the Koran focuses on this dedication of everything to God in this passage:

> *Surely My earth is vast. Therefore, Me alone should you serve.*

We have found this quality of devotion to be much more practical than we at first realised. For example, Amber Chand, co-founder of Eziba, an international company that markets the products of artisans from around the world, told us:

> *I remembered my childhood where my mother and father taught me to treat a guest as God. You do everything you can to make their time with you happy and*

*satisfying. During our first customer training, I told our employees that the customer is God. When the customer calls, we drop everything and we listen.*

But what happens when a customer is unhappy?

*I always pick up the phone and call them; I begin by apologising to them. The customers are amazed; they cannot believe that one of the founders is taking the time to call them. From this call, I always end up with a happy customer.*

When our devotion comes from a spiritual basis it also helps us to purify our minds and hearts, which can lead us to becoming like the one we are devoted to, and working as Divinity would work. As Mother Teresa tells us:

*We all long for heaven where God is, but we have it in our power to be in heaven with Him at this very moment. Being happy with Him now means loving as He loves, helping as He helps, giving as He gives, serving as He serves…*

G. Narayana, Chairman Emeritus of Excel Industries Ltd., described how he put the power of devoted love into action when he was dealing with the worst year of profitability his company had ever faced:

*We gave continuous love to every person, and made sure that each one was successful. In giving continuous love, I do not get tired. Love energises. No matter where I go, I give love, even more than information.*

When we work from spiritual devotion, we give of ourselves and uplift others through our work. We do the highest quality work with great joy and true efficiency, giving us a totally new experience of success at work. As Dr. Chattopadhyay, the Executive Director of Tata Refractories, told us:

*If I have a feeling of loving people, then I can provide a better service to the people. If I love, then I can serve better. This is success.*

So, ask yourself: *What is the source of my devotion at work? How can I use my work to strengthen my spiritual growth?*

## 2.10 "WAKING UP" SPIRITUAL WISDOM

Is it possible that the workplace could offer an even more fertile opportunity to "wake up" spiritual wisdom than going to the proverbial "forest"?

**IN ALL MAJOR** religions, the path of spiritual wisdom *(jnana* yoga) is the awakening of consciousness to see the inherent Divinity in all beings – which literally means to be aware of the "substance behind the form." As the Christian mystic Meister Eckhart once wrote:

> *Whoever has God truly as a companion is with Him in all places… When a person keeps their gaze fixed upon God, all things become God for him or her.*

Imagine the difference it could make in the quality of your work, and in the satisfaction you derive from your work, if you were steeped in this unitive consciousness that Divinity resides in all of creation. Swami Ranganathananda speaks to this in his commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita*:

> *When we learn to respect the dignity and inherent worth of ourselves and others as sparks of the one Divine Atman (God), we shall capture a high level of self-discipline, human concern, and practical efficiency. We can find joy in even the simplest work because we have put spiritual value into our work.*

Is it possible that the workplace could offer an even more fertile opportunity to "wake up" spiritual wisdom than going to the proverbial forest? Swami Vivekananda says:

> *These conceptions that I have the same God in me as you have in you must come out. They must not remain only in the forest. They must come out to work at the bar and the bench. If a lawyer thinks he is Spirit (Atma), he will be a better lawyer*.

A core practice for becoming more spiritually wise through our work is to actively seek to "awaken to the substance behind the form." At one level, this means to see the Divinity that underlies worldly objects and activities. At a more tangible level, it means looking for the "spirit" behind the goals, procedures, rules and regulations found in every workplace. By "spirit" we mean the pure, spiritual intention that underlies these codes of conduct.

For example, V.V. Ranganathan, a senior partner with a leading professional services firm, told us how he does this with clients who hire contractors who in turn hire labourers. Sometimes these contractors do not account for all the labourers, in order to avoid paying their social security to the government. Rangananthan told us:

*I ask my clients who hire such contractors, "Do you want to deal with a contractor who has such little respect for human beings? Look at the goals and values of your company. If you hire someone who is not in line with these values, you should help them understand that they must follow these values if they are going to work for you." This transports our conversation to a whole new plane altogether, a transcendent plane.*

A second practice is to be willing to "sit" in the uncomfortable uncertainty of facing complex work situations. In that silence, we can find the spiritual wisdom to guide our decisions, based on recognising and respecting the Divinity in everyone impacted by the decision.

Ricardo Levy, CEO of Catalytica, Inc., told us how he faced a decision to sell off a major part of the company he had built over 27 years:

*There were so many things we had to consider, like the employees we had attracted and what was good for our shareholders. Since I am still so hard-wired to jump in and solve problems, the whole concept of living in the unknown – to let the enormity of the decision be with me, and just rest there – helped me tremendously throughout this period. From that place I could listen to the voice of God and allow my inner spirit to give me the signals of what to do.*

Ultimately, only good can come when we use our work as an opportunity to "wake up" this spiritual wisdom within us. As Ricardo told us:

*Once I reached this internal compass marker, then the ability to harness the forces around me to get all of this done was ten fold better.*

So, ask yourself: *How can I practice seeing the Divinity that underlies all of creation? In what practical ways can I apply that spiritual wisdom in what I think, say, and do at work?*

## 2.11 BLESS OUTSIDE FOR HAPPINESS INSIDE

The workplace is an ideal ground for cultivating our good qualities and striving for the welfare of our colleagues. Thereby, we can tap into our true inner happiness and to contribute to the inner happiness of others.

**"MAY ALL BEINGS BE HAPPY"** is a beautiful blessing that S. N. Goenka, a great teacher of the Buddhist Vipassana meditation, expresses throughout his teachings. This prayer was originally sung by the ancient spiritual masters of India and is still sung around the world even today.

In the moments of singing or saying these words in a spiritual context, they seem so full of meaning for us, and our hearts truly wish for happiness for all beings. But then, as we engage in the everyday world of work, it's not so easy to maintain the spirit of this blessing for all people. It's all too easy to become agitated and impatient, and to have negative rather than positive thoughts towards others.

For example, 10 months ago we were grossly overcharged on our telephone bill. The company personnel have admitted it was due to an error in the meter at the telephone office. Yet, even after numerous calls and trips to our local telephone office, we still have not been credited for the overcharge. As we have contemplated still another trip to their office, we find it quite challenging to heartfully wish for these people to be happy!

However, when we take the quiet time to think about the value of extending this blessing of happiness to the people who work at the telephone company, we are aware of how counterproductive it is to be angry and upset about what has happened. Most people return anger for anger when it's expressed at them – and if they *were* happy, they'd most likely be more caring, courteous, and productive. As Ashoke Maitra, former Director of Human Resources for the Times of India, said to us:

> *To my mind if a person is joyful, happy and inspired, then only can that person reach the highest level of productivity and performance.*

All of this has had us inquire deeply into "What is this 'happiness' that we are wishing for all beings?"

Most people think of happiness as a feeling, an emotion, which is tied to external circumstances. Typically, we engage in the "pursuit of happiness" in order to fulfil our worldly ambitions and desires. Yet we've learned from so many spiritual masters that true, enduring happiness is not a passing emotion, but a state of being – an unconditional, inner contentment (even bliss) that is a natural expression of our inherent Divine nature.

As such, we believe that happiness is inextricably linked to spiritual growth. As Janiece Webb, formerly a senior vice president with Motorola, once told us:

> *I believe that God put us on earth to find joy and happiness and to become enlightened.*

For N. S. Raghavan, one of the co-founders of Infosys, spiritual growth provides happiness through serving others at work:

> *Spirituality is something that gives you joy, happiness and contentment, which cannot be gotten through material pursuits and knowledge; it is something beyond that. It also gives you the motivation to do something for others and gives you joy when you do.*

So, how can we tap into this true inner happiness in our everyday work, no matter how challenging the circumstances? Sathya Sai Baba, a spiritual teacher in India, gives us clear guidance:

> *Cultivate good qualities and strive for the promotion of dharma (righteousness) in the world. This will give you more enduring happiness than the acquisition of perishable worldly things.*

As we ourselves surrender our irritation with the telephone company to this lesson on happiness, it immediately begins to reshape our thoughts and has us wonder, "How can we use this experience to grow in our ability to be equanimous with the ups and downs of business?" and "How might we be able to lovingly contribute our business skills to help the telephone company transform their customer service?"

Work is a fabulous place to put these principles of cultivating our own good qualities and striving for the welfare of everyone into day-to-day practice. And, when we do, we foster both our spiritual growth and contribute to the inner happiness of others.

So, ask yourself: *What good qualities could I focus on cultivating that would increase my own internal happiness? In what ways can I give to others that would support them in growing in their happiness at work?*

## 2.12 SEE, SAVOUR, AND SERVE THE DIVINE

When we do work as a spiritual practice, it becomes a journey of wisdom, devotion and action by which we come to know, appreciate and serve everyone as sparks of Divinity.

**IN RECENT ARTICLES**, we've spoken of three different pathways that people commonly choose for growing spiritually through their work: the paths of action, devotion, and wisdom. The path of wisdom leads us to work with the awareness that Divinity is in everyone and everything. As the Sikh's book *Adi Granth* says:

> *God dwells in everything, God shines in every heart. Wherever I look, there is God; no one else is seen.*

The path of devotion inspires us to work with love, compassion, and sacrifice and see work as worship. As Confucianism says:

> *Always and in everything let there be reverence.*

The path of action emphasises work as selfless service, without any self-centred ego or will. As the *Bhagavad Gita* says:

> *Do your worldly duty, but without any attachment to it or desire for its fruits. Keep your mind always on the Divine. Be aware that the work you do should contribute in some way, directly or indirectly, to the higher good of humanity.*

Are these three paths really different? Most people tend to focus more on one of these three paths in their spiritual growth, yet if you take a closer look you'll see that they're actually quite interrelated. For example, Joanne Zimmerman, CEO of a major hospital in the USA speaks of the path of wisdom when she says:

> *I pray two times a day – prayer or meditation, they are so alike. I experience what is beyond what I can see and I let go of the reality around me. In the hardest of times – and there are hard times – I allow myself to feel the pain. I ask for help and it always comes.*

She speaks of the path of devotion when she says:

> *Every answer will not be on a spreadsheet. It all comes from a position of love. I truly love my work and the people I work with. I treat them first and foremost with love. This love allows me to create intimacies with people and to achieve higher relationships. It's real! You can also forge mountains that way.*

She speaks of the path of action and service when she says:

*I believe daily that each one makes a difference. It's not all about big things. Even giving directions to a visitor can make a difference. At the end of each day, I find one thing where I made a difference.*

Integrating these paths of wisdom, action, and devotion, the Hindu Upanishads give us this guidance:

*Strengthen inspiration for excelling in work. Come from the God within through prayer, meditation, holy readings, and unselfish work.*

In other words: work and grow through devotion (worshipful prayer), wisdom (meditation and holy readings), and action (unselfish work).

We have found that one path cannot exist apart from the others because their spiritual essence is based on the single, common foundation of seeing and appreciating the Divinity in everyone and everything. From that basis, the three paths are an indivisible whole and each path leads to the other. For example:

- When we see the inherent Divinity in all (wisdom), we become motivated by love (devotion) to serve that Divinity (action).
- When we love (devotion), we begin to see everyone as love (wisdom) and wish to serve through love (action).
- When we selflessly serve others (action), we reduce our sense of ego and see the unity of all as Divine (wisdom) and naturally feel love (devotion).

The *Srimad Bhagavatam* sums up this unity of seeing, serving, and savouring the Divinity in all:

*Looking upon all beings as Divinity – in thought, word and deed – is the best of all methods of worship.*

Ultimately, work as a spiritual path is just that: a journey along a path that leads us to know that we are all sparks of Divinity, and that we can serve that Divinity in each other with love. As Joanne Zimmerman sums up:

*The gift is the journey. Everyday is a blank slate for me. Whatever happens is part of the journey.*

So, ask yourself: *Which path of spiritual growth am I most drawn to practise in my work? How do I experience all three spiritual paths in my thoughts, words, and deeds at work?*

## 2.13 POSITIVE SPIRIT – POSITIVE INFLUENCE

When we want to have a positive influence at work, it takes more than wishing "If only *other* people would…" It takes being spiritually true to ourselves and consciously acting from that basis.

**"IF ONLY *OTHER*** people would be honest and respectful, then my company would be a better place to work." At work, it's very tempting to think this way – to focus on changing *others* rather than changing ourselves. But as the Greek philosopher Socrates (470-399 B.C.) once said:

*Let him who would move the world, first move himself.*

Or, as Ramón Ollé, President of Epson Europe, told us:

*First put yourself in order. After that, everything will follow.*

This is never more true than when you want to positively influence the people you work with. People we've known at every level of organisations – from production workers to CEOs – have shown us that our effectiveness in influencing others at work goes up exponentially to the degree that we "first move ourselves" to embody our spirituality.

One example is Deependra Moitra. Since we have known him, he has held leadership positions with Lucent Technologies and Infosys. Here's how we see that he positively influences others from his spiritual basis.

First, he is clear about his own spiritual view of life and sincerely strives to do his work from that basis:

*"Living with a purpose" would be a spiritual theme for me. True fulfilment is then the outcome of this journey. The personal principles that are most important to me are integrity and honesty. I can never compromise on those.*

Then, he seeks to think, speak and act authentically in alignment with his spiritual views:

*I ask myself questions like: Am I able to really make people happy around me? Am I able to make them comfortable? Am I able to provide them with a sense of direction? Am I able to really help them grow? Am I able to help them be successful? All of these questions, in my opinion, are a spiritual approach to how I want to interact both personally and in business.*

From his spiritual integrity, he tries to uplift others in their work:

> *When I talk about spirituality in business, I think it really boils down to taking care of people's emotions and being truthful. For me to be really successful in relationships and in doing productive work with others, I consistently try to communicate to people in a way that their dignity and emotions are respected.*

Helping others to bring out their unique potential is another way that Deependra seeks to be a positive influence at work:

> *We all have unique DNAs: that is God's way of telling us that every individual is unique. We must understand how we can tap into that uniqueness to do something productive. I do not believe in force because I think it's against the law of nature. I have never attempted to force any of my associates in the last five years on even a single issue. I believe in dialogue.*

And lastly, he inspires people to discover a larger meaning in their work:

> *I influence people by creating a cause and helping them to identify how they can contribute. I place a lot of emphasis on understanding each individual. When I know that someone will do good in a certain environment, I make sure that his/her job is designed that way. Focus and purpose are very much present here – that's how it links to my way of defining spirituality in organisations and management.*

Does this way of being a positive influence at work really foster collaboration and make a tangible difference? Here's one success story that Deependra shared with us:

> *When we engaged in a quality program to be certified as a Bell Labs organisation, we became certified in just one year's time – a splendid and rare accomplishment given the stringent assessment process focused on innovation and excellence.*

Thus, from people like Deependra, we have learned that when we want to have a positive influence on others at work, it takes more than wishing, "If only *other* people would…" It takes being spiritually true to ourselves and consciously acting from that basis.

So, ask yourself: *How can I positively influence others at work from my spiritual basis? How can I uplift others in being their best and help them to discover a larger meaning in their work?*

## 2.14 SEEING THE ETERNAL IN THE TEMPORAL

To view everything that happens to us in our workday as expressions of the Divine, we must practice a new way of "seeing" – we must shift from seeing our work through our minds to seeing it through our hearts.

**HAVE YOU** ever faced a challenge at work and felt stuck in finding a solution? Or, felt alone in your work with no one to support you in your efforts? These are examples of when it's important to step back and see our work from a broader perspective. Einstein explained this well when he said that we cannot solve our problems at the same level that we created them.

We've found that this ability to see our work from a broader perspective requires an internal shift in our vision that we like to describe as "seeing the eternal in the temporal". This is the wisdom that Krishna taught Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*:

> *When one sees Eternity in things that pass away and Infinity in finite things, then one has pure knowledge*. (18:20)

Sathya Sai Baba explains the relationship of the eternal to the temporal in this way:

> *When you see a film, you do not see the screen as screen; you forget its existence. But the screen is there all the time and it is only the screen that makes you experience the picture. A volcano throws up its lava on the screen, but the screen is not burnt. The screen is the truth; the film is an illusion, however realistic it is, however genuine the feelings it arouses. God is the screen and the objective world is the film. See all as but expressions of the same God, as appearances on the same screen.*

Seeing all as expressions of the Divine – perhaps the ultimate spiritual practice – has an important practicality for us at work, as Swami Ranganathananda[2] points out:

> *When we learn to respect the dignity and inherent worth of ourselves and others as sparks of Divinity (Atman), we shall capture a high level of self-discipline, human concern, and practical efficiency.*

But how do we "see" the eternal in the temporal world we work in each day? In order to do this we must practice a new way of "seeing": we must shift from seeing our work through our minds to seeing it through our hearts.

[2] *Human Values in Management,* p. 56

When we say “mind”, we mean our capability to mentally focus and concentrate on the individual, separate parts of a situation. By “heart”, we refer not to our emotions, but to our capability to reach inside ourselves, connect to the very core of our reality, and then see the spiritual whole as well as the parts. Janiece Webb, formerly a senior vice president with Motorola introduced us to this aspect by telling us:

> *Spirituality means to be connected in a real way to life, with the centre, and to realise that this is all so much bigger than what we can physically see.*

Ricardo Levy, Chairman of Catalytica, Inc., describes the value, and challenge, of reaching inside to see the eternal in the temporal as an on-going spiritual practice in our work:

> *This ability to reach within ourselves goes beyond our normal mental exercises and capabilities. The more you consciously attempt to reach within, the more the quality of your decisions will be enhanced. At first this type of contemplation was so difficult. Why? Because I am an engineer and my entire training throughout my life was to solve problems. It was so difficult for me to just sit back and listen and pray. This is a marvellous discipline that some of my business colleagues have helped me to develop.*

Ultimately, bringing the eternal to the foreground of our awareness, and moving the temporal to the background, allows us to know the substance behind all of this worldly form – just as the 14th century Christian mystic, Jan van Ruusbroec, experienced it:

> *The image of God is found essentially and personally in all mankind. Each possesses it whole, entire and undivided, and all together not more than one alone. In this way we are all one, intimately united in our eternal image, which is the image of God and the source in us of all our life.*

So, ask yourself: *How can I shift from my mind to my heart at work? What does it mean for me to see the eternal as well as the temporal in my day-to-day work activities?*

## 2.15 THE SPIRITUAL BASIS OF CREATIVITY

> Creativity is the domain of the Divine and of man at the same time, and spiritual growth naturally supports the conditions in which creativity emerges more fully and more brilliantly.

**IN THE MID-1980'S,** while William was consulting on corporate creativity, he began to recognise a similarity in the language that people used to describe their moments of creative insight and their experience of spiritual inspiration. It dawned on him that the similarities were not by accident; but rather, it's because our spiritual nature literally means we are co-creators with the Divine…as Martin Buber, a 20th century Jewish philosopher, reminds us:

> *"Destiny is not where we wait for God to push us. We take part in creation, meet the Creator, reach out to Him, helpers and companions."*

Therefore, creativity is simultaneously the domain of man and the Divine, and spiritual growth naturally supports the conditions for creativity to emerge more fully and brilliantly. But how? Here are some ways we've found through our own experience:

1. **Inspiration**. Spiritual practices such as meditation and volunteer service open us up to a consciousness beyond our own thoughts and self-focused attention. With this openness, we perceive the world freshly, with a "beginner's mind", and can hear the subtle voice of guidance from within. This same openness and receptivity allows the free flow of creative *inspiration* within us. For example, in a workshop William conducted with some corporate scientists, a highlight was their realisation that creative ideas actually emerge from the open space *between thoughts*. Therefore, this openness to inner guidance and spiritual inspiration gives us access to a richer variety of creative ideas.

2. **Motivation**. Research by Teresa Amabile[3] has long demonstrated that creativity is most enhanced by intrinsic motivation – not driven by the need for external rewards. Western notions of motivation say that we are "moved" by *needs* (a lack of fulfilment). But according to the spiritual teachings of ancient India, we are always full and complete, lacking nothing, because we have an intimate relationship with the Godhead. Thereby, *motivation* is the natural, intrinsic expression of our full nature. The corporate need for "passionate product champions", who act to fulfil their own inner calling, relies on this self-fulfilled motivation. When we express the fullness of who we are as spiritual beings, our creativity is most fully released.

[3] Teresa Amabile is a professor of entrepreneurship at the Harvard Business School

3. **Intention**. From our spiritual studies, the goal of most spiritual paths can be summed up as (a) fully experiencing our intimacy with Divinity/dharma and (b) serving others from that experience of oneness. Thereby, the purpose of work is equally twofold: (a) to grow spiritually through our work and (b) to serve others. In this vein, when we expand our goals for creative work to serving others, we expand our access to inner ideas and energy. William once led a group of computer salespeople in a creative process, where they initially set their goal as "making more money". To stimulate a more expansive level of creativity, he asked them, "Can you express your goal in terms of a customer benefit?" This gave pause to the process, and helped them to see that a goal of serving others opens up new vistas of ideas.

4. **Collaboration**. Spiritual values such as love, truth, peace, righteousness, and non-violence can be found in all major spiritual paths. These values enhance the *collaboration* that is so essential in organisations, where creativity is rarely a solitary venture and requires close teamwork. They provide a climate of oneness while allowing for diversity and individuality. A few years ago, William's client at HP Labs found that the difference between successful product development teams and truly extraordinary ones was due to the presence of sincere caring and truthful authenticity in the extraordinary teams. Thus, spiritual values can be the foundation of extraordinary team creativity.

From all of this, it might be tempting to make spirituality the next big tool for enhancing creativity at work. But if spirituality is seen as a *means* to that goal, we might then be tempted to discard spirituality if "better" tools are found. However, we've found that when we focus on our spiritual growth and allow our creativity to naturally emerge, then we are tapping into the deepest source of creativity itself.

So, ask yourself: *How does my spirituality contribute to my creativity at work? How can my spiritual practices also provide the inspiration for creative ideas?*

## 2.16 TURN YOUR CHALLENGES INTO A CREATIVE JOURNEY

It's often the plunge from confidence to darkness that grabs our attention the most, and requires us to search our souls to find the courage, as well as the creative solutions, to meet the challenges we face.

**OUR SPIRITUAL TEACHER** often reminds us to be thankful for our challenges and difficulties, and to consider them as good for us. We initially resisted this wise guidance, since our natural tendency is to shy away from those things that we don't have a ready answer for, especially if the outcome seems risky. And yet, over the years we have found that it's often the plunge from confidence to darkness that grabs our attention the most, and requires us to search our souls for creative ideas and solutions.

As a creativity consultant in the early 1980's, William pondered this relationship between challenges, creativity and spirituality and realised that most creative problem solving methods focused only on the mental side of creativity, such as goal-setting, analysis, idea-generation, and decision-making. But he knew from his own experience that creative work takes more than good left-brains and right-brains! It also requires us to call upon our deepest spiritual values where we can tap into the empowerment we need to carry us through the *entire* process of meeting our work challenges.

A breakthrough in William's understanding of the spiritual side of the creative process occurred in 1982, after he read *The Way to Shambhala* by Edwin Bernbaum. He realised that virtually all the stories about spiritual quests across all cultures – from the Tibetans' spiritual quest for Shambhala to the mythical quest of Odysseus – have a typical "plot line" with four stages:

*Stage 1: You're on a quest, and you come to an impassable river (or some other risky obstacle), guarded by a demon.*

*Stage 2: The instructions are clear: Withdraw to gather your strength and power – identify with a Divine Power so its energies merge in you; then call forth the demon to see exactly what you have to deal with.*

*Stage 3: Do battle until you are victorious in defeating, befriending, or taming the demon.*

*Stage 4: Engage the subdued/tamed demon as an ally to get you across the impassable river; on the other side, take an account, with gratitude, of what you've learned to assist you on the next stage of your journey.*

In a very real sense, this is a "creative journey" in four stages. It's a journey where we face our "impassable rivers" and "demons" – those circumstances that can make our work challenges seem insurmountable. We have to find courage as well as creativity from deep within ourselves in order to tame the demon. Once tamed, the demon then becomes our ally to help us cross the impassable river.

While you might not be fully aware of it, your own work experiences are the best examples of how you've already reached deep within yourself to bring forth new and creative solutions. And, they can be the greatest inspiration to empower you as you face new challenges in the future.

Think back to a challenge you've faced at work that you didn't know how to solve. By answering the following questions, discover for yourself how you've turned a work challenge into a creative journey:

1. *What was your quest – your initial goal?*
2. *What were the risks and obstacles that made it a difficult challenge?*
3. *How did you tap into an inner strength – your spiritual values, integrity, and character – to give you confidence that you could meet your challenge?*
4. *How did you "call forth the demon" – i.e., define the most important issues that you would have to address?*
5. *What were the creative options you considered as you did "battle" with the issues?*
6. *Which options did you chose to "win the battle"?*
7. *How did you get across the "impassable river" of implementation?*
8. *What did you achieve and learn, with gratitude, to carry into your future?*

Take some moments to reflect upon your answers and how you tapped into that deeper part of yourself to bring forth a creative solution to your challenge. In the next article we'll share more about how you can use this creative journey in your work, and how Edgar Mitchell, an American astronaut who walked on the moon, turned his challenges into creative opportunities.

In the meantime, ask yourself: *How have my work challenges and difficulties brought forth my courage and creativity?*

## 2.17 A SAFE LANDING

The "Creative Journey" is a discipline that enables our creativity. Upon completion of our journey, celebration provides a safe landing that revitalises our spirit and prepares us for our next challenge.

**IN OUR PREVIOUS** article about the "Creative Journey", we described four stages to creatively respond to the challenges we face at work. At this point you may be wondering, *"Isn't creativity a spontaneous experience? Won't it suppress creativity to follow some prescribed process?"*

To the contrary. In his 20 years in the field of innovation and creativity, William has observed that, ironically, *discipline enables our creativity*. For example, highly artistic dancers or musicians spend years in training to be able to express their creativity in ways that few people can even dream of.

A very dramatic example of taking a four-stage Creative Journey is that of Edgar Mitchell – an American astronaut who, in 1971, had the rare privilege of walking on the moon's surface. He once related his adventure to William, and the creative discipline it took throughout the four stages:

How Edgar Mitchell defined his twofold challenge:

> *The opportunity to go to the moon was virtually an irresistible challenge. I characterize the space flight—of getting off the planet—as being an event as significant as when the first sea creatures crawled out onto land. Early on, I found disagreement between my scientific training and my religious training. I have been pursuing a resolution to the conflicts in cosmology ever since.*

How he focused on his mission:

> *I recognized very early in life that fear is to be overcome: If it is physical danger, by being skilful; if it's a psychological fear, by getting into yourself and rooting it out. Preparation for the Apollo flight involved many skills. All the knowledge and skill had to be practiced to a point where it was automatic. To deal with unexpected events, however, our judgment would come into play.*

How he creatively solved a crisis:

> *There was always an opportunity for creativity, because almost never did the spacecraft fail in the ways that we had trained for. The problem that posed the most potential for creativity was before we went down to the lunar surface. The*

> *automatic abort system had somehow failed. We finally reprogrammed the computer, with just a few moments to spare, so that the engines could be ignited to descend to the moon's surface.*

How he completed his journey:

> *This powerful experience of seeing Earth and our whole solar system against the background of the cosmos had a very profound effect . . . an overwhelming sense of being connected with the universe, of feeling connected to all things, to the most distant galaxies, to Earth, to self, to sun.*

One of the most important aspects of completing the Creative Journey is *celebration*, which allows us to assess not only what we've achieved, but also what we've learned, to take forward into the future. For example, Edgar described how his experience of "being connected with the universe" spiritualised his personal values:

> *What came out of that experience was an enormous sense of responsibility that goes with the power of creativity. The word responsibility means to accept one's choices and the consequences of those choices, and that means letting go of fear. Automatically that brings a deeper sense of love and responsibility for one's self, surroundings, environment, and planet.*

Celebration provides the moment to gain a deep sense of satisfaction and gratitude, and therefore provides a "safe landing" for the Creative Journey. It also revitalises our human spirit and prepares us for our next round of challenges. Edgar Mitchell celebrated his transformation, and that of many fellow space travellers, by declaring:

> *We went to the moon as technicians. We returned as humanitarians.*

Every one of us, from clerical worker to executive, has personal stories of taking on challenges we've never faced before and finding ways to meet them. Not every story is as dramatic as Edgar's, but each can be something to celebrate and learn from.

While Edgar Mitchell's story was about the *past*, in the next article we'll explore how, with a work challenge, the Creative Journey can become the means for writing a story about the *future*.

So, ask yourself: *How have I gone through these same four stages in handling a creative challenge in my work? How have I celebrated my achievements and learning?*

## 2.18 GENERATING YOUR FUTURE

Now is the time for you to put the Creative Journey to work generating your future; a future that reflects your spiritual values and character.

**IN OUR LAST** two articles, we discussed how to use the Creative Journey to turn work challenges into creative opportunities. We asked you to recall a creative journey that you've experienced in the past, and described how USA astronaut Edgar Mitchell creatively handled the challenges he faced in his flight to and from the moon.

Each stage of the Creative Journey has two distinct steps, each with its own unique question. The story of Mary Nelson, President of Bethel New Life in West Side Chicago, USA, illustrates how she followed these steps to create a new future out of a definite challenge: to rejuvenate housing in run-down urban communities:

**The Challenge**

1. What was your initial goal?
   *We wanted to create a low-income housing alternative to the welfare system.*

2. What was at stake? What made it a difficult challenge?
   *We needed to do something about housing in our community. Over ten years, we had lost 200 housing units per year in a one-square-mile area. Soon there would be no community left.*

**The Focus**

3. What about *you* —your spiritual values, your experience, your character— gave you confidence you could somehow do it?
   *People said, "We've got to do it, because this is going to be a visible symbol that the church cares, that this is our community. As Martin Luther King Jr. said, 'We know finite disappointment but we know infinite hope.' We have a sense that what we do, with God's help, makes a difference."*

4. What were the most important issues that would require some creative ideas to resolve?
   *Financing housing was a big issue. So was getting people involved. We also needed the right skills, and a "can do" attitude.*

**The Creative Solutions**

5. What were some of the options you considered, even if you didn't use them?

*Having the government sponsor the housing. Doing "sweat equity" – in which people gave their "sweat" in the form of actually helping to build their own dwelling, as their form of "down payment" for the home. Mortgaging the church to gain capital. Asking contractors to donate funds, labor, and/or materials.*

6. What were the options you chose?

*Mortgaging the church to gain capital. Doing "sweat equity".*

**The Completion**

7. What did you do to implement those solutions?

*We mortgaged the buildings five times—it gave the bankers comfort that we would do everything in our power to ensure the project wouldn't fail. We enlisted people who wanted to be homeowners rather than tenants. We had meetings to hash out issues and used these as occasions to practice communication skills that would help people continue to manage "their" property in the future.*

8. What were the results, and the satisfaction you gained from them?

*It not only made affordable housing available to people who didn't have any cash, it was a great leadership development tool. A building is so visible. It is a positive accomplishment that bolsters everyone's self-image and "can do" spirit. So now when it comes to the drug dealer down the street, they say, "Wow, we did this building, then why can't we get rid of the drug dealer. We can do it."*

Now it's time for you to put the Creative Journey to work. Think of a challenge you're currently facing at work that requires a new, creative solution. See what creative future you can generate that reflects your spiritual values and character:

**The Challenge**

Establish the Goal: What is my goal?

Assess the Risks: What makes this goal a difficult challenge?

**The Focus**

Tap into Character: What about *me*—my spiritual values, my experience, my character – gives me confidence I can do it?

Analyse Priority Issues: What are the most important issues I need to resolve with some creative ideas?

**The Creative Solutions**

Generate Options: What are creative options I can think of, even if I don't use them?

Decide on Solution: What options would I choose?

**The Completion**

Implement Change: What can I do to implement this solution?

Celebrate Results: What are the results, and the new learning I gained from my journey?

And then, continuing this as an ongoing practice, ask yourself: *How can I generate a creative future at work?*

## 2.19 YES, BUT... YES, AND...

Inevitably, people feel that a "Yes, and…" approach to creativity is more productive and fun. Yet, most people readily admit that "Yes, but…" is the approach they are most familiar with in their daily work.

**THE FIRST TIME** Debra observed William conduct a creative exercise called "Yes, but… Yes, and" with a group of executives, she was excited. It was a powerful exercise that clearly demonstrated some of the reasons we are not as creative as we could be, especially in a group at work.

The exercise goes like this… Your group decides to focus on generating creative ideas for a specific challenge. One person starts by suggesting a creative idea. Another person responds by saying, "Yes, but…" and then says why that first creative idea wouldn't work, and instead suggests another idea. The next person once again responds with "Yes, but…", and after giving reasons why the other person's idea won't work, goes on to suggest a new idea. This continues in the same pattern for some time.

In part two of the exercise, the group again focuses on creating ideas for a specific challenge, but in a different manner. After the first person has suggested his creative idea, the next person says, "Yes, and…" and adds a creative idea of her own. The next person responds with, "Yes, and…" and once again gives another idea. This continues until a rich bouquet of creative ideas has been generated.

To complete the exercise, the group discusses how each of the approaches felt and the difference between the two. Inevitably, people feel that the "Yes, and…" approach was more creative, productive and fun. Yet, most participants readily admit that "Yes, but…" is the approach they are most familiar with in their daily work.

As Debra observed the exercise, she was feeling quite proud of herself, thinking she was an open-minded, creative person, certain that she was practising the "Yes, and…" approach. But then reality sank in. Upon returning to daily work, Debra began to see how often she reacted with "Yes, but…" rather than "Yes, and…" She saw how closed her heart and mind were in the creative process with other people. It was quite an eye-opener for Debra, one that caused her to return to her spiritual foundation for guidance and strength.

The first step Debra took was to tap into her spiritual view of life, which sees this universe as God's play, or God's "leela" as they would say in India. She also believes that God represents the pure essence of creativity, and we (God's creation) too are endowed with the same creative nature. Even her executive coaching work has been focused on "designing and creating your reality," knowing that everyone is a co-creator with God.

This spiritual view of life had always been inspiring for Debra, but now she was finding it quite challenging. She asked herself, "If we are endowed with God's creative nature and this universe is God's play, then why am I dis-empowering the creative process?" It took some real soul searching and embarrassing moments of continuing to catch herself say, "Yes, but…" before she gained any new insights.

Soon Debra realised she was lacking faith in the creative process of life itself. Looking even more deeply, she saw that there were people and events in this world she had judged as wrong, and in doing so had judged God negatively for "creating" such things. The bottom line was – Debra did not trust God's creativity! Debra saw she was continuously attempting to control the creative process in order to direct the outcome. This led to her consistent use of the "Yes, but…" approach, a process which closed her heart and mind to the power of creativity.

These insights have led Debra into a deeper trust of God as the source of creativity. It has also heightened her confidence that as co-creators with God, we can all work together to generate the kind of universe that genuinely reflects our Divine nature. Debra now focuses on being aware of any attempt on her part to dis-empower the creative process by saying "Yes, but…". She rather seeks to surrender her fears to God, which in turn allows her to experience "God's play at work".

So, ask yourself: *Do I say or think "Yes, but…" or "Yes, and…" most often? How can my spiritual view of life assist me in fostering a "Yes, and…" attitude to creativity?*

## 2.20 BEING A "SPIRITED" PERSON

People who fully express their creative potential are SPIRITED people… self-aware, purposeful, incisive, rewarding, inventive, transforming, evaluative, and dauntless.

**WHILE WRITING** about creativity and spirituality at work, we thought of several questions that we've always enjoyed asking: *Who would you consider to be a "creative person" at work? What qualities do they display? What is the source of their creativity?*

From such questions, we've found that many people do not easily recognise the wide array of creative qualities in others, or in themselves. We've also discovered that the true source of our creativity is our spiritual nature – in other words, as manifestations of the Creator, we share in its creative powers. As one executive we know has expressed to us:

> *My understanding of God is that it is an energy. It is our source of energy; it is the creative energy of God. And, it is an energy that engulfs all of us; we are part and parcel of it.*

> *I also think that we discover God's laws of nature, we do not invent them ourselves. God has given us the faculties to create things such as art, music, inventions, etc., but all other things concerning nature we must discover.*

But if we are all naturally creative, as part of our Divine nature, then why does it seem that only a few people fully exercise their creativity? From various research studies, and our own experience, it's because people do not recognise their creative potential or cultivate the personal qualities for being creative.

What are those qualities? We've observed that people who fully express their creative potential are SPIRITED people – that's what inspired us to create this acronym and its related qualities. Take a few moments to do a self-assessment of which qualities you already embody, and which ones you could strengthen as personal habits for expressing your creativity at work:

> S = SELF-AWARE: I actively develop my intuition; I am willing to feel my emotions; I seek insights about others and myself; I know my own personal purpose and values

P = PURPOSEFUL: I see the big picture; I envision what's important; I commit wholeheartedly; I promote the highest benefit for everyone concerned

I = INCISIVE: I seek opposing points of view; I assess situations systemically and holistically; I am curious; I gain clear insights into complex situations

R = REWARDING: I share credit; I seek to acknowledge positive performance in others; I express appreciation easily; I celebrate completions

I = INVENTIVE: I generate many options; I switch easily between logic and imagination; I play spontaneously; I look at challenges in new ways

T = TRANSFORMING: I take persistent action; I energise and move people to action; I act with integrity to keep agreements; I choose growth over fear

E = EVALUATIVE: I make decisions based on personal values; I seek long term as well as short term benefits; I seek consensus when appropriate; I anticipate consequences

D = DAUNTLESS: I am comfortable with ambiguity; I take prudent risks; I maintain confidence in tough situations; I act independently if necessary

The executive who told us that "God is our source of energy" has demonstrated many of these SPIRITED qualities in his work:

*I have always felt that we were causing problems to our nature by polluting our environment. To me environment pollution also creates pollution in the mind. Because of this, I started working with solar technology. Sun is the greatest giver of energy. To me the sun is a manifestation of God.*

*To protect the society to which we all belong, our air, water and so on, we must give back whatever it is that we take. My way of doing this is try to help the young people, many of whom know what they want to do, but they are rudderless. I try to help them and this is how I try to give back to nature, to society.*

*Wherever we are, we must look after the local people and we must be engaged in social work. I am trying to implement some programs to improve literacy through the use of information technology. Besides my formal job, this is really my passion.*

So, ask yourself: *In what ways do I have the qualities of a SPIRITED person? From my spiritual source, what daily habits could I begin that would strengthen my creative qualities?*

## 2.21 WAKING UP AT WORK

Increasing our self-awareness can be a spiritual practice that reduces ego and fear – thereby making a positive difference in our creativity and overall effectiveness at work.

**AFTER WE CREATED** the acronym "SPIRITED" to represent qualities that unlock our creative potential[4], we found that each one can be a *sadhana*, a spiritual practice, to integrate into our everyday work. The more we began to practice each of these qualities from this perspective, the more enlivening and richer our lives became.

The first quality is to be "self-aware". According to the Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, to be aware means *having or showing realisation, perception, or knowledge*. Two of its synonyms are also insightful: cognizant – *having knowledge as from firsthand experience*; awake – *becoming alive and alert*. To us, being self-aware gives us an alive, vibrant life in which we are aware of our intuition, conscience, values, emotions, thoughts and insights… as well as our interconnection with others and the transcendent.

Parantha Narendra, Strategy Director of Eurotel in the Czech Republic, told us how he was awakened to a new level of self-awareness when he went to India for the first time and visited the ashram of his spiritual teacher:

> *For the entire time I spent at the ashram, it was as if I could see the whole interconnectedness of life, and I was aware of everything as I moved through my daily routine. It was effortless. I was aware of people's thoughts and ideas. I was aware of everything going on in the background. I had no stress or anxiety. I just had awareness and contentment.*

From that awakening, it naturally made an impact in his life:

> *When you view your life as spiritual, you start to make certain choices. There are positive values that I have accepted and I try to be aware of those values in everything that I do. Through experience, I have noticed that as I've become more aware of myself, I've become more content and happy, and have learned things about other people and life that have just seemed to come to me.*

As a spiritual practice at work, there are two ways that being self-aware helps Parantha to be more creative:

[4] From our previous article titled "Becoming a SPIRITED person": self-aware, purposeful, incisive, rewarding, inventive, transforming, evaluative, and dauntless.

> *First of all, spirituality makes me less egotistical – I am very aware of my ego. And secondly, it makes me less fearful. Both of which have had a major impact in the way that I work.*
>
> *When I do not have an active ego, I am able to help get things done far more effectively; I realise I am a lot more capable than I give myself credit for. If my ego is active, then I tend to think, "I can't do this and I can't do that" because my ego is afraid of failure.*
>
> *As I listen to conversations going on in a meeting, I can see how people perceive things and want to lead them in a particular way. I can see how they are mis-communicating with each other. I understand what the real issues of the meeting are, and where we should be going; I can help pull things together in a way that I couldn't do if my ego was in control. I can present things clearly and talk to everyone in their own language. I think this is an enormously spiritual exercise. It is like meditation when I am sitting there listening to everyone.*

Parantha's insights point to two ways that becoming self-aware can positively impact our work creativity: reducing ego and fear. When we have less ego, we have greater self-confidence and can more clearly see the issues at hand; thus we remain open not only to others' ideas, but also to the next evolution of our own thinking. And when we have less fear, we're more able to let the best ideas unfold over time, as needed, and to think more expansively into unconventional, less certain-to-succeed ideas.

Ultimately, cultivating the spiritual discipline of being self-aware can lead us to be more aware of the transcendent in our work, leading us to a higher knowledge, as the *Bhagavad Gita* tells us:

> *When one sees Eternity in things that pass away and Infinity in finite things, then one has pure knowledge.*

So, ask yourself: *In what areas of my work could I be more self-aware – about myself and about my interconnected with others and the transcendent? How can I best cultivate this self-awareness?*

## 2.22 LIGHT UP YOUR WORK WITH PURPOSE

When we are purposeful, we see a bigger picture, we envision what's important and meaningful, we commit wholeheartedly, and we promote the highest benefit for everyone concerned.

**WHILE REVIEWING** an article written by two of his MBA students[5], William was inspired by a story about Albert Einstein that he had not heard before:

> *Einstein was supposedly once asked: "If you could ask God one question, what would the question be"? He quickly responded that he would ask God how the universe began, because after that the rest would all be math. However, after further reflection, Einstein said he would ask God 'why' the universe began, because then he would know the meaning of his life.*

When we have this sense of meaning that Einstein talked about, we feel that our lives have a purpose in the scheme of things. In India, this is like knowing our *dharma* – our role and purpose in the harmony of life. We feel settled inside. Our work has an energy and authenticity that emanates from that sense of meaning and purpose, just as the students also expressed in their article:

> *Realising the purpose of one's existence leads to one being what he is—regardless of whether he is with family and friends, or with managers, or direct reports, co-workers, suppliers, vendors, customers, and competitors, or with his spiritual neighbours and fellow congregants – always anchored in peace and contentment.*

When we seek to be a SPIRITED person, being purposeful (the "P" in this acronym) is an important step along the journey. When we are purposeful, we see a bigger picture, we envision what's important and meaningful, we commit wholeheartedly, and we promote the highest benefit for everyone concerned.

Furthermore, when our sense of purpose stems from our spiritual view of life, our work naturally becomes an extension of that personal, spiritual purpose. For example, Francisco Canada, a Director of a major publishing firm in Argentina, once told us:

> *The spiritual purpose of my life is to realise God in my heart, to have God working through my own self. In the concept of business we work with, our goal is to make people aware of their inner potential, to help bring out this potential, and to always strive for excellence. Excellence is the way God made the world. I also think this should be the purpose of business in general.*

[5] Article title: Organisations in Spirituality, written by Sanjay Mahalingam and Shyam Sundar

As we live our spiritual purpose at work, it enhances and stimulates our creativity in two ways: to creatively develop our own talents for expressing our purpose; and to creatively serve through our work.

A good example of this is Frances Meiser, author and founder of a non-profit organisation called the "Brain Train" in the USA[6]. At the age of 50, she faced a dysfunctional future due to her experience with panic disorder and a diagnosis of ADHD (hyperactive disorder). But she responded with a serious soul searching, while studying and participating in educational experiences that enhanced her ability to function "normally" and enjoy life to the fullest.

Then, she began to focus her new knowledge on creatively helping others who suffer from the same difficulties, especially children who were diagnosed with ADHD and prescribed pharmaceutical drugs. When she goes to schools to work with teachers and children, she starts by making the children drink water using a crazy straw. Why?

> *One of the reasons children are not learning today is because their brains are literally dehydrated from all of the sugar sodas they are drinking.*

Frances then teaches what foods, especially sugar, contribute to hyperactive disorder and what foods contribute to learning. She also teaches exercises that help children to effectively use both sides of their brain. She is giving them what they need to "fire up their brains for learning."

Today Frances is creatively serving people in ways she never dreamed possible. She delivers presentations that enlighten audiences from doctors to teachers to parents. Her simple, yet purposeful insights are directed at helping people to understand the source of their disorders, rather than masking them with drugs. When asked about her spiritual purpose and how she brings that into her work, Frances gleefully responds:

> *It's all about being joyful and sharing it with others!*

So, ask yourself: *What creative changes would I make in my work if I were to wholeheartedly commit to fulfilling my spiritual purpose?*

[6] For more information about the Brain Train, see: www.braintraincenter.org

## 2.23 CLEARING THE FOG

When we fully see and acknowledge the truth of what is going on, it helps us focus our creative thinking and find solutions beyond what we believe is possible.

**AS WE REFLECTED** upon the next quality of a SPIRITED person, being *Incisive,* we recalled the famous prayer from the Hindu Brihad Upanishad: "*Asatoma sadgamaya*… Lead me from delusion to truth." We especially need the fulfilment of that prayer at work – clouded as it can be with an overload of information, stressful issues to sort out, and uncertainty about the future. Incisive is an important spiritual practice at work: being open to discern and acknowledge the truth about what is happening.

Incisiveness often means speaking the simple truth when there's something everyone knows but is afraid to talk about – a failed project, a misjudged decision, a relationship conflict. Typically in such situations, we feel fearful, constrained and suppressed.

Nilofer Merchant, an American consultant who specialises in market strategies, exemplifies a person who draws from her spirituality to be incisive:

> *To me, spirituality is "Living fully the glory of God and being fully alive." To me this means using your gifts to the fullest and being in true, intimate relationships with other people.*
>
> *I am often the voice of truth in a group; whatever is unsaid I am usually the person who can articulate that. This is how I use my gifts in my work. Many people are afraid to speak their underlying fears, and so I help create a safe environment for them to do that.*

In one case, a client was in the midst of making decisions about a new marketing strategy that would require a great change in their organisation. Nilofer's incisiveness came from keen listening and then asking the right question at the right time:

> *Everyone was talking about this in a very intellectual way, presenting all of the options along with the pros and cons. I was well aware that there was lots of tension in the room that no one was addressing.*
>
> *I had really prayed that morning that the group could come to a consensus and use their decision as a positive move forward. I was very quiet for some time as I*

*watched the group. I kept feeling there was an important question that needed to be asked. I closed my eyes for a second, and then asked, "What is it we are not saying? What are we not addressing?" Because of the way I asked these questions, it created a sense of safety, and people were able to say what was true in their hearts.*

When we fully see and acknowledge the truth of what is going on, that new awareness positively impacts our creativity. It gives us the clarity to focus our creative thinking in the best direction, even as it also gives us the expansive energy to seek and find creative solutions beyond what we believe is possible.

As those in the meeting began to speak the truth, their creativity came alive, as Nilofer shared:

*A Vice President who had been reluctant to speak said, "I am afraid about what this will mean for my people." It brought everyone together and people began to step forward and say, "I'll take 50 of your people" and "We'll take care of your people." For the first time in that discussion, that executive was able to agree to the new organisational structure even though it meant he would be sacrificing his organisation. This was really the big decision that was on the table, even though it had not been said explicitly. This process of telling the truth drew upon people's goodness.*

*I had no idea those questions were going to come out of my mouth; it was one of those moments where I offered to the group the gift from my heart. I happened to be the one who could help them find the truth that was already there.*

Incisiveness helps us to clear the fog, overcome our fears, and see the full, complete truth of what is going on. From there, we can find the creative solutions to the challenges we face.

So, ask yourself: *In what areas of my work am I not seeing or speaking the "simple truth" of what is going on? How could doing that, from a spiritual basis, assist me in creatively addressing the challenges I face?*

## 2.24 SPREADING THE WEALTH

"Spreading the wealth" through uplifting and encouraging words, gratitude, humility, generosity and responsibility is a "rewarding" quality that empowers our creativity at work.

**HAVE YOU EVER** been around a person who seems to "spread the wealth" – they naturally express uplifting and encouraging words, compliment people on their work, and appreciate what others have done, while often downplaying their own accomplishments? These traits all point to what we think of as the personal quality of "rewarding", which is another aspect of being a SPIRITED person.

This "rewarding" quality has a direct impact on motivating ourselves and others to be creative and innovative in our work, even when faced with the most daunting of challenges. It instils a "can do" feeling and attitude.

Some people think they can "put on" this rewarding quality by giving praise and compliments, or even financial incentives if they are in a position to do so, but without sincere appreciation. However, rewarding must be a genuine expression that comes from within us. We have found that this quality emerges naturally when we are in touch with our spiritual roots, because being "rewarding" is actually grounded in a sense of gratitude, humility, responsibility and generosity – all of which are fostered by our spiritual nature.

Gratitude and humility work in harmony together, like two sides of a coin. Both recognise that no one person can accomplish what needs to be done at work – it's a group effort. Janiece Webb, formerly a senior vice president with Motorola, told us how she set up such a rewarding climate:

> *I think that all people are God's people. I believe in the pure potentiality of every single being. No one gets anywhere by themselves; I am only as good as the people around me. I can only achieve our organizational goals by nurturing the people. I encourage people to believe in themselves and not let the system dictate who they are.*
>
> *I make sure that I communicate in every meeting that anyone can speak up and say whatever they need to say to me. I tell them that I don't have any more grand ideas then they do. I encourage them to enlighten me if I say dumb things. I remind them that we are all trying to solve this problem together.*

Responsibility and generosity are also key components of a rewarding attitude. As part of our research with spiritual-based leaders, our colleagues interviewed the Honourable President of India, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. He spoke of his spiritual view of life this way:

> *One thing I have found is that I am influenced by a certain belief, it's something like this: If God is there, who can be against?*

He told us of a time when he was Project Director for developing India's first indigenous Satellite Launch Vehicle (SLV-III) – and how he experienced the "rewarding" qualities of his boss, Professor Satish Dhawan, just after their first satellite launch:

> *When we were at t-minus eight seconds, the computer put the satellite on hold. After receiving expert recommendations, I bypassed the computer and manually launched the system. The first stage fired beautifully. Suddenly, during the second stage, the rocket got into a spin and the satellite fell into the Bay of Bengal, instead of going into orbit. So it was a failure.*

Mr. Kalam's boss chose to face the media himself and took responsibility for the failure:

> *We could not succeed today. As the Chief of this organisation, I have decided that I have to give some more help to the scientific community in personal resources, and I am going to assist them. We will definitely succeed in a year's time.*

When the next launch was a success, Professor Dhawan generously allowed Mr. Kalam to face the media, conduct the press conference, and receive the accolades. President Kalam sums up the lesson he learned in this experience:

> *Professor Dhawan took the initial failure upon himself, while in fact as Project Director I was responsible for the failure. You see, he was the real leader. That means the leader takes upon himself the responsibility for failure… and gives the credit for success to his team.*

So, ask yourself: *In what ways do I sincerely express the quality of "rewarding" through expressions of gratitude, humility, responsibility and generosity? How do these expressions empower the creative energy where I work?*

## 2.25 "WHAT'S LEARNING YOU?"

When we approach our work and our relationships with a spirit of inquiry, it takes us into a realm of adventure, and thus into a work-life filled with creative responses to the opportunities and challenges we face.

**ANGELES ARRIEN** is a cultural anthropologist, author and consultant to businesses around the world. She is unusual and inspiring in her work as she draws upon the wisdom of indigenous cultures to help others bring out new, creative perspectives. She once told a story of a culture where people greet each other with a provocative, curious question, "What's learning you?" instead of the usual greeting of "How are you?"

We love to ask people this question as it stimulates a whole new spirit of inquiry about their life and work. We know it isn't proper English, yet it has a way of inviting others to look more closely to discover new arenas of learning about themselves or about their work projects. This compelling curiosity – this spirit of inquiry – is something we've noted in people who are dedicated to creative, "spirited" lives and work. Thus it's the next quality in our acronym of a SPIRITED person.

When we approach our work and our relationships with a spirit of inquiry, we keep ourselves from getting stuck in what we already know – about a topic or about another person. It takes us into a realm of adventure, and thus into a work-life filled with creative responses to the opportunities and challenges we face. We don't assume we know it all, which keeps our work and our relationships interesting and engaging.

Niran Jiang, a native of Inner Mongolia (an autonomous region of China), received her MBA in the USA and was an Assistant Professor at Shenzhen University in China. Later she worked as a Marketing Manager for S. C. Johnson, the third largest privately owned company in the world. She told us about her spiritual view of life and how it relates to this creative "spirit of inquiry" in her work:

> *Wonderment is a big part of my spiritual feeling, which includes a sense of curiosity. To me, what stimulates wonderment is when we connect our inner life forces. This interconnectedness of everything is what is most important to me; I believe in true equality because of this interconnectedness.*
>
> *As a Marketing Manager at S. C. Johnson, my team's breakthrough incubation of new concepts resulted in the largest acquisition in the company's history. The*

*company was experiencing stagnant growth, as most established businesses do, so we invited the Boston Consulting Group, BCG, to do a major study of where growth could come from.*

*Three of us, who connected really well, identified the target for a new acquisition, which was Ziploc – a small plastic storage bag. Others had previously said "no" to this type of acquisition as it was not in our traditional category of household cleaning products; plus we didn't have the manufacturing capability and didn't have any knowledge about making bags. But intuitively this felt right; we felt a lot of wonderment about this, almost a passion. It was not just about valuation, but about future potentials.*

*My spirituality brought to this exciting project a true respect for and feeling of equality on the soul level with everybody in the small team; nobody was afraid of opening up. We were passionate. We had a strong curiosity, which I see as spirituality, as a life force. We got connected to a universal power, and we all felt a great commitment. This is why we succeeded.*

*After doing the traditional marketing research, we kept on brainstorming ideas. We talked it over in a restaurant one time where we were joking, having fun, a lot of humour, and all the ideas became very visual and graphic. We opened up to tremendous creativity and were able to catch all those ideas later on.*

*Ultimately, we put everything on the board for the CEO and said, "This is your future business." After ten minutes he said, "I got it, we're buying it!" The whole senior management committees' jaws dropped. They said, "But what about manufacturing, we don't know how to…" "We'll learn," the CEO said. As a result, the company bought Ziploc, which was their largest acquisition at that time.*

So, ask yourself: *What's learning me in my work? In what ways do I approach my work with a spirit of inquiry, curiosity, and wonder?*

## 2.26 BEGINNER'S MIND

When we meet challenges with an open, beginner's mind, we tap into our own inventiveness as well as that of others who come forth to support us in reaching a solution to our challenges.

**INNOVATION** requires us to have the spirit of inventiveness, which enables us to find *creative* solutions to meet our goals and challenges. This quality of "inventiveness" is yet another aspect of being a SPIRITED person at work. Being inventive means challenging our own beliefs about what's possible so we can get unstuck from "business as usual". We have found that this requires having a "beginner's mind", one that looks freshly for what's possible, rather than what can't be done, and then generates a plenitude of ways to achieve it.

One person who inspires this through his own leadership is André Delbecq, the former dean of the business school at Santa Clara University. He shared with us the connection he sees between his spirituality and his sense of wonder, imagination, and inventiveness:

> *Wonder is the theme that naturally comes to me. I have always had and continue to retain a great excitement associated with building collaboration between bright minds seeking to understand a complex problem and engaged in the discovery of a creative solution.*
>
> *But now my sense of wonder is even enlarged. My eyes are opened to how the unimaginable emerges in all of creation; e.g. in nature in a blossoming flower, in the movements of the tides and the mysteries of the sea. I am increasingly appreciative of the insights from each of my colleagues when they join together for innovation. So the world is filled with wonder, echoing the limitlessness of the transcendent.*

As an example from his own life, about 10 years ago, he was urged by many high-tech executives in his area to offer a course on the spiritual side of business leadership. He felt totally unprepared – by his own personal spirituality as well as by his academic expertise – to offer such a seminar. But as he told us:

> *Fortunately, I had begun to understand that this spiritual path required me to give up the need to be the expert. Once having accepted this truth, preparation for teaching the seminar unfolded with constant surprises. Everything I needed was given to me. People whom I had never met found out about my efforts and*

*provided constant new resources. So the knowledge I needed began to arrive through others.*

*Somehow I was gifted with the beginner's mind and was at peace with my lack of both knowledge and wisdom. This was a very new experience for an arrogant professor – to be comfortable in the beginner's mind.*

His experience shows us that when we meet challenges with an open, beginner's mind, we tap into our own inventiveness as well as the inventiveness of others who come forth to help us reach a solution. Whether we are dealing with our own day-to-day challenges, or coming together to tackle the mega-challenges of our times, this combination of spirituality and inventiveness can make a positive difference, as André shares:

*I think a business exists to provide an innovative and compelling answer to a societal need in the form of a needed service or product. When this purpose is approached through a spiritual lens, it will be shaped differently in many ways. You become willing to let go of many trivial and opportunistic concerns, and instead increasingly put energy into important challenges. Your own willingness as a business leader to endure the mystery of suffering will shift. You will see all the elements of business challenges as part of a calling to service.*

André's faith in the inventiveness of business people is clearly based in his faith in Spirit:

*I don't think the creative answers for future generations will emerge through the government. Rather, long term solutions for all of these problems will emerge out of the creative energy that the private sector, acting at its best, unleashes. As we collaborate with Spirit by deepening the spirituality associated with organisational enterprise, I believe business leaders will continue to explore entrepreneurial solutions to address present and future challenges, and solve many of the paths of destruction that have been associated with our prior behaviour.*

So, ask yourself: *In what ways do I have a "beginner's mind" when I face challenges at work? From my spiritual basis, what daily habits could I begin that would strengthen my inventiveness?*

## 2.27 A "TRANSFORMING" ATTITUDE

The process of transforming never stops; it requires the persistence to continuously learn and to renew ourselves spiritually, both at work and in our personal lives.

**A FEW YEARS** ago, Francisco Roberto Canada, a director and partner of the Argentine publishing company Errepar S.A., realised that his company was "losing its spirit." He had long held a spiritual view of life and led his company from that basis:

> *To me, spirituality is the search for true happiness. And I have come to realise that happiness in life is to do all the work for God, to take part in God's creation, and to leave the fruits of my actions, my products, to God. As a leader, I make an effort that our companies all do good business, do good work, and make good products in the way of God.*

But something was missing… though it wasn't the lack of a noble purpose, for he, his partners and his staff were highly inspired by their work:

> *One of our activities is publishing spiritual, cultural, and educational books. We look upon this activity as a possibility of helping to make a better world. We are working to include the principles of human values, which are so central in our spiritual paths, in the books we are publishing for primary and secondary schools – not only into books about societal affairs, but also in books about mathematics, biology or history.*

As we examined Francisco Canada's history as a business leader, through ups and downs, we saw that he embodied the ability to bring forth the spirit of creativity, to stay open to continuous learning, and to energise people into action by tapping into what is most meaningful. In other words, he was an example of the *transforming* aspect of a SPIRITED person at work (the "T" in our acronym).

How did he exemplify this transforming quality? First, he and the other two owners set out to implement a set of spiritual principles for operating the company and uplifting each person in their work:

> *We held weekly meetings with the sales managers, product managers, systems managers, and all the staff, where we discussed how to apply the teachings and principles of spiritual leadership, both at work and in our daily life. We focused on principles based on human values of truth, right action, love, peace and non-violence - not on religion. The employees accepted this in a wonderful way.*

The meetings focused on transforming how each staff person made decisions in accord with those human values:

> *Sometimes the managers have to make decisions that are so subtle that they say: 'Well, there is a thin red line between what is a good decision and what is not, between what is right to do and what is wrong to do.' We try to make people aware of what has to be done in those situations.*

But as years passed, the business grew, the meetings stopped, and the transforming spirit grew dim:

> *When we, the three owners, worked directly with everybody, there was a certain family spirit in the company. When we began growing as a business, and changed the organisational structure by installing general managers for each of the companies, the spirit of the overall organisation suffered. The weekly meetings stopped during the time when the company went through hard times for a period of roughly three years.*

That was when Francisco and his partners realised their mistake. They needed to reinvigorate the transforming, creative attitude of all the company managers and staff:

> *Recently we have taken up the weekly meetings again with the managers, with the middle management, and with the employees. People who have been with us for 25 years feel that the whole organisation is going to revive the old family spirit.*

Francisco has learned that the process of transforming never stops. It requires the persistence to continuously learn and renew ourselves spiritually, both at work and in our personal lives:

> *Our goal is to make people aware of their inner potentials, to help bring out these potentials, and to always strive for excellence. Excellence is the way that God made the world. I also think this should be the purpose of business in general.*

So, ask yourself: *Where in my work could I apply a spiritually transforming attitude to bring about a new level of energy and creativity?*

## 2.28 GETTING TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER

When we draw from our spiritual view of life to evaluate a project, idea or situation, we view it from a more holistic perspective and focus on what is most meaningful.

**GENERATING** creative ideas at work can be fun and satisfying, but then comes "the moment of truth": what are we really going to do with them? It's a time of evaluating – a time that's important, and always full of pitfalls depending on how we go about it. Some people "go by the numbers"; while others get caught up in "analysis paralysis." Some decide by an intuitive "gut feeling"; while others go by what emotionally feels best.

But what does it mean to be *evaluative* – the next aspect of being a SPIRITED person – from a *spiritual basis*? From our own experience, we have found that when we draw from our spiritual view of life to evaluate a project, idea or situation, we view it from a more holistic perspective. We focus on what is most meaningful, and we seek to serve others without letting our own self-interest get in the way.

A European bank executive once told us how he evaluates a situation with a poorly performing employee:

> *In some cases, someone may grossly overstep their line, by misconduct or unacceptable underperformance. I try first everything to mend or correct the situation. I also try to evaluate the trade-off between the damage to the organisation in keeping such a person and the impact of firing them. I also try to carefully analyse, too, whether it is only my own ego which got hurt. Only if all efforts should fail, I am prepared to ask the person to leave, if possible on his own accord.*

How does he draw upon his spirituality to make such evaluations?

> *With such decisions, I try always to do everything in accordance with my conscience, the innate higher intelligence which let us discern the right from wrong actions. Then there is no need to worry about the results. In this context, when crucial decisions have to be reached, and you do not have the clear answer to your problem, I am now convinced that in deep meditation your innermost self will give you the right response, just by listening to its subtle voice.*

Sathya Sai Baba, a universal spiritual teacher, comments on the importance of accessing our spiritual source:

> *There is a force in you through which God works, and that is discrimination. Every man has the discrimination to know what is the right action and what is the wrong action.*

Another executive, working with high tech companies in the USA, gave us another lesson about being evaluative: not relying on our own ego-driven intelligence:

> *I think that the greatest conversion I have had spiritually in my work has to do with the many times in my career where I thought that I was responsible for finding and convincing others of the right answer. In other words, it was up to me to figure it all out. I worked from sheer individual will power and intelligence.*
>
> *Now that I look back I can see that this type of attitude and behaviour is what caused me to fail the most. Yes, I might have made it through the project okay, but did I really help people to unite around a common vision? Today, I feel that it is much more about working together in a collaborative way.*

Sathya Sai Baba brings these lessons about being evaluative into a clear perspective when he says:

> *The educated person… must know how to keep the mind well within check, the intellect sharp and clear, unhampered by prejudices and hatreds, and feelings untouched by egoism. Reason can be tamed only by discipline, by systematic application of compassion, calmness, forbearance, and endurance.*

From all of this, we must conclude that being evaluative is the opportunity to make creative decisions that really get to the heart of the matter – bringing together the best of our spirituality and reasoning mind. From that basis we can make decisions based on our higher values, seek input and consensus with others, and anticipate consequence. And most importantly, we follow what we know inside as right and wrong.

So, ask yourself: *From what basis do I evaluate people and situations in my work? How can I draw from my spiritual view of life when I am being evaluative?*

## 2.29 DAUNTLESS AND DETERMINED

We can be fearless and confident when we realise that the true source of our creativity is our spiritual nature – as manifestations of the Creator, we share in its creative powers.

**MANY MONTHS** ago we began a series of articles related to the acronym "SPIRITED". We created this acronym to describe the qualities found in people whose creativity at work is a natural expression of their spiritual nature. As we began to focus on the last letter in our acronym, "D" for dauntless, we also thought of its synonyms: fearless; confident; resolute; determined; bold.

We couldn't help but smile as these words reminded us of the many daring and courageous stories that spiritual-based business executives have told us during our interviews. Each one had its own unique creative characteristics, things that the leader thought and did that no one else around them had thought of.

Ashoke Maitra, former Director of Human Resources for the "Times of India," is one such example. He was dauntless in creatively leading from his spiritual view of life, which he describes as:

> *My definition of spirituality is that each soul is potentially Divine. The same energy resides in every human being because we are all part of the same universe. Therefore there is no difference between two human beings because we are creations and manifestation of the same energy.*

When Ashoke first joined the newspaper in the mid-90's, there was a major fight going on between the management and journalists. He chose to locate his office right in the middle of the journalists, rather than isolated on the management floor:

> *The first thing the journalists asked me was, "How can you come and sit here? You are from the other side." I said, "But I thought we were all on the same side." They said, "No, you are from the other side." So I said, "Fine, I am sitting here and if you hate me I will go away. But it is your choice because I have taken my first step not to have any discrimination, to show you that we are all one, because that is what I believe. I believe in Vedanta and I believe that all of us are the same. If you think I am some kind of skunk, then I will leave, but give me 15 days to see whether you want me to sit here or not." After 15 days I went to the floor and asked them whether I should stay or go. They said no and asked me to stay. I have now been on this floor for over six years.*

Earlier in his career as a human resource director, Ashoke had to deal with an extremely difficult merger of two large petroleum companies. Even then he was resolute and determined to bring forth spiritual consciousness to solve the seemingly insurmountable problems:

> *Throughout the merger process, I chose to create a spiritual connection so that they could learn to relate with each other as Divine beings, rather than employees of two different companies. We created 44 task force teams and with each team did a retreat-style workshop for 2 days in which we taught Self-Mastery: the art and science of taking responsibility for one's self and learning to stay at equipoise, centred in one's existence.*
>
> *The retreat had a tremendous healing effect and allowed people to detach themselves from the current reality and look at life from a fresh positive perspective. This resulted in an integration at the spirit level. After that individuals from both sides started working together and were able to evolve a new vision, mission and values policy for the company.*

What is the key for all of us to tap into this creative quality of being fearless and confident, no matter what the challenge or circumstances? Looking back to our first article on being a "SPIRITED" person, we found an important clue: *the true source of our creativity is our spiritual nature – as manifestations of the Creator, we share in its creative powers*. Martin Buber, the 20th century Jewish philosopher, boldly points out what it means to live in this awareness:

> *Destiny is not where we wait for God to push us. We take part in creation, meet the Creator, reach out to Him, helpers and companions.*

So, ask yourself: *What is one challenge I have at work, and how can I be dauntless in bringing forth my creative potential to address that challenge?*

## 2.30 DIVINE ASSIGNMENT

When we seek to follow our dharma, which is being true to our Divine nature, we can rise above our ego desires and discover our Divine assignment in our work.

**LOOKING BACK** at an article we wrote about "Dharmic Excellence", we were inspired by one of the self-inquiry questions: *What does it mean to me to distinguish between my ego and my Divine assignment (my dharma) in life?*

We recalled three young business leaders under the age of 35 who were interviewed for our spiritual-based leadership research programme. While we and our colleagues interviewed each one, we admired their ability to be aware of and focus on making sure that their leadership was in alignment with their dharma, their true Divine nature.

Deependra Moitra, who was at one time the youngest general manager for Lucent Technologies in India, spoke about following his dharma in this way:

> *My definition of spirituality is very simple: spirituality is "an approach to fulfilment." It is important to me how I achieve fulfilment; it is a path. Ultimately what is most important to me is: joy, satisfaction, peace and fulfilment. Now how do I get this? I have a 4-pronged approach. Here is society, here is my family, here is my professional life, and here is my personal life. All of this is a framework for me to operate in life.*
>
> *There is one more thing that I am trying to practice: to position myself as someone who has no ego, who is a 'nobody'. I have seen that when we think we are important, it puts a lot of pressure on us. There is a spiritual scripture that says, 'Renounce ego is the Lord's request. And you shall become God is the Lord's promise.' This is a very powerful statement and I am trying to live this.*

Nilofer Merchant, founder of a marketing consulting firm in the USA, Rubicon Consulting, shared how she follows her dharma in this way:

> *I have a phrase I really like that I feel best defines spirituality for me: 'Living fully the glory of God is being fully alive.' To me this means using your gifts to the fullest, working in a position that is using all of you, and being in true, intimate relationships with other people in the community – all of those things that bring you fully alive.*

*I think it is so clear that we were each born with our own unique essences, but we get distracted. We look in the mirror or to the outside world and think, 'this is it.' The answer is truly within you, and all of the spiritual methods and processes are designed to help you get quiet enough, fearless enough, courageous enough, compassionate enough, loving enough to discover who you really are.*

*I do believe in people's goodness and in the redemption quality of people – that even if they do make a mistake, they can come back tomorrow and do it right. And I think I am often the voice of truth in a group, so that whatever is unsaid I am usually the person who can articulate that. This is how I use my gifts in my work.*

Parantha Narendra, Strategy Director for Eurotel in the Czech Republic, speaks about following his dharma in this way:

*For me, spirituality is how you approach life and what you do with your life. I am sure that if there is a meaning to life, it is to get to an understanding where you can see all of life and yourself as united, as integral, as unity.*

*I think that when a leader believes in empowering individuals, he has the best interests of the company at heart, and can use the empowerment as a vehicle to this end. This is an area where I think that spirituality and the objectives of an organisation happily coincide. Having the individual realise his potentials along with the spiritual aspects, and having the organisation develop itself at the same time, are my primary and secondary goals.*

We celebrate the wisdom of each of these young leaders in striving to rise above ego desires, to be aware of and fulfil their Divine assignments. To us, they are role models for leaders everywhere.

So ask yourself: *How would I describe the spiritual basis of my leadership and what it means to me to fulfil my Divine assignment?*

# APPENDIX A: STARTING A CONVERSATION GROUP

You may already be doing your work from a spiritual basis, or you may want to learn more about how to have spirituality be a fundamental aspect of your work. Either way, there's a great deal you can gain from participating in group conversations about putting your spirituality to work. Here are some of the benefits we have discovered:

- By sharing your own answers out loud, you can gain clarity and confidence in what you think and feel about the message in the articles.
- By hearing others' answers, you can broaden your own perspectives and deepen your own understanding.
- By applying the messages of the articles to real-life work situations, you can support each other in working from a spiritual basis

There are many different types of conversations you can have about putting your spirituality to work. For example:

- You can bring together a close community of friends, family or co-workers to read the articles and share spontaneously
- You can bring together a close community of friends, family or co-workers with a purpose and structure – this might fit within another event or could be an on-going gathering
- You can bring together a broader and more diverse community to read the articles and share spontaneously
- You can bring together a broader and more diverse community with a purpose and structure – this might fit within another event or could be an on-going gathering

There are many different venues in which you can hold your conversations, such as:

- Lunchtime gatherings

- Office meetings
- After work get-togethers
- Management retreats
- Workshops
- Informal gatherings at home

Particularly with the on-going gatherings, sometimes your group may want someone to act as group leader or facilitator. At other times, your group might want to share the leadership among everyone.

In this Appendix, we offer you some suggestions and guidelines:

- For everyone in your group, to help make your conversations as enlightening and enjoyable as possible, this appendix includes:
    - Self-inquiry – the basis of good conversation
    - Living with "Wonder Questions"
    - Guidelines for good conversation
    - A suggested group process
    - Getting the most from a good conversation

- For leaders and facilitators of your group, this appendix includes:
    - The purpose and role of a group leader or facilitator
    - Facilitating good conversations
    - Facilitating a large group and/or sub-groups
    - Simple group dynamics
    - Working with very talkative or very quiet participants

## FOR EVERYONE IN YOUR GROUP

### Self-inquiry – the basis of good conversation

To us, the best way to bring the most, and get the most, from any conversation is to start with sincere *self*-inquiry – rather than trying to get others to change or to agree on "the right thing to believe." Therefore, throughout the "Put Your Spirituality to Work" articles we have designed many stimulating self-inquiry questions.

These self-inquiries can provide you with a rich personal learning, as well as the practical insights for applying that learning in your work life. So, when you reach the end of an article, we heartily encourage you to "stop, look inside, and listen." Listen for your inner voice of wisdom and then hold each inquiry in silence without needing to have immediate answers.

For some people, this self-inquiry process may be new and may seem awkward at first. Give yourself time to see the benefits of it as you progress through the articles. Allow your knowing to deepen slowly and from that place within you, begin to share and listen to others with an open heart and mind.

**Living with "Wonder Questions"**

You might have concerns or reservations about something written in the articles. Your concerns can include: challenges you might face as you apply these new ideas in your work; and deeper questions you may have about your life and work. Reservations may include: doubts, hesitations and scepticisms about the ideas contained in the articles and how you might apply them at work.

For example, some people are positive about business and sceptical about spirituality:

- "Business and spirituality just don't mix – the business of business is business."
- "You can't really be competitive in business if you're spiritual."

Some people are positive about spirituality and sceptical about business:

- "Business greed is too widespread for spirituality to make a difference."
- "You can't really be spiritual if you're involved in business."

Other concerns and reservations about spirituality at work that are common are:

- "Even if I'm spiritual in my own life, I can't be spiritual at work. My boss would have a fit."
- "If I want to be accepted and promoted, I have to compromise my spiritual values."
- "What if I find that my spiritual aspirations are contrary to the type of work I'm doing or to the goals of the company I'm working for? Do I have to quit my job?"

Each of these concerns and reservations are welcome, as are any others that you may have. From a spiritual point of view, they simply invite us to look deeper, to inquire with determination: "How can I put my spirituality to work?"

You can turn all of your concerns and reservations into "Wonder Questions" that invite your inner wisdom to emerge over the coming days and weeks. To do this, write each one in the form of a question beginning with "How can I…"

When asking Wonder Questions, avoid making them general or abstract; and avoid focusing them on changing other people. For example:

- A *general or abstract concern* might be: "How can we replace greed with spirituality in business?"
- A *concern focused on changing other people* might be: "How can I get the people I work with to focus on spirituality, rather than greed?"

Instead, personalise each concern and reservation in such a way that you have the power to fully implement the answer to your question. For example:

- A *personalised concern* might be: "How can I be true to my spirituality at work even if business greed is widespread?"

When you personalise your concerns and reservations, and can answer your Wonder Question *for yourself,* you will gain the wisdom of your own experience to learn and grow from, and to share with others. Using the examples of concerns and reservations, personalised Wonder Questions might look like:

- *How can I* mix business and spirituality?
- *How can I* be competitive in business if I'm spiritual?
- *How can I* be true to my spirituality at work even if business greed is widespread?
- *How can I* be spiritual if I'm involved in business?
- *How can I* be spiritual at work in a way that's aligned with my spirituality in the rest of my life?
- *How can I* be accepted and promoted without compromising my spiritual values?
- *How can I* deal with my job if my spiritual aspirations seem contrary to the type of work I'm doing or to the goals of the company I'm working for?

**One note of caution:** do not seek to resolve any of your wonder questions right away – that's why we call them "Wonder Questions." It's enough just to bring them to consciousness. Each of them will no doubt yield a pearl of wisdom, to be gained in due time. You may want to keep a list of your Wonder Questions and from time to time see what wisdom you have gained as a result.

**Guidelines for good conversation**

For a flower garden to flourish, you need healthy seeds, fertile soil, pure water, warm sunshine and invigorating air. In the same way, for the flowering of vibrant group conversations, you need some good guidelines. Here are some guidelines we have

found helpful based on five fundamental human values[7] that are found in spiritual traditions throughout the world:

| Conversation Guidelines | The Human Values |
|---|---|
| • Listen and speak from the heart<br>• Care enough to hear fully from each person (no side conversations) | Love |
| • Be authentic in sharing your thoughts, words and deeds<br>• Honour the time available for all to share – stay focused | Righteousness |
| • Listen patiently and openly; welcome all points of view<br>• Uplift and encourage everyone's confidence | Peace |
| • Give the "headline" of your thoughts before the details<br>• Share *your own* personal experiences rather than talking about others' situations | Truth |
| • Respect differences and avoid criticism of others<br>• Honour confidentiality | Non-violence |

In short, to have uplifting, enriching conversations, focus on *conversing*, rather than *converting*. That is, focus on self-reflection, listening (to one's inner voice as well as to others), and respecting the range of insights – rather than trying to convince others that your point of view is the "right" way. Allow your spirituality to work in its own way and in its own time.

We highly recommend that you post the "Conversation Guidelines" where you meet so that everyone remembers them easily. Maybe you can ask a youth group to make a creative poster for you…

**A suggested group process**

[7] To learn more about these five human values, see the following articles in Book 1 – The Basics:

- Basics 1.08 Spiritual Values are Human Values
- Basics 1.09 Seeing the Truth
- Basics 1.10 Attuning Work with Righteousness
- Basics 1.11 Love is the Ultimate Power
- Basics 1.12 Peace that Transcends Understanding
- Basics 1.13 Conquer Your Inner Enemy

There are innumerable ways you can start and have a good conversation about "putting your spirituality to work". But if you would like some suggestions as a starting point, we have a few …

1. Begin with several minutes of quiet time. Let everyone relax and mentally put away the stresses of the day.
2. Even if people have read a particular article ahead of time, read the article aloud in the group (perhaps passing it around and letting different people read two or three paragraphs each).
3. Spend a few minutes in quiet, reflective time, posing the self-inquiry questions that are contained in the article.
4. Begin your conversation with an emphasis on personal sharing using any of the self-inquiry questions that are contained in the article.
5. End by going around the group and have each person give a brief (15-30 second) summary of one insight or application that they are going to put into practice in their work as a result of the conversation.

In addition, you can use a variety of approaches to deepen your conversations, such as: appreciative inquiry, dialogue and world cafes[8]

Overall, feel free to be creative in your group process, making sure that your focus is always aimed at a sincere effort at gaining spiritual insights from the articles and applying them in your everyday work life.

**Getting the most from a good conversation**

Ultimately, *what* you learn from a good conversation depends on *you* and your willingness to contribute to and learn from others. To help you give and receive the most from a conversation, we encourage you to:

- Read each article closely and carefully – inquiring into your own experience and applying it to your own work life.
- Keep in mind that a fundamental intention of a good conversation is for you to come to your own answers – through introspection and direct experience – as well as by listening and sharing with others.

[8] To learn more about these types of conversations see the following articles in Book 3 – Spiritual-Based Leaders:

- SBL 3.12 The Wholeness of Meaningful Conversation
- SBL 3.13 Fuelling a Positive Future
- SBL 3.14 Hosting Conversations that Matter

- Do not rush to a solution for your concerns or reservations. Be patient and allow your wisdom and insights to unfold naturally as you progress through the articles. And, be sure to create "Wonder Questions" along your journey.

If you're not feeling that a conversation is as meaningful as you'd like, then *take the initiative*…

- If you feel lost or confused, ask yourself, "What is the key question that would give me clarity?" and *ask it*!
- If you feel passive or distant, ask yourself, "What would energise me to be totally engaged?" and *propose it*!
- If you feel disinterested or impatient, ask yourself, "What do I most want to learn from this conversation?" and *say what that is*.

**FOR GROUP LEADERS AND FACILITATORS**

**The purpose and role of a facilitator / group leader**

The *purpose* of a facilitator is to assist a group to:

- Explore a variety of individual answers to the self-inquiry questions in each article and to probe the depths of the group's collective wisdom
- Uplift and encourage participants in the learning and application of their new insights
- Create a sense of community and support
- Share stories as well as the wisdom gained from putting spirituality to work

The role of the facilitator is to take care of what happens during a conversation and to provide support to participants *between* conversations. Some things to keep in mind include:

- Set a tone for the conversation using the "Conversation Guidelines" given earlier from the five fundamental human values
- Help each individual to participate as they feel most comfortable
- Bring your own energy and heartfulness to the group
- Lead through your own experience and example
- Focus on the participants' own learning and avoid becoming the "answer/expert" person.

**Facilitating good conversation**

Sometimes, conversations can get "off the track." With ongoing gatherings, it can be helpful to have a person who monitors and facilitates the "quality of conversation"

according to the guidelines given earlier. If you find yourself in that role, to best facilitate these group discussions, we suggest that you:

- Encourage everyone to find their own unique individual answers, rather than relying on you or others in the group to formulate them.
- Avoid philosophical debates and stay focused on heartful insights and practical applications.
- Allow each person's personal experience to be his or her best teacher, and avoid pressing for group agreement.
- Assist each person in coming up with their own best answers, using phrases such as: "Say a little more about that..." "Thank you…" "What I understand (or hear) you saying is…"
- Invite others to share their experiences from similar inquiries or situations, so long as it is not "advice." The key is to have each person speak about themselves, and not focus on "problem-solving" someone else's concern.
- Keep your focus during the group sessions on the participants' own reflections and learning and avoid becoming the "answer/expert" person.
- Share *your own* experiences from similar inquiries or situations – as inspiration, not as "advice." Such sharing can open and expand the dialogue and give participants more confidence to share their experiences. For example, start with, "I once had a similar confusion…"
- When a question remains unresolved, or a person has concerns or reservations, remind them about creating "Wonder Questions".

**Facilitating a large group and/or sub-groups**

Facilitating the entire group together

Depending on the size of your group, you may want to keep everyone together. The advantages of keeping everyone in the full group include:

- You can maintain control of when to start each article and how much time you give the participants to share their insights and experiences.
- Everyone can hear what everyone else has to say.
- You can more closely monitor that everyone gets a chance to share and participate.
- You can see when a conversation has finished and it's time to move on to the next article; you can also see if some extra time is needed before you move on.

Typically groups of 5 – 15 can have an open, flowing sharing where most everyone can have the "air time" to express their ideas. If you have a group with more than 15

participants and want to facilitate the entire group together, it usually works best if you create a selection process so the participants can share one at a time (see the next section on “Simple Group Dynamics” for ideas).

Facilitating with sub-groups

Rather than facilitating the full group, you may wish to form sub-groups of 3 – 6 people for the group sharing. The advantages of using sub-groups include:

- As with the large group, you can maintain control of when to start each article and how much time you give the sub-groups to share among themselves.
- It gives everyone a more equal chance to share their insights, stories, experiences, questions, points of view, etc.
- It gives participants who are quiet, or shy about speaking in a larger group, a more comfortable way to share.
- You can change the composition of the sub-groups from one article to another so participants have a chance to listen to a variety of insights, stories and experiences.

If you choose this option, it is best for you to introduce each article and then have the participants form smaller sub-groups of 3 - 6 people to maximise the individual sharing time of insights, stories and experiences. Before putting them into sub-groups, be sure and let them know how much time they have to share, so that everyone in the sub-group has a chance to speak.

**Simple group dynamics**

There are many ways to have individuals speak and share in an orderly fashion, whether in large groups or smaller sub-groups:

1. “Go around the circle” – Start with one place in a circle (or other shape) and have each person share in turn, without being interrupted. We suggest giving participants the option of “passing” if they have nothing they want to say, with the option of speaking up later on the second go-around.
2. “Passing the card” – Pass around a card (or the microphone or other object) to signify whose turn it is; it doesn’t have to go around a circle. *Only the person with the card can speak*.
3. “Call on someone” – You can call on each person to speak from among those who raise their hands to share.
4. Refer to the “Conversation Guidelines” when needed to remind participants of how they can each contribute to a positive environment for the group.

**Working with very talkative or very quiet participants**

Here are some suggestions for eliciting the "even" participation of everyone, especially if you have a few people who are speaking much more than the others.

1. If only a few are consistently speaking and the rest of the group tends to be quiet, use the "go around the circle" or the "pass the card" techniques… or switch to sub-groups of 3 – 6 participants.
2. If one or two people tend to talk "on and on" – telling long stories or never getting to the point of their sharing – you might talk to them privately and remind them of the "Conversation Guidelines":
    - Listen and speak from the heart
    - Care enough to hear fully from each person (no side conversations)
    - Be authentic in sharing your thoughts, words and deeds
    - Honour the time available for all to share – stay focused
    - Listen patiently and openly; welcome all points of view
    - Uplift and encourage everyone's confidence
    - Give the "headline" of your thoughts before the details
    - Share *your own* personal experiences rather than talking about others' situations
    - Respect differences and avoid criticism of others
    - Honour confidentiality
3. Ask the quieter participants to read aloud from the articles. This might give them a more comfortable experience of speaking that could eventually lead to more sharing of their own ideas.

**In closing**

Remember, to gain all of the benefits that a good conversation has to offer, speak from your heart and be sure to focus on:

- Learning with humility – not "knowing it all" with arrogance
- Inquiring with curiosity – not conducting an inquisition
- Self-disclosing – not lecturing
- Respecting each person's own experience – not being dogmatic about "the right way"
- Listening and sharing from the heart – not arguing or philosophising
- Uplifting – not criticising

# APPENDIX B: ABOUT THE CO-AUTHORS AND EDITOR

As we began to ponder the question of what to share about ourselves in this book, we decided to follow our own guidance and turned our dilemma into a Wonder Question: *How can we share our career history so that people feel confident in our skills and gain insights from our experiences, without bringing undo notice to ourselves?* Once we pondered this Wonder Question, we realised that the solution was to write our career history from our spiritual view of life, which naturally revealed how our spiritual growth has impacted our careers.

While this may sound like a simple solution, it was truly a new learning skill for us. We went through several attempts to do this before we began to understand what it meant to write our career histories authentically from the heart.

Once you have read our career histories, we encourage you to go through the same process for yourself. If you were going to write your career history from your spiritual view of life, what would it be like?

We hope you will gain as much insight from this exercise as we have!

## Co-author Debra R. Miller

### DISCOVERING "TRUE WORTH"

When I was 31, I had a spiritual awakening of the heart: for the first time in my life, I had a direct experience of Divine Love. That experience is still with me today and was the turning point for me to realise that all the worldly status I had acquired was not a measure of my "true worth". This experience redirected the course of both my life and career.

I started my corporate career in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA in 1975, at the age of 19. For years I worked earnestly to climb the corporate ladder, as it seemed the way for me to prove my worth as a human being and to feel good about my life. I was a young mother with one daughter when I held a full time job and went to college at Tulsa University, where I majored in accounting and computer science.

During this time I experienced many career successes. At the age of 22, I was promoted to my first supervisory position; and soon after was put in charge of building a new computer department. At the age of 27, an international oil and gas firm, Santa Fe Minerals, recruited me and I was relocated to Dallas, Texas. After three years, I became head of their software maintenance and development and by the age of 32 I was on the executive management team.

In 1991, I began to design my career from my spiritual understanding of "true worth", which led me to become an entrepreneur. Because I loved sports, I was inspired by the idea of being a coach for business professionals and executives. To me, this meant helping others to bring out their deepest values and most natural talents in their work. My client experiences were so rewarding that before long, I felt an inner calling to write my first book: *Beyond Motivation: Waking Up The Knowing Within.* This helped me to discover my love and talent for writing and opened up a whole new direction for my work.

As I grew spiritually, and with my clients' encouragement, my work took on a broader dimension, resulting in my developing two methodologies related to spirituality as the source of consciousness: "Business by Design: Mastering Business from the Inside Out" and "Spiritual Life Design: Living a Fully Conscious Life". Through all of this, I discovered that my "true worth" was in living my life congruent with my spiritual nature and being an example of what I wrote and offered to my clients.

After William and I married, we wanted our life and work to be a reflection of “oneness expressing as two”, a spiritual theme we chose for our marriage. So, in the spring of 2000, we co-founded a non-profit organisation called the Global Dharma Center and began to create many diverse projects that focus on spirituality as the basis for life and work. We also moved our home from the USA to India to live in the Sathya Sai Baba ashram, an international spiritual community that honours the diversity of all spiritual paths.

Today our work projects continually challenge us to grow spiritually. Some of these projects include: writing an on-going column for the Times of India on “Spirituality at Work”; developing the *Human Values at Work* programme; conducting an international research programme on “Spiritual-Based Leadership”; and writing two books on the life and teachings of Jesus from a universal perspective.

## Co-author William C. Miller

### SPIRITUALITY, BUSINESS, & CREATIVITY: A MULTI-FACETED DIAMOND

In 1986, an executive at 3M Corporation invited me to make a presentation on strategic innovation management. At the time, I was head of innovation management at SRI International (Stanford Research Institute). After the presentation, he asked me about a book he saw in my briefcase. I said, "Oh, its a book about Christian saints from the 13th to 16th centuries." That's all I planned to say, but he asked me to say more. I added, "For a few years now, I've realised that a major theme in my life and work is how spirituality, creativity, and business are facets of the same diamond, rather than separate subjects." He responded, "That's exactly what I've been thinking about these past months!"

I've always marvelled at how many people I've met have shared that interest with me, which emerged slowly but surely in the years after I graduated from Stanford University, USA, in 1970 with studies in psychology, mathematics and physics. When I studied for my M.A. in humanistic psychology, with a specialty in organisational psychology, I was intrigued to learn how Buddhist and other spiritual cultures have influenced that field.

In 1975, I embarked on a corporate career with the intention to assist people in actualising their full potential through their work. My first job was with a health insurance company teaching employees how to communicate better with each other and customers. Then, in the late 1970's, at the age of 30, I became corporate manager of training and development for a major American manufacturing firm, where I developed management programs based on values I sincerely believed in: honesty, trustworthiness, and caring.

Around the time I started my consulting career at SRI International in 1982, I had a spiritual awakening and realised that my "humanistic" inclinations were turning more strongly towards "ideas of Divinity". That's when I also met Sathya Sai Baba and began to take annual trips to India, which in turn deepened my love for my own Christian heritage.

While at SRI, I managed its international consulting practice on values-driven innovation and had my first book published: *The Creative Edge*. The final chapter was entitled, "From Prophets to Profits", explicitly speaking of the spiritual basis of corporate creativity. In 1987, I left SRI and started my own consulting firm with a

strong interest in how the spiritual/human values of truth, righteousness, peace, love, and non-violence were the foundation for true, sustainable business success. I drew from spiritual texts as the inspiration for models of corporate innovation. As a consultant, I have worked with over 100 corporate clients in more than a dozen countries worldwide. In 1999, I had the satisfaction of consolidating my knowledge, experience and methodologies into a book called *Flash of Brilliance: Inspiring Creativity Where You Work*, which was selected by Executive Book Summaries as one of the top 30 business books that year.

In May of 2000, my wife Debra and I co-founded a non-profit organisation called the Global Dharma Center, focusing on spirituality as the basis for work. That same year, we also moved our home from the USA to India to live in the Sathya Sai Baba ashram, a place we heartfully feel is “home” like no other place on earth. There, my spiritual practice is focused on deepening my experience of “the Divinity in myself and all creation”.

## Editor: Vijay Srinivas

### FROM RESTLESSNESS TO SURRENDER

At 22, I was a restless mass of opinions, desires and dreams. I started my professional life as a correspondent with BusinessWorld magazine (currently, the number one business publication in the country) – probably one of my best breaks in career. The stint here gave me a ringside view of the fascinating world of industry, finance, economy and corporates. Even as my journalistic skills began to take shape, I began to dream of becoming an editor of a business magazine or newspaper. The dream run continued and led me to another opening in the India Today magazine (arguably, still the leading Indian current affairs weekly).

I would have ideally settled down in the magazine for a long innings here, but destiny had other ideas. Within a few months, an opportunity to work for an English newspaper in Saudi Arabia fell in my lap. The lure of the overseas was strong enough to pull me off my perch. I headed off for my first and last job abroad. All along these initial years of my career, I followed my heart, and threw logic and reason to the winds. The unsettled soul that I was, I felt happy to explore new dimensions to my growth in the lap of freedom. Could that have been the first stirrings of a free spirit trying to discover its place in the world? Perhaps yes.

By the time I was 25, surprisingly, I did not want to stick to journalism. I came back to India, got married, and joined the communication division of World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). This was the time when I opened my eyes to the magnificent power of nature and ecological forces that sustain life on our planet. Gradually, my sense of awe towards the natural world began to translate into a deep respect for the Ultimate Power that created it all.

Before I turned 30, the wheel of destiny brought me back to journalism, though of a different kind. For the next four years, I worked as a TV journalist for India This Week (a popular current affairs weekly programme on Doordarshan, the national broadcaster). Television journalism excited me in the beginning, but its 'instantness' and 'ephemerality' gradually made me weary of the medium. The real search for something beyond the mundane probably began at that time.

Marriage and the birth of my two children brought inside me the joy, responsibility and pains of fatherhood. It was a difficult period where I learnt to juggle my roles as an employee, husband, father and son. My children taught me to enjoy both the simple pleasures and difficulties of daily life.

In the past few years, my decision to work as a freelance communication professional has given me more freedom to manage my life and career. As I look back, I realise that my restlessness and discontent with the outside world was more a reflection of my inner turbulence. My inward odyssey towards my spiritual purpose in life may have just begun, but it has already made me a much more tranquil person today than I ever was. As I learn to take everything in a spirit of surrender to the Almighty, life suddenly seems a cakewalk – despite the hurdles and obstacles.

To download additional book chapters, articles, workbooks, and research on this subject of “Spirituality at Work”, visit our website: www.globaldharma.org