

CHAPTER 10

On the Systems Intelligence of Forgiveness

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It is impossible to forgive whoever has done us harm if that harm has lowered us. We have to think that it has not lowered us, but has revealed our true level.

Simone Weil, 1947.

I am a Bishop in the Church of God. I am fifty-four years old. I am a Nobel laureate. Many would say I was reasonably responsible. In the land of my birth I cannot vote.

Desmond Tutu, 1985.

Systems Intelligence is understood as intelligent behaviour in the context of complex systems involving interaction and feedback. In chaotic situations the concept of Systems Intelligence offers a new approach to understand and interpret the ongoing situation and interact with it. It is a key form of human involvement with the environment and its social structures. People are enriched in various, sometimes seemingly small ways, and this will pay back in unexpected ways and may bring along huge changes. Forgiveness is one such enriching element, which has enormous power and impact on individuals and entire societies. The methods of the great leaders of forgiveness and nonviolence have many similarities with the Systems Intelligence framework.

Introduction

When we look back at the history of totalitarian regimes, we see their rudeness and injustice, but when a person is inside such a horrible system he or she is seldom able to see its inhumanities¹. This kind of environment can provoke irrational violence, in absurd proportions as South-African journalist Rian Malan describes in his autobiographical novel (1989). Totalitarian governments aim to make people function as marionettes. Extreme examples are concentration camps in Nazi Germany, gulags in Siberia or North Korean terrorists shooting down a commercial flight (Ten Boom 1971, Kim 1993, Glover 1999). And yet, even in these cases, forgiveness is possible.

¹ To find more about totalitarianism and evil see for instance writings by Hannah Arendt, Simone Weil and Victor E. Frankl.

Miraculously, even when confronted with extreme oppression, there are those very special individuals who do not submit to it. They have the vision of something better and the willpower to go against the current, which often demands courage. Usually they have to work inside the system, but fortunately they are strong enough to resist. They are able to keep their minds and ideals clear, and often, oppression sharpens their vision, the way Martin Luther King (1963) so tremendously manifested in his speech “I Have a Dream”. As Coretta Scott King (1969) later recalled, she felt that the words poured from somewhere above through Martin to the audience and they all felt a transformation.

Systems intelligence deals with the structures and ideas human agents use in order to conduct their lives successfully (Saarinen and Hämäläinen 2004). Systems intelligence does this by challenging our thinking and making us more conscious about the consequences of our actions. Saarinen (2006) has used a concept of “systems intelligence looking glass”, which help to notice systems intelligence in most surprising situations. Systems intelligence is present when people use common sense, manage the whole, pay attention to important details, think with their heart and soul and use all their resources. It is a philosophy of life (Hämäläinen and Saarinen 2006).

In this article I explore the relationship between systems intelligence and forgiveness, one of the important virtues. I discuss some aspects of forgiveness: what forgiveness is and when it is needed. I link dignity and hope with forgiveness. I also study the leaders of the nonviolence ideology and link their work with forgiveness and humanity. As a case study I discuss the complex situation of South African post apartheid era. I show that the methods of the great leaders of forgiveness and nonviolence have many points of contact with systems intelligence.

The South-African Miracle

In many aspects the era of South-African apartheid² regime was very controversial from the standpoint of international politics. During the cold war Soviet Union supported South African blacks and United States supported apartheid regime. However, what always annoyed me were the conflicting morals of Soviet Union and United States. Many of the policies of apartheid were exactly what Soviet Union practiced on its own people – no freedom of speech, but banning orders and internal exiles, detentions without trial and restrictions on travel and housing. Any resistance was met with violence or imprisonment. Besides, most of the victims of the apartheid regime were devoted Christians, while Soviet Union was anti-religious. Of course South African apartheid regime regarded itself as a Christian and God fearing nation, but it was not so. They even banned the old hymn “God Bless Africa”. What kind of a regime does that? And United States, which is proud of being the “Land of the Free”, would not allow that freedom to other Nations.

“Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security... No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment...”

All are equal before the law and are entitled without discrimination to equal protection of the law... “

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948

Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1994, p. 98) highlighted this paradox in his speech in 1985:

² The Afrikaans word apartheid means apartness, separateness. It was the official policy of South Africa from 1948 till about 1991 but it was practiced already in the beginning of the 20th century when Gandhi lived in South Africa. All races were prevented from interaction with each other. The non-whites were stripped off most of the civil and human rights.

Many Western countries received their independence only after a violent and bloody struggle. The West has lauded to the skies the resistance movement during Second World War... And yet when it comes to black liberation, the West wakes up and suddenly finds it has become pacifist. They say South Africa is a bulwark against Communism. But injustice and oppression are surely the best breeding grounds for communism. The West is giving free enterprise and capitalism very bad names as the allies of that vicious system of apartheid.

He continued his speech by pointing out that their country was on the verge of catastrophe. Only a miracle or the intervention of the West could prevent Armageddon. But the miracle did happen, with a little help from the West. Consequently a more conciliatory man de Klerk was nominated as president. He gradually guided South Africa away from apartheid. "[On February 1990 an] old man walked out of jail. He was past seventy-one years old. More than half his life had been stolen from him by a succession of apartheid government, but he was at last free. For the first time in two generations, South African newspapers published his photograph ..." Wooten (2004, p. 51) recalls Mandela's release.

Eventually on April 1994 South-Africans had their first general election day ever. It could have turned into a very bloody day; armed packs with AK-47 rifles and other weapons could have easily caused devastation. But they did not. It turned out to be a wonderful day of reconciliation and sharing. It was like a spiritual event, a religious experience as Tutu (1994, p. 4) describes:

People of all races were standing in the same queues, perhaps for the very first time in their lives. Professionals, domestic workers, cleaners and their madams – all were standing in those lines that were snaking their way slowly to the polling booth. And what should have been a disaster turned out to be a blessing in disguise ... Those long hours helped us South Africans to find one another. People shared newspapers, sandwiches, umbrellas, and the scales began to fall from their eyes. South Africans found fellow South Africans ... they found a fellow human being.

How was that wonder possible, after dark decades of injustice and violence? My solemn belief is that the example Nelson Mandela and his fellow prisoners showed was vital to the birth of this modern day wonder. He refused to revenge in choosing forgiveness. The chalk quarries of Robben Island deteriorated his eyesight and everything was done to break his spirit and to fill him with hate and anger (Tutu 1999). But quite contrary to expectations, out came a noble man.

*Human agents
can influence
entire systems.*

One of the key ideas of systems intelligence is that human agents can influence entire systems (Saarinen and Hämäläinen 2004). The question is: What makes the difference in the hearts of people? First a seemingly marginal thing catches fire and causes an avalanche of consequences. Furthermore, as structure creates behaviour and behaviour in turn creates structure, forgiveness and hope spreads reconciliation in the environment like a domino effect. South African editor Malala (2004) tells in his article how his old mother felt about Mandela in 1995: "Mandela has made us people. He has given us dignity we did not have under apartheid." Egan (2000) puts it felicitously:

Consolidation also requires reconciliation, something Mandela understands but Lenin never did. The Soviet Union has been relegated to the dust heaps of history, as Trotsky once said of the Czars, but modern South Africa seems likely to endure.

Systems intelligence is based on a principle of humbleness and optimism for change, which acknowledges that one's perspective of others might be drastically mistaken (Hämäläinen and Saarinen 2006). Beliefs regarding structures produce behaviour and people's behaviour often reflects their best guesses of rational behaviour. They can get caught in systems that serve

nobody's interest and feel helpless regarding their possibilities of changing the system, in this case apartheid (Saarinen and Hämäläinen 2004). They can even conceal their real thoughts because they are part of the system of holding back, which means that many of the core beliefs of people do not show up in their action (Hämäläinen and Saarinen 2006). People can feel insecure and as heretics and dissidents are despised by the system they are too frightened to speak up (Tutu 1999, Nouwen 2005, Varto 2005).

Mandela has made us people. He has given us dignity we did not have under apartheid.

The change begins when people start to re-think their relationship with the environment and its structures. Even a small change in one's behaviour might be a significant change for the better in the eyes of others (Saarinen and Hämäläinen 2004). Tutu (1999) notes how many South African whites were taught to believe that blacks are animals (literally). They had also mixed the concepts of "legally right" and "morally right". The new South Africa was a huge change for them as well. A breathtaking moment of reconciliation was Mandela's former prison guard among the invited guests in his presidential inauguration. As Carpenter (1998) formulates: "Ever since his release from prison, Mandela has given the whole world a demonstration of forgiveness and his attitude can be applied by each one of us."

Forgiveness as a Virtue

Human nature has tendency to retaliate or seek retribution after being insulted or victimized. Nearly all cultures have codified revenge so that it can be taken out of the hands of individuals and placed in the hands of a third party, e.g. the society (McCullough and Witvliet 2002). The work of Truth and Reconciliation Committee³ (TRC) had obviously such an intention. Beginning was not easy; first there were some pitfalls and distrust. Not all South-Africans were enthusiastic about TRC either (Tutu 1999, Robinson 2006). But eventually it became a success.

Forgiveness may be defined according to its properties as a response, a personality disposition or a characteristic of social units. As a personality disposition, forgiveness may be understood as a propensity to forgive others across a wide variety of interpersonal circumstances. In this sense, people can be scaled along a forgiving—unforgiving continuum. Some social structures are characterized by a high degree of forgiveness (e.g. marriages, families), whereas other social structures are characterized by less forgiveness (McCullough and Witvliet 2002). It is crucial to remember that forgiveness and reconciliation happen most frequently not between friends or those who like one another. Forgiveness and reconciliation are needed precisely because people detest one another. The good part is that enemies are potential allies, friends and colleagues (Tutu 1999, p. 226). And that is not a mere utopia (Tutu 2004, p. 8):

In 1989 they were ready to kill to maintain apartheid and to keep the beaches just for the whites. And just a few years later there we were a nation that had elected as president Nelson Mandela. This man who languished in jail for twenty-seven years, vilified as a terrorist, and who eventually became one of the moral leaders of the world.

Holloway (2002, p. 66) asks what really happens in the act of forgiving. And what does it mean to the parties involved in the conflict. Forgiveness is needed in bringing some kind of order and rationality to the chaos people have created with their own behaviour. The act and its

³ TRC was a mechanism to deal with the crimes committed during apartheid. Under certain conditions (e.g. timeline) the perpetrators were allowed to seek amnesty, providing they told all about their crimes. Desmond Tutu was nominated the chairman of TRC by Mandela.

consequences cannot be undone, but confession may change the psychological reaction of the victim and interrupt the expected sequence of revenge. According to the Christian tradition, nobody and nothing is beyond the forgiveness of God (Nouwen 1992, Tutu 1999, Tutu 2004, Nouwen 2005). Forgiveness is also encouraged in the Bible⁴: “And be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another just as God has forgiven you.”

McCullough and Witvliet (2002) note that *seeking* and *receiving* forgiveness have been largely ignored by research. How do seeking and receiving forgiveness relate to confession and moral emotions such as guilt and shame? Interestingly, the process of TRC seems to give some answers. Perhaps apologies and expressions of remorse allow the victim to distinguish the personality of the transgressor from his or hers negative behaviour. This facilitates a more favourable relationship and reduces negative thoughts. McCullough and Witvliet (2002) conclude that all the world’s great religions have commended forgiveness as:

- (1) A response with redemptive consequences for transgressors and their victims.
- (2) A human virtue worth cultivating.
- (3) A form of social capital that helps social units such as marriages and communities to operate more harmoniously.

Virtues are systems intelligent (Saarinen and Hämäläinen 2004). They point beyond a person’s immediate benefit and egoistic concerns by contributing the whole. They produce a better community, a better system to live in. Park and Peterson (2003) have developed the Values in Action (VIA) Classification of character strengths. They define forgiveness or mercy as forgiving those who have done wrong, giving people a second chance, not being vengeful. Forgiveness in itself is not a motivation; it is a complex of changes in one’s motivations. Especially rumination of past events appears to hinder forgiveness. Emotionally stable people are less prone to ruminate in negative life events (Goleman 1995). Surprisingly though, it seems that religious and spiritual people are no more forgiving than those who are less religious and spiritual (McCullough 2001). Obviously, ability to forgive has something to do with the person’s character, a person either has “character” or not.

Forgiving the Evil

To forgive does not mean that you have to forget. It is not hypocrisy and turning your blind eye to the wrong. True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the pain, the truth (Tutu 1999). It means telling what happened, talking about it. Trying to forget by sweeping the past under the carpet means you get trapped with your past. A much better way is to express your hurt: “I will carry the memory of what you have done with me. I will not forget but I refuse to let what you have done stand between us. I refuse to allow it to create a permanent barrier between us. I still want you in my life.” (Carpenter 1998).

*The key to forgiveness
is understanding.*

Corrie ten Boom’s older sister who perished in the concentration camp asked her sister to tell everybody about what had happened, to make sure that it is not forgotten (1972). It is important that next time nobody can say: they did not know. Forgiving also involves trying to understand the perpetrators, to have empathy, not to judge but to realize the pressures and influences that might have caused their deeds (Tutu 1999, Nouwen 2005). Dith

⁴ Ef 4:32

Pran (1997, p. 232), a survivor of Cambodia's killing fields says that he can forgive the ordinary soldiers. They were uneducated and poor and had no means to object their orders:

I am not saying what the soldiers did was right and I'm not offering them excuses, but at least I understand why they did what they did. I think the key to forgiveness is understanding. I just will never understand why the Khmer Rouge top leaders did what they did. What was the purpose? Where was their humanity? They had the option to stop killing. ... We need to learn to separate the true culprits from the pawns, the evil masterminds from the brainwashed. We cannot label everyone the same. There is a world of difference between the leadership of the Khmer Rouge and the individuals who followed their orders.

During TRC when listening to the horrendous testimonies Tutu (1999, p. 110) realized: "There is an awful depth of depravity to which we can all sink; we do possess an extraordinary capacity of evil." And this applies to all of us. Every one of us has a huge capacity for evil. As the Bible⁵ says: "For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and continue to fall short of God's glory."

*Asking for forgiveness
and being forgiven also
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responsibility of your
actions.*

Tragically those who oppose the evil sometimes become brutalized and descend to the same level as those they were opposing (Tutu 1999). The society has filled them with self-hate and has destroyed their dignity. They have become part of the evil. Systems can make people act in an undesirable way and as people act this way, it is causing the system of undesirable behaviour to regenerate itself (Saarinen and Hämäläinen 2004). Carpenter (1998) explains: "That's why St. Paul said that we do not wrestle only with flesh and blood but with principalities and powers.⁶ Paul is referring to social structures like sexism and racism that envelop us and the hurtful social decisions which involve us by virtue of the fact that we are alive in these times and places."

The Jewish have a special day for forgiving, Jom Kippur, when the Jewry throw their sins away. However, the tone of forgiving is different than among the Christians. Prager (1997, p. 226) explains:

Jewish view of forgiveness is that a person who hurts another person must ask forgiveness from his victim and that only the victim can forgive him. God Himself does not forgive a person who has sinned against a human being unless that human being has been forgiven by his victim. Therefore, people can never forgive murder, since the one person who can forgive is gone, forever.

Forgiving someone who has killed your loved one is one of the hardest things you can ever do (Tutu 1999, Robinson 2006). Unfortunately, the above concept means that there would forever be an obstacle between the perpetrator and the victim (and their families), with no way out and no brighter tomorrow, no hope (Tutu 1999, p. 225). I wonder what role this unforgiveness has in the modern day situation in Israel and the surrounding Arab states. Archbishop Tutu (1999, p. 51) points out one very important fact: Asking for forgiveness and being forgiven also means taking responsibility of your actions. In order to acknowledge that you are being forgiven you have to admit and confess that you have done something that requires forgiveness (Carpenter 1998). You have to swallow your pride. However this humility has an additional bonus: "as we are liberated

⁵ Rom 3:22-23

⁶ Ef 6:12

from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others".⁷ In the systems intelligent sense, here the system of holding back collapses, courage conquers fear, gratefulness rules over ungratefulness and hope prevails (Hämäläinen and Saarinen 2006).

Of course, the toils of South Africa are far from over. Statistics⁸ report quite a shocking story: homicide rate is the second highest in the world (after Colombia) and the mortality rate among young adults is alarmingly high, the latter mainly due to HIV. Journalist Wooten (2004) surveys the cultural catastrophe that has led to this horrible situation. As the apartheid regime had separated men into the mines and the mills and expelled women and children into the poor Bantustans it had also destroyed the strong tribal traditions of marriage and family ties. One can only speculate how enormously more difficult the situation would be if the transition period had been more violent. Tutu (2004) reminds us that just because there is more to be done, we should not forget the miracles that have taken place in our lifetime. Had Mandela not shown forgiveness and acted systems intelligently, the situation could be much worse.

Time Was Ripe

So how is it that this fine example of national renewal took place in South Africa when it did? Tutu (1999) refers to the words of the Bible: "In the fullness of time"⁹. Little earlier would have been too early; little later would have been too late. The iron curtain had fallen as the Berlin Wall was torn down in 1989. The world was on the verge of globalization and IT-revolution. South Africa had a new president. The change starts when the time is ripe and the system is ready, when the right button of people's internal system is touched (Hämäläinen and Saarinen 2005, p. 43). Tutu (2004, p. 3) calls this the phenomenon of transfiguration. The principle of transfiguration is at work when something utterly unlikely happens. He believes that nothing, no one and no situation is untransfigurable.

Gladwell (2000) suggests that ideas and messages spread just like viruses do. He calls such contagious ideas "social epidemics". I am convinced that this was the mechanism in South Africa, too. First there are only hints, nothing seems to happen and suddenly everything is changing. Hämäläinen and Saarinen (2006) note in their paper on systems intelligence that what people experience as opportunity for action results from a small but significant change somewhere in the system. It might first emerge in something marginal, and seem like a small thing, yet it might amount to the restructuring of the entire system.

One important antecessor and forerunner of the "social epidemic" of nonviolence was Mahatma Gandhi, who spent several years in his adulthood in South Africa. He had never experienced in England or India such humiliations and insults he was forced to face in South Africa (Gandhi et al. 2001). The suffering he confronted there started his development to the great man we know him. He just could not sit and do nothing. Park and Peterson (2003) name this bravery/valour character as one of the character strengths in their VIA Classification. Another strength mentioned is fairness/equity, also expressed by Gandhi: He believed that even the adversaries are good people and can be reasoned in discourse (Gandhi et al. 2001).

⁷ The words by Nelson Mandela, quoted in Luthans et al. (2004).

⁸ "Report-03-09-05: Adult mortality (age 15–64) based on death notification data in South Africa: 1997–2004" on website <http://www.statssa.gov.za/>

⁹ Galatians 4:4

Mandela writes in his autobiography (1994) how fighting against the injustices in the prisons was part of the campaign against apartheid. That was also the way they were able to keep their dignity. In "Robben Island University" – as his prison is sometimes called – Mandela studied Gandhi's ideas and writings among other readings. Mandela and other older ANC prisoners also educated the young ignorant hooligans entering the prison. This all had its effect in the chain of reflections.

The first black archbishop in South Africa, Desmond Tutu was one hugely important link in the chain. He talked and preached against apartheid for decades. He refused to rest on his laurels and lead a comfortable life in his priory. He sent letters to government leaders (1994); he participated in marches and rallies. Wooten (2004, p. 76) describes one such rally in 1990: "In Cape Town a white neo-nazi rally went unmolested by police while Bishop Tutu, the Nobel Peace laureate, and other clergymen were arrested for staging a counter demonstration."

Tutu preached on funerals. He used every opportunity to speak to the world leaders about his cause. This physically small man was like a barking dog on apartheid's heels, like a nagging conscience. When one reads his Nobel Lecture (Tutu 1984), one can only admire his courage. Tutu resonated with the system of humanity in the spirit of Jesus' words¹⁰: "Love your neighbour as yourself." On the other hand, as Tutu (2004, pp. 13–14) reminds us: You can't force love, because "[l]ove is something that must be given freely ... [We] are free to choose to love or hate, to be kind or to be cruel ... To be human is to be a morally responsible creature ... "

So how can a human being act intelligently and magnificently – with love – in situations, in systems where a veil of uncertainty is present? This is one of the key questions of the systems intelligence approach (Hämäläinen and Saarinen 2006). The answer is that human beings do possess systemic intelligence; people have access to the realm of flourishing. People are intelligent creatures and positive reciprocity works! As for Tutu, I find he possesses every character strength listed by Park and Peterson (2003). Hope and optimism were already present in Steve Biko's funeral in 1976 (Tutu 1994, p. 21):

Our cause, the cause of justice and liberation, must triumph because it is moral and just and right. Many who support the present unjust system in this country know in their hearts that they are upholding a system that is evil and unjust and oppressive, and which is utterly abhorrent and displeasing to God. There is no doubt whatsoever that freedom is coming. Yes, it may be a costly struggle still. The darkest hour, they say, is before the dawn.

Ubuntu

Tutu (1999) refers to the concept of ubuntu as one of the main factors why TRC process was possible in the South African society. Ubuntu means "a person is a person through other human beings", "our humanity is intertwined" and "I participate, therefore I am". It means that one is diminished when others are humiliated, tortured or oppressed. Ubuntu also means that even the supporters of apartheid were victims of the system. In the process of dehumanizing another human being the perpetrator is inevitably dehumanized as well. Tutu (1994, p. 256) explains: "We are all wounded people, traumatized, all of us, by the evil of apartheid. We all need healing ..." Both collective (ubuntu) and individualistic (traditional western) cultural values are present in the South African society. Luthans et al. (2004) draw a vivid scenario of the future for organizations where these cultural differences are nurtured and understood properly and combined with hope.

¹⁰ Mark 12:31

At first it seems that the concept of ubuntu has no parallel with the western individualistic tradition. However, I found the following meditation by John Donne (1624) to be exactly what ubuntu is all about:

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less ... any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind...

Systems intelligence aims at changing the system through individuals. It is about making a difference by setting the system in motion; by creating a resonance in human hearts and wills (Hämäläinen and Saarinen 2005, pp. 30, 53). People are existential creatures that thrive on meaning. They flourish when they can sense they are being respected; they long to feel connected with something meaningful (Hämäläinen and Saarinen 2006). A systems intelligent concept "Miracle of the Commons" means one resonates with a system that tells one can contribute (Hämäläinen and Saarinen 2005, p. 16). This comes very close to the concept of ubuntu. Miracle of the Commons increases one's sense of empowerment as a result of being part of the inspiringly changing system...having participated!

*A person is a
person through
other human
beings.*

Another systems intelligence idea has also close connection with ubuntu. "Sharing away the Burden" takes place when people are enriched and empowered in various small, perhaps seemingly insignificant ways. This will pay back in unexpected ways (Hämäläinen and Saarinen 2005, p. 14). An outsider can easily pass victims' testimonies in front of TRC as mere testimonies. However, for the victims and their families they were much, much more (Tutu 1999). They were the indication that they matter, that their life story is important and somebody is finally listening to them. They found relief and experienced healing through the process of telling their story. The acceptance and the acknowledgement had healing power. And they realized that the stories of other people are their own stories as well. And they became part of ubuntu through their shared stories.

This miraculous transfiguration had an effect on the perpetrators, too. Those who were in power in the days of apartheid now wanted to confess their deeds. A heavy load dropped off their shoulders as they told how they had tortured and killed people and burned their bodies and buried them. Asking for forgiveness eases the feeling of isolation and seclusion and gives new trust and courage (Nouwen 2005). And as one bereaved relative said: "We do want to forgive but we don't know whom to forgive." Now they knew (Tutu 1999). This all comes close to the psychological question asked by McCullough and Witvliet (2002): "What are the effects of feeling truly forgiven?"

Becoming a Great Leader

How are great leaders and men and women of peace and forgiving made? Rao (2004) noticed that several leaders who chose nonviolence had surprisingly similar backgrounds. They had simple and modest homes; loving and strict parents and their families had good connections with the surrounding community. The leaders-to-be were urged on to have a better-than-average education. Furthermore, their education did not stop when they got a degree, they continued their training throughout their lives. Imprisonment usually gave them good chance to study further and develop and cultivate their ideas and thinking. As youngsters, all of them had contacts with nonviolent atmosphere and role models (King 1969, Mandela 1994, Gandhi et al. 2001, Rao 2004).

Nelson Mandela was raised in the province of Transkei to be the personal adviser of a local king. He received an education to be a lawyer and he also practiced law. As a part of their divide and rule system the authorities were willing to allow traditional leaders visit Mandela while he was in jail (Mandela 1994). Desmond Tutu was the son of a well-educated schoolmaster in the rural area. Later the family moved to Johannesburg. Interestingly, Mandela and another great leader, Mahatma Gandhi, were lawyers while two other, Tutu and Martin Luther King, were men of God. Both vocations deal with the deepest needs of people; love and justice. With all these leaders, nonviolence was linked with their sense of morality and their value system based on love and humanity. King and Gandhi were religious which strengthened their nonviolence ideology. According to Rao (2004), Mandela's reasons are not religion-related but more practical, a strategy. However, my opinion is that as he received most of his education at missionary schools and institutions, no doubt, it affected his thinking.

The Christian resistance is nonviolent because the peace they are reaching for is not from this world (Nouwen 2005). It is not reached by taking slaves, not by showing one's power but by love, willingness and turning the other cheek. The peace-bringing resistance does not divide the world into friends and enemies, but believes that everyone is a Child of God. Nonviolent leaders are thought to be naïve and even traitors. Those who have the power often regard nonviolent resistance dangerous in the spirit of the slogan¹¹ "you are either with us or against us."

A great leader is also willing to take risks and do things that are not very popular at the moment.

A leader is somebody who significantly affects the thoughts, feelings and behaviour of a significant number of individuals (Gardner and Laskin 1995). A leader can be a direct or indirect leader but either way; he or she has to have a story to tell and should embody that story in his or her own life. The rarest subtype of a leader is the visionary leader, who actually creates a new story, one not known to most individuals before. Gardner and Laskin (1995) name Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed and Gandhi as such leaders. I want to add to that list a few names more: Martin Luther King, Desmond Tutu, and Nelson Mandela.

To be a great leader you do not have to be macho although current culture seems to admire strength and cynicism. Nouwen (1992) notes that our modern world is constantly comparing everything and everybody, it is giving points and scores and calculating whether something is worth doing. The leader I am describing here is something different; a leader of hearts. Tutu¹² refers to Jesus when he describes an ideal leader:

The real, the authentic leader shows the attribute of leadership in a kind of paradoxical way, almost an oxymoron. The leader is a servant. So leadership is not having your own way. It's not for self-aggrandizement. But oddly, it is for service. It is for sake of the led. It is a proper altruism.

Tutu continues that we ultimately recognize goodness. Suffering surely is one of the components that make a leader competent. He refers to Mandela and his readiness to forgive those who treated him so badly. Holloway (2002, p. 88) visited Robben Island Museum and was stunned to see how barren and cold Mandela's cell was and realizing the enormity of his graciousness. Forgiveness flowing from those conditions is almost impossible to understand, it seems insanity

¹¹ Used by many leaders, one of the latest being George W. Bush on the war against terrorism.

¹² An interview in 2004 by Academy of Achievement: <http://www.achievement.org/autodoc/page/tut0int-1/> (accessed 20 January 2007).

draped in grace. Normally such a place produces aggressive avengers but somehow, a miraculous transfiguration took place.

Collins (2001) describes a Level 5 Leader, who is a paradoxical combination of personal humility and professional will and who acts with quiet calm determination. Kallasvuo, President and CEO of Nokia says (2007):

Having humility does not mean that you are quiet or that you lack the courage to say what you think. Courage and humility are more complementary than contradictory. People who have been humbled by being down and out can have more courage when things get tough. They've been there already, and they understand that things are not always easy. But having humility does mean that you put your own contribution in perspective.

A great leader is also willing to take risks and do things that are not very popular at the moment. Mahatma Gandhi (Gandhi et al. 2001) experienced that, too, as well as so many modern day organizational leaders do almost daily basis. In systems intelligence framework there is an interesting idea of "you never know what tomorrow brings", which means that it is good to be open to new things, to have a curious mind (Saarinen 2006). Something that is underrated today can be the most important idea tomorrow, like microloans (Hämäläinen and Saarinen 2007, p. 29). This is how many inventions are made.

Finding Your Own Path

I already showed education to be an important factor in becoming a great leader. Time and space are also essential in the process of finding your way (Rao 2004). Gandhi, King and Mandela each had space to develop their ideas, whether it was in university or abroad or in jail. Space can be a personal space or interpersonal space where one can meet other people and learn from them. One can grow to see the others' perspective and learn to respect them. Space can be physical space like a cell or non-physical space like prayer or meditation. Tutu also had time and space for his thoughts, as a priest he was able to retire to solitude and prayer. Prayer brings spiritual peace, and spiritual peace brings you to confess your own responsibilities regarding the environment and its structures (Nouwen 2005).

*"The calling to speak is
often a vocation of agony,
but we must speak."*

King, 1967

Gardner and Laskin (1995) remind us that the audience is not a blank slate, waiting for the first story. Rather, the audience is equipped with many stories that have been told and retold over and over again. Thus a leader must compete with the previous stories, and if the new story is to be a success, it has to outweigh all the other stories in some way. King realized that leadership is entirely about the character, as other great leaders like Churchill and Lincoln had realized before him (Phillips 1998). King was skillful in telling his story, he was compassionate, and he cared for people. So was Tutu. They knew that all the people are Children of God and that made their message especially touching: "Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children" (King 1963).

In the beginning of his career Mahatma Gandhi was a shy man, to whom public speaking was extremely difficult, almost impossible (Gandhi et al. 2001). One of the paradoxes of leadership is that you do not have to be a daring extrovert to be brave. Phillips (1998, p. 98) notes: "Simply being up there on stage makes an individual appear more courageous than others who are unwilling to take the risk." King (1967) said in one of his great speeches: "And some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a

vocation of agony, but we must speak. We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak.”

Kallasvuo (2007) tells about a decision he made early in his career:

I made the decision that this is the life I am going to lead. I’m serving the company, and I will give it my all. When you have made that decision, you grow as a person. It gives you the courage to speak up when everyone in a room says ‘this is the case’, and you don’t agree. It gives you strength to resist the safe conformity of benchmarking and instead try to think differently.

As Varto, a leading phenomenologist in Finland says in his deliberation on Simone Weil (2005), it is important always to be critical, because it makes us test all the ideas, also those ideas “everybody” is agreeing with. Hardly ever “everybody” has it right but quite often totally wrong. “Everybody” is following those who shout the loudest. This also means that a thoughtful and conscious person has to tell bad is bad and make good look good, to prevent at least somebody from getting lost. This means we have to speak up, however hard it might be.

Kotter (2007) discusses important factors that cause a transformation process to fail or to succeed. One of the success factors is having a clear vision and communicating it successfully. A good vision goes beyond the numbers and says something that helps clarify the direction in which the organization needs to move. If the vision is too complicated or blurry it is not very useful. I find the idea of Rainbow Nation that has become the symbol of South Africa exactly what Kotter is talking about. The term was coined by Desmond Tutu to describe the post-1994 era¹³. The slogan “Rainbow Nation – One country, many peoples” has been successfully used to describe the new multicultural South Africa.

Songs and pictures help in communicating the vision. Martin Luther King encouraged the use of Negro spirituals and songs like “We shall overcome” and “Go down Moses” as part of their campaign (Phillips 1998, p. 98). The same applies to South Africa. Luthans et al. (2004) quote Mandela: “The curious beauty of African music is that it uplifts even as it tells a sad tale. You may be poor, you may have only a ramshackle house, you may have lost your job, but that song gives you hope.” Paul Simon and his Graceland brought South Africa to the general awareness the same way Joan Baez and other Woodstock era artists did to the civil rights movement.

*So the God seyeth: go down, Moses
Way down in Egypt land
Tell all pharaoes to
Let my people go!*

*So Moses went to Egypt land.
Let my people go!
He made all pharaoes understand.
Let my people go!*

*Yes the Lord said go down, Moses
Way down in Egypt land
Tell all pharaoes to
Let my people go!*

*Thus spoke the Lord, bold Moses said:
Let my people go! (Trad.)*

¹³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainbow_nation

Conclusion

Think for a moment, what we could achieve if we conducted our lives like Mandela or Corrie ten Boom, or Jesus! Forgiveness in itself creates goodness. When you deep in your heart decide to forgive or ask for forgiveness, progress begins. And it does not have to be easy, like Corrie ten Boom (1971), a concentration camp survivor tells us. She had great difficulties forgiving a concentration camp guard in the late 1940's but finally she decided that she *must* forgive (because that is what she had been teaching!). When she forced herself to reach out and shake hands with her oppressor a miracle happened, a transfiguration such as Tutu (2004) described. She suddenly sensed warmth towards her former jailor and all her resentment was gone.

We have many days for celebration, like St Valentine's Day, or Mothers' Day or Thanks Giving Day. What if we had a universal Day of Forgiving! We would post beautiful cards saying, "Forgive me" and "I forgive You". Why is it so much easier to ruminate in your bad feelings than it is to forgive your trespassers and take a positive and respectful attitude on life? When we wrestle with flesh and blood, forgiveness is not easy but it is discernible. It's when we move beyond the interpersonal relationship that we lose sight of the power of forgiveness (Carpenter 1998). Tutu (1999, p. 228) hopes that the world leaders and the parties of conflicts would begin to make symbolic gestures of peace and would change the way they speak about their enemies and began talking to them instead. Consequently, the behaviour is bound to change, too. A Miracle of the Commons would happen. This would bring love and consolidation between human beings and entire nations (Nouwen 2005). Who will take the first step?

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