

## 29 The Concept of Enough

In the early stages of my soul's journey, I had asked myself relentlessly: 'Tell me, what do I stand for?' I kept forgetting my covenant with God and needed reminding until the words I'd uttered in the darkness in May 1995 were written into my DNA. That way, every breath, every word and action would integrate with who I really was.

My heart replied on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2003, the same day that I saw the face of Jesus on the garden fence, with a manifesto for my life: the "Concept of Enough." At 5am, I hurried to the PC to let the inspiration pour out onto the keyboard. In the way that creativity always begins, it was written when my views on this book's subject matter were still half formed.

*I started writing the "Little Book of Culture" at the beginning of the Iraq war. Tensions had been escalating during the past three years across the globe – Rwanda, the Congo, Iraq, Zimbabwe, and Sudan as people from different tribes, class structures and religions fought each other for the earth's resources. Whether it was land, oil, gold, water, opium or diamonds.*

*Wherever I looked, I saw that each army had support from other groups outside the conflict – whether neighbouring countries: religious groups or the US, Europe, Middle East, or Far East. Often these links came about through businesses as their sales territories and operations moved from local to regional to global. Companies paid highly for good investor relations companies to lobby politicians to bend the rules in favour of more trade and more money. And of course, someone's misery was another's opportunity!*

*So, at a time when Microsoft earned \$1 billion a day, and I drove past houses with four cars outside on the drive in an ordinary neighbourhood, Enron's directors had stolen \$billions from their employees, customers, and shareholders, our wealth in the West still wasn't enough. I visited shopping centres and saw shoppers laden down with bags, whilst outside a beggar sat on dirty blanket with a small paper coffee cup in front of him. Most ignored him: occasionally a young man would stop and put a few coins in, whilst shy children would give him some of their pocket money, as their fathers looked on, embarrassed. More often, a lady, frequently middle aged, would give them a little more.*

*Wherever I went, it was the same – in Europe, the US and South Africa. Is it the same in your country? The word shame springs to mind: I for secretly watching; the beggars for being reduced to living off the kindness of strangers and the donors, secretly fearing others would laugh at them as they put money in the cup.*

*I had been reading a great deal, and using my experience of working in corporate communications roles in big companies, to try and find the answer to the questions: "What is enough?" "When do we know when we have enough?": "How can we end poverty, in a simple way, without feeling guilty about it?"*

*I looked at balance sheets, studied Business in the Community reports here in UK, but it was apparent that in the past ten years, donations to charitable causes had been falling. There were few big companies giving more than one per cent of their profits to charity, but up until 2001, many had benefited from changes to markets and exchange rates. This was at a time when directors' incomes had grown from 15 x the earnings of their lowest paid worker to 30 or even 40 times their salary in the UK.*

*We helped them by investing our own money in their companies, hoping to make a quick buck, or through our pension schemes, investing for a golden retirement: so that we'd have sufficient when we stopped working and didn't have to spend our abundance of time worrying about how to get enough money.*

*From 2001, recession began to bite in various economies, because of over-capacity, and the fact that most of us couldn't afford to buy any more. This was because we'd used our credit cards to their maximum limit, and we couldn't afford to top up the mortgage or take out any more loans. At home, our bookcases, cupboards, wardrobes and lofts bulged with yet more and more goods, some of which we hadn't even bothered unwrapping. Our fridges groaned with food, along with our stomachs.*

*We tried to blame banks and building societies for being too generous in their lending: we tried to sue fast food companies for making us put their food in our mouth: we blamed the government for not improving public transport as we got in our cars for a short ride to the shops. The dot.com bubble burst, because we found that that without content, a mobile phone, TV, or website, is only that – a channel to communicate, not the actual meaningful communication.*

*The world stopped and paused, shaken to its core on 9/11/01, when two planes flew into the World Trade Centre in New York. So many people dead, so many families suffering and grieving, with just the last recorded message from their loved one on their mobiles or answer machines to console them. We quickly took action to find and root out the perpetrators, and began the witch-hunt for fanatics so angry with us that they had to destroy almost 3,000 people's lives.*

*In all the media coverage and assessments, only one voice in a thousand dared to ask the question: "What have we done that these people hate us so much?" Only one voice in 10,000 asked the question "How can we begin to heal the rift between the haves and have-nots?" The latter was the biggest question of all, and one I believe many of us have been thinking in our own way for the past 30 years.*

*That question has never been answered.*

*It is still borne on the wind in the Gaza Strip, the streets of Baghdad, the farms in Zimbabwe, the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, and the slums in Cape Town. It licks at the heels of young girls as they walk five miles at 5am to get water for their family's use during the day: it hangs from the nipple of a starving mother crying as her baby nuzzles uselessly for milk, his belly growing more distended with malnutrition: it rattles from the throat of a young boy in the last throes of AIDs, starving to death because his throat is covered in thrush, as his family can't afford to buy the medicine at prices demanded by the big pharmaceutical companies.*

*The question is also in the mind of Iraqis looting their neighbours' homes because they have a TV and fridge, whilst their own small house is bare of electrical appliances. The US and UK stood by and said they'd send in police forces, but how to police, when they didn't know the customs, and don't speak the language? They too would be seen as invaders and infidels, making it the most dangerous post-war policing job in the world.*

*And so we decided that everyone was wrong except for you and I, the individual. Yet you and I had acquiesced in the growth of greed and the belief that unless we kept buying, stealing or invading, we'd never have enough.*

*As I contemplated these events, and realised how greed was gradually killing us all inside, I realised that I had to start by not criticising, but by setting an example. As Gandhi said: "Be the change you want to see in the world".*

*So, I began to think about all the things we have in common, and the things I'd experienced as a girl growing up in Norway, Ethiopia, South Africa, and all over England. This travelling was all*

*down to my father – an aeronautical engineer – and his itchy feet! At the time I hated the constant moving, but I now realise that he did me an enormous favour.*

*I remembered the little things that we often talked about in coffee and tea shops, in restaurants, by the water coolers at work, in pubs and bars and over dinner with good friends. As I recalled the thousands of conversations over the years, the stories that we enjoyed, the experiences that we shared, I realised that there was one connection: culture.*

### **What is culture?**

*Culture is what defines us, in a group as small as a family, or with our partners: in our places of worship and the celebrations and ceremonies we share there: our food and drink – and the recipes we hand down from generation to generation; in our sports clubs, whether local or international like Manchester United Football Club, in our music – in local clubs or concert halls where we gather in our thousands. It's in our dress and jewellery – both contemporary, and signifying our race – the wonderful netallahs in Ethiopia, with their multiplicity of borders: the saris from India,*

*It's the celebrations and ceremonies we have to welcome babies into the world, engagements, marriages, rites of passage and finally, death. Lastly, and most importantly, nature. Everywhere in the world you will find unique plants, insects, birds, and mammals. It is also, apart from sunshine, the main reason for leisure travel across the globe – because we want to find out about new customs and what interests you. Culture is incredibly attractive, and makes us much larger than we are as individuals, because it's about the shared connections between us.*

*As you told me about your culture, I saw the look of enjoyment or pain in your eyes, I heard the emotion in your voice, and the laughter from your stories: your body language changed and became more expansive, as you rolled out imaginary pastry, danced round the room showing how one drunk wedding guest behaved at your wedding, or swung an imaginary golf club hitting your first birdie!*

*It was something so ingrained in you, of which you were so proud, that I realised how it came to be that people would fight to the death to preserve their culture. I heard those words from a smiling West African lady who talked about the community's important customs and said "I would die for my culture", just two weeks after I wrote this.*

*Globalisation, whilst initially good for the countries where the jobs are being exported to (until their labour costs also got too high) is seen as a tidal wave by many, obliterating all that they'd grown up with, and much of which they hold dear. Globalisation depends on market forces, and ultimately, as Charles Handy so wisely puts it in his book "The Hungry Spirit", the market's master is the need for profit and not to do good. ●*

*So I decided to write this book, as a celebration of our world and lives and our common humanity, to donate 50 per cent to charity.*

***Those donations would be permanent, because I believe the following:***

***Profit x ½ given away = Enough***

*This manifesto was emailed to a few friends in March 2003 to see their reaction. It touched them deeply, and some sent it to friends and relatives in different countries. Within 24 hours, it had reached 100 people (this was pre-Facebook days.)*

*Four months later, I was on a barge trip with some colleagues on a beautifully sunny day, sailing down the Thames. Marie, a very bright, feisty Mauritian, turned to me and remarked: "You know that Ravi Shankar's been sent your 'concept of enough'?"*

“No, really!” How did that happen?”

“Some friends of ours know him.”

So, these words had touched friends' hearts, who had then created a cord of connection between India's famous sitar player, me and one of my dream guides, George Harrison. George, the most spiritual of the Beatles, had appeared to me twice in dreams: in 1997 and 2001. Ravi Shankar had taught him to play the sitar.

The touch-paper had been lit. Destiny was calling.

Further information:

- ① Charles Handy, *The Hungry Spirit*, pages 13-24, Arrow Books, 1998.